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**Doctoral Thesis**

## Is Social Integration Necessary for Corporate Branding?: A study of corporate branding strategies at Novo Nordisk

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PhD Series 22.2012



**Copenhagen  
Business School**  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

# Is Social Integration Necessary for Corporate Branding?

A study of corporate branding strategies  
at Novo Nordisk

**Jacob Holm Hansen**

Doctoral School of Organisation  
and Management Studies

PhD Series 22.2012

# **Is Social Integration Necessary for Corporate Branding?**

*- A study of corporate branding strategies at Novo Nordisk*

**Jacob Holm Hansen**

Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy  
Copenhagen Business School

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies

Jacob Holm Hansen

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## **Preface**

The inspiration for this project came from a practical and a theoretical interest in how strategies are anchored in organisations. In 2005 a colleague and I published a book about strategic leadership communication (Bordum and Holm Hansen 2005). It was an inquiry into how the power of strategic statements, such as vision, mission and values, are rooted in the underlying forces of communication and actions among the stakeholders of organisations. It demonstrated that the drivers of successful leadership are based on persuasive communication and action.

This project takes this line of thought further through a conceptual and empirical inquiry. It is motivated by an interest in basic knowledge about corporate branding as an integrative phenomenon. Corporate branding is often understood as a strategic activity that creates attention and value for a company. The strategic and managerial approaches are generally dominant in theory and practice, where they suggest various prescriptions for success with a corporate branding project. Such approaches often build on assumptions about control where certain consecutive steps automatically lead to a powerful brand. While there are many possible approaches to corporate branding, it seems that the question of integration is a salient issue that characterises the phenomenon in different ways. For instance, corporate branding is said to integrate various academic disciplines, provide an integrated profile of a company, integrate internal and external stakeholders, etc. The particular focus here is encouraged by questions and reflections about how corporate branding as an integrative activity can be analysed and understood through a pragmatic theory of communication.

This project focuses on contemporary managerial approaches to corporate branding and their basis for creating support among the members of an organisation. However, support among the members of an organisation cannot be taken for granted. By combining current developments in the field of corporate

branding with communications theory focusing on the social processes in an organisation, I suggest that support depends on the degree to which a corporate branding effort creates validity among the members of an organisation. My focus is therefore on both managerial and social integration. While managerial integration is about controlling and managing a corporate branding effort, the issue of social integration is about how a corporate branding effort can create mutual understanding and coordination among the members of an organisation.

This conceptual starting point provides the background for exploring an empirical case about how a corporate branding strategy was supported, but also challenged, across the organisation of the pharmaceuticals company, Novo Nordisk. The company undertook strategic decisions that put corporate branding on the internal agenda during the period of my case study. The case therefore provides some interesting examples not only of the managerial strategies that were followed, but also how the members of the organisation reacted. The project indicates that corporate branding is not a flawless alchemy that will automatically turn organisational characteristics into an everlasting goldmine. On the contrary, the creation of a powerful brand depends on credible arguments among the members of an organisation.

All things considered, it takes a great effort to complete a PhD project. Although it is a long and eye-opening journey with many decisions to be made and difficulties to be overcome, it is also a learning process which develops the student. Several people have generously helped me with advice and critical comments, which taken together assisted me in the completion of this project. I would like to thank my superb supervisors, Majken Schultz and Flemming Poulsen, for their unwavering support and patience. Trine Kok Løvig, Thomas Basbøll and Lawrence White deserve special thanks for their firm eye with regard to the clarity of my language and arguments. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the Department of

Management, Politics and Philosophy for their good company and many interesting discussions. I would also like to express my gratitude to Novo Nordisk, who hosted and supported me as an industrial PhD for three years. Special thanks to my colleagues in the departments of Corporate Communications and Corporate Branding for their open-mindedness and support during my study. Finally, I am grateful for the insight, discussions and possibilities opened up by Helle Petersen, Mike Rulis, Mads Øvlisen, Tina Nørgaard, Nick Adams, Markela Dedopoulos, Charlotte Ersbøll, Mads Gyldenkerne and Troels Mørk. All good advice and support considered, however, the responsibility for any shortcomings in this project is of course mine. Last but not least, I am indebted to my family for their support and patience in the many hours when I was absent.

Jacob Holm Hansen

Birkerød, Denmark

Spring 2012





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## 0 “Turning up the Volume ... to Zero”

To illustrate the focus and problem of this project, it begins by telling part of the story of a critical corporate branding event in the pharmaceuticals company, Novo Nordisk. A leading Danish business magazine carried an article about the company's image in May 2003. The article was published at the same time as the company received the prize for the best image among Danish companies for the third year in a row. The article included the following quote:

‘[The CEO] and the other members of the company's management are far from satisfied with the admiration Novo Nordisk is surrounded by in Denmark. On the contrary, Lars Rebie Sørensen is very focused on how Novo Nordisk can make its image sharper and more precise. “Outside Denmark we are totally unknown. Unless you have diabetes or are a diabetes specialist, you don't have a clue about who Novo Nordisk is. We need to deal with this in some intelligent way, which we have set out to find,” says Lars Rebie Sørensen (4<sup>th</sup> May 2003: Berlingske Nyhedsmagasinet).

### **The international management meeting**

About 21 months later, on a cold winter day at the end of January 2005, about three hundred managers from all over the world checked into the Hilton Hotel in the Copenhagen Airport. They were top-managers of the pharmaceuticals company, Novo Nordisk. They were attending the annual International Management Meeting (IM<sup>1</sup>) of the company.

Attending the IM, as it is called at Novo Nordisk, is always an exceptional event for the managers because they never quite know what to expect. However, the IM

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<sup>1</sup> IM is Novo Nordisk's abbreviation for an annual International Management Meeting at Novo Nordisk. At the meeting top managers from all over the world network, exchange knowledge and learn about the latest developments and future perspectives in the company.

is also the annually recurring opportunity for managers to see old friends and celebrate successes, share knowledge across corporate functions and geographical distances, exchange experiences from the past year and get a sense of where the company is going. Although parts of the agenda are predictable, something always happens that no one can foresee.

While the previous year's meeting had been very spectacular, this year's meeting seemed rather conventional, taking place in an ordinary hotel setting. The only disturbance of the mundane atmosphere consisted of mysterious messages that appeared all over the hotel. These were part of a carefully designed plan with surprises in store for the managers. A newly established corporate branding department had been working hard for months to be ready to implement a new corporate branding initiative in a compelling way. IM was the key event they had been planning for.

On the third and last day of the meeting, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005, various messages appeared across the hotel. There were signs on the doors outside all the managers' rooms, which said, "Shhh ... every type needs some privacy"; in the elevator, footprints stuck to the floor indicated "This type here" and "That type there"; coasters in the bar asked "What type are you?" giving the reader a number of types to choose from, such as the "brainy type, artsy type, executive type, friendly type and motherly type" (Appendix 13.8 includes a sample of pictures from the launch).

### **Presentation of a new brand strategy**

As planned, the CEO of Novo Nordisk took the floor and revealed that an initiative had been taken to revitalise the corporate brand. Launching the new brand strategy at the IM was the first step in a plan to improve the company's

competitive advantage. The CEO gave a rough overview of the state of affairs in the company and outlined its distinctive traits as a part of a branding presentation (see Appendix 13.3 for an overview of products). References to facts about the company's history and to its pride in its ability to see things from the patient's point of view, along with its unique focus on diabetes, painted a familiar picture. The picture was contrasted with impending external challenges.

“As competition has been heating up,”<sup>2</sup> he said, “and as it is getting noisier out there, it is time to revisit our brand”. He highlighted the fact that Novo Nordisk had to push an agenda, face challenges from the competition, tackle criticisms from the public, and become a stronger and more differentiated company, which meant making some important choices. One strategic choice was therefore to have a focused brand strategy.

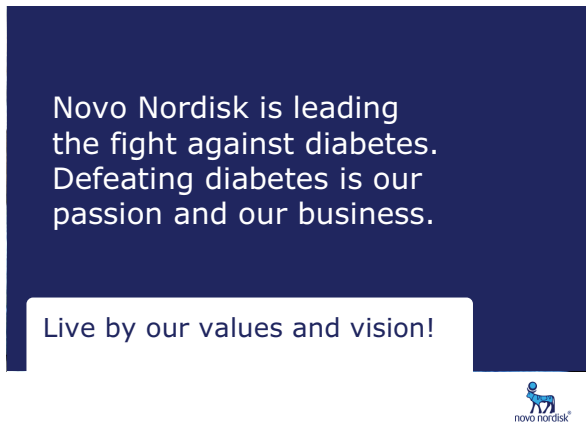
One of the differentiating factors was to focus on the history of Novo Nordisk and its work on diabetes. In particular, making diabetes the key theme was an important strategic choice, because here the company had identified the biggest competitor pressure in its business. However, the work on diabetes was also that part of the business where Novo Nordisk had a credible base and plenty of assets that could support a brand initiative according to the CEO. He presented the company's new brand promise<sup>3</sup> as:

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<sup>2</sup> This and the following quotes from the CEO, the executive vice-president and the managers, are all based on an unedited video recording from the meeting. Some quotes are anonymous because identification serves no purpose. Chapter 5 offers a methodological account for the use of empirical material in the project. Appendix 13.4 provides a list of the empirical material included.

<sup>3</sup> A brand promise is brand terminology and signifies a statement that incorporates a central meaningful proposition to which a company commits itself in its corporate branding strategy.

**Figure 1: Novo Nordisk brand promise** <sup>4</sup>



The CEO offered the following interpretation: “Being a leader means that we have to believe that we can assist in alleviating the burden of diabetes at the individual level as well as society level”. “We are caring and friendly. This is good enough if you are a nursing home, but to meet the competition, you have to be proactive, courageous, innovative, not aggressive but assertive – you know that is what we are – the problem is that they don’t know it out there”. It was therefore the intention to “turn up the volume of what we stand for and what we are”, he said.

During the presentation, it became clear that the scope of the new strategy was global and cross organisational. “To found the platform<sup>5</sup> in reality,” as it was said, people from the UK, the US, Germany and China had assisted the new branding department in how to revitalise the brand in an inspiring and motivating way. Throughout the presentation, the value of a strong corporate brand was highlighted again and again.

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<sup>4</sup> This graphical version originates from slide no. 8 in the CEO’s presentation at the meeting. See Appendix 13.4.

<sup>5</sup> The use of brand terminology was not consistent. Sometimes the brand platform and brand promise was seen as synonymous, and sometimes as different.



After the overall presentation by the CEO the senior executive vice-president of the organisational area of Stakeholder Relations, which included the new branding department, took the floor and spoke about the more tactical and operational aspects of the initiative. She said: “We are trying to create innovation around our company brand and we feel there is so much potential lying there waiting to be utilised”. She explained how the corporate branding initiative incorporated the organisational values and basic principles for management at Novo Nordisk.

“Why is it so important to turn up the volume?” the senior executive vice-president rhetorically asked, and then answered: “Because we want to leave nobody in doubt that we are the leaders in diabetes – we owe it to our employees that they all know what constitutes us as a company ... because we are all the company”. In this way, she highlighted the expected internal commitment to the initiative among the employees. During the talk, it became clear that the top managers at the meeting were meant to help pull the corporate branding strategy off, starting that same day. The managers could get assistance from a recently established corporate branding department as well as a coming brand portal opening on the company intranet. The senior executive vice-president expressed her confidence and said, “What you will get from us here will be very useful both from an internal perspective and from a market perspective”. Novo Nordisk would simply be *turning up the volume*, as she emphasised several times.

### **Type Zero**

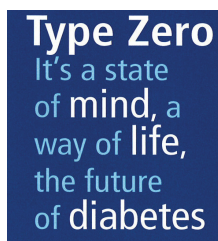
That day, the walls in the meeting room were covered with the same mysterious messages as the rest of the hotel area, and even on the backs of chairs a message announced that “Right now, someone is sitting behind you wondering what type you are ...”. The senior executive vice-president said: “Nobody likes being

stereotyped” [...] “People with diabetes do not like to be stigmatised – we want to help people to get out of this stigmatisation”.

The strange happenings and messages seen around in the hotel area turned out to be elements of a concept attached to the new brand strategy. Various messages had teased the managers about stereotypes trying to pique their curiosity. They had gradually been exposed to a new brand concept called *Type Zero*. “Type Zero is an extension of the company brand focusing on the individual,” the senior executive vice-president continued, and argued for the advantage of the Type Zero initiative, which did not divide people into type one or type two diabetics as the clinical terms do. Instead, it was supposed to liberate people with diabetes from their categorisation or, as it was also called, their stigmatisation.

The people responsible for branding had been working hard to ready the launch. A detailed plan had been prepared for launching the strategy leaving nothing to chance. A wide range of communicative vehicles had been ready for carrying the message of Type Zero through at the IM, including door hangers, coasters, mirror stickers, floor mats and posters for the elevators, stickers for the chairs, several video clips and twenty-four big banners for the atrium in the hotel. Blue wristbands had also been produced for the managers to carry so they could show their support. A brochure meant to clarify what the initiative was about made the following statement:

**Figure 2: Statement from Type Zero brochure**<sup>6</sup>



The managers were the first to see the new strategy, concept and brand statements. The initiative, supported by extensive market tests among health care professionals, was said to be ready to be implemented in the US, the UK, Germany and China. An accompanying letter to the managers explained that the branding strategy was “one of the most important collaborative global efforts Novo Nordisk has embarked on in recent years to create competitive advantage on the global diabetes market” (Brand Letter 2005:1). It was made clear that “good branding starts from within, so the first step is to make sure that we, and those around us, get the best opportunities for walking the talk” (Brand Letter 2005:2). The next step was “that the world around us, our customers, our key opinion leaders and partners get an opportunity to truly see, understand and embrace who we are and what we stand for” (Brand Letter 2005:2). The letter ended by presenting the vice-president of the newly formed corporate branding department, and welcoming a dialogue about the initiative with the hope that the managers would receive the brand strategy well.

After the presentation of the strategy and the brand concept, the managers were divided up to attend workshops where they should discuss how they could support

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<sup>6</sup> The graphic version of the statement originates from a Type Zero brochure (01 2005) distributed at the meeting and later in the organisation. See Appendix 13.4.

the new branding initiative. Each of them carried a blue folder with branding material and some were even wearing the blue wristband as a piece of branding merchandise. Everything was going as planned.

### **Reactions to the revitalised brand strategy**

After the workshops and back in the meeting room the CEO and the senior executive vice-president were on the stage again answering questions from the audience at a plenary session. A microphone was passed around in the audience to get reactions to the branding initiative. “It is problematic calling something Type Zero, because it linguistically still defines a type, and Zero means somebody who is not very important” was a reaction from one manager in the audience. “I agree with the potential stigmatisation of calling a person a stigmatisation of anything ... inventing something that should not be a type but we still call a type ... that is the wrong message to give. The blue ribbon [wrist band] reminds me of the wrong colour of a yellow ribbon – that is too much like plagiarising ... looking like somebody who is very popular” was a reaction from another manager in the audience.

The senior executive vice-president replied. “Do you have a better idea? ... it is the best thing we have come up with so far ... but it is not in any way cut into stone ... we want to just test it out in the four markets first ...” thereby being dragged into a discussion. The corporate branding initiative was facing severe criticism. It came as a surprise that the Type Zero initiative was neither immediately understood nor seen as directly beneficial to the organisation. Several managers responsible for operations all over the world found it objectionable and questioned its potential usefulness. Suddenly things were no longer going as planned.

The senior executive vice-president faced the criticism and said: “I am very glad that we have created a debate around Type Zero, or whatever it is we want to call it. I want to emphasise again ... what we are asking everybody to do is to implement the brand promise. Besides that, we are asking the four markets to experiment to implement the Type Zero campaign ... but only the four ... so we can gain experience ...”. As the criticism heated up and more managers commented on the concept, the CEO and the senior executive vice-president began to modify their support for Type Zero. During the debate, the CEO suddenly indicated that he also had his doubts about parts of the initiative: “One thing that is slightly uncertain to me is how Type Zero will work in relation to patients themselves. ... Can a patient relate to Type Zero?” ... “Is it the right metaphor for the patient? – I doubt it – but that is something we will have to work on”, ... “ We should not focus too much on Type Zero as such ...” he finally said trying to guide the focus towards the brand promise.

However, the criticism did not stop there. In an internal survey conducted among all the managers after the meeting, the same pattern of reactions appeared. The general idea of corporate branding was received rather positively, but the strategic initiative, both campaign and concept, was questioned and rejected. When IM 2005 was over, a cardboard box was packed with Type Zero material left over from the IM and brought back to headquarters. The box ended up in my office. For the newly established corporate branding department, it was time to evaluate and decide what the next step should be.

For me as an industrial business researcher, the IM 2005 became an important event and an illustration of some of the challenges which organisations can face when they engage in realising a corporate branding strategy. The volume had, indeed, been *turned up to ...zero...*



# **1 Introduction: What the story of Type Zero can tell us?**

The Type Zero story could tell us something about what corporate branding is and specifically how it was approached and managed at Novo Nordisk. It could also tell us that the strategic corporate branding effort was an answer to some external challenges which were met in a certain way by turning up the volume about the company. And it could further tell us that what was believed to be an intelligent solution to some of the challenges facing the company, in fact turned out to be a problem. A problem in the sense that the Type Zero initiative was expected to be successful, but somehow resulted in a failure. The Type Zero initiative apparently lacked support among the members of the organisation and therefore never became the preferred corporate brand for Novo Nordisk.

My story about Type Zero is based on observations and interviews in the organisation and indicates some of Novo Nordisk's reasons for undertaking a corporate branding initiative. It demonstrates management's way of introducing and explaining a new corporate branding effort accompanied by visual material and brand merchandise. It also indicates how some of the members of the organisation reacted to the initiative. Through a discussion of various aspects of the Type Zero story, this introduction will clarify the assumptions, perspectives and problems on which this project is based. My general interest is to explore various integrative aspects of the phenomenon corporate branding seen through a focus on the complex relationship between a corporate branding strategy and the organisation that adopts it. But first, let me provide a brief reflection on my version of the Type Zero story.

## **1.1 Different perspectives and assumptions on corporate branding**

My story of the events and activities that took place, for instance using some of the words from the launch in a paradoxical and slightly provocative way as

“turning the volume up to zero”, is of course an understanding that tries to call attention to certain problematical and critical aspects of the initiative. This is in sharp contrast to the story told by the responsible brand managers at Novo Nordisk who were in control and had the privileged position to plan, define and evaluate the initiative. They interpreted and talked about the Type Zero initiative as an altogether unmistakable success for a long time even after the experience at the International Meeting at Hilton.

The fact of such two contrasting stories naturally opens a question of which story is then right? Providing an immediate answer could consider specific elements in each story and ask participants from the meeting questions about the events that took place and thereby following a method based on a correspondence-oriented positivistic approach. I tried this to an extent and found that such an approach cannot clearly solve the difference because there was no agreement among the members of the organisation about how the initiative should be understood in terms of success or failure. Members of the organisation understood the initiative differently according to their context and thereby emphasised different facts and cultural characteristics of the company as part of their perspectives, which either supported or challenged the Type Zero initiative. The most apparent inference is that “reality” can be discussed with regard to how it is constituted and what is important to notice. Although management were in a position to define right and wrong, there seemed to be no absolute truth or agreement about how the particular Type Zero experience should be understood.

An appropriate answer to this question therefore shifts the focus to another level of reflection, away from finding answers about details in the practical Type Zero initiative and what possibly went wrong or right, to a reflection about the assumptions on which each perspective is based, because they play a constitutive



role in the creation of truth claims and arguments about what happened. It is reasonable to consider such assumptions, to the extent that they can be identified, because there is no privileged perspective or theory that will adequately explain everything about the initiative. “Instead, all theories are partial, perspectival, political and contested. All ‘truths’ about organizational life therefore have to be situated within the set of epistemological, ontological, axiological, and political assumptions upon which such claims are built” (May and Mumby 2005:8; see also Alvesson and Deetz 2000:23). All “truths” may tell us something about what corporate branding is and how it is managed in a particular context, but they may also tell us something about the assumptions of a specific perspective, such as a management or research perspective.

The context and community for researchers and managers are both usually rather detached and only overlap to some degree. In simple terms, managers manage organisations and relate to stakeholders, such as employees and customers, often based implicitly on assumptions about an epistemologically manageable reality that through certain methods in accordance with the political conditions in an organisation will achieve the objective of their strategic initiatives. Researchers, on the contrary, may approach and study organisations from a different set of assumptions and relate primarily to a research objective and research community, and only secondarily to the organisation and the people being studied. Because accepted arguments in these different contexts may relate to different assumptions and ways of understanding the world and people in it, it implies that only a tentative answer can be given to the question about which story is right. While either perspective may hold arguments about the opponent’s way of telling the story and consequently point to practical and theoretical weaknesses to support his or her own perspective, it does not exclude the possibility of both being right

about specific issues when the assumptions from each perspective are taken into account.

According to the scholars of communications studies, Steve May and Dennis Mumby (2005), it is up to the proponent of a particular perspective to reflect on and clarify these assumptions and if required make them explicit. Such a requirement is certainly necessary from a research perspective if the aim is to practise open, reflective and self-critical research that can be evaluated by other researchers. Such a reflection is, however, not necessarily a requirement if you are a manager, because management often rely on another more implicit and unquestioned base of authority when it concerns their perspectives, purposes and knowledge. In the case of making corporate branding succeed, managers often rely on power and superior arguments coming from a managerial approach that paint a compelling picture concerning the need to brand. Such an approach to corporate branding, in practice as well as in theory, is often concerned about finding the most effective means to succeed and therefore employs a whole set of operational, tactical and strategic beliefs, which accordingly are based on various assumptions about the objectives pursued, the world and the people in it (e.g. Keller 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Kotler 1997).

The point is that the possible explanations and ways of interpreting the story about the Type Zero initiative relate to some second-order assumptions that influence the perspectives and the possible first-order practical explanations. This can briefly be illustrated by considering how the brand management might view my version of the story. My slightly provocative framing the story of Type Zero like an oxymoron as “turning the volume up to zero”, could be seen as the researcher living in a (second or some other order) Babel Tower detached from organisational ‘reality’ and not really understanding what corporate branding is actually about

and who therefore, out of the blue, writes a story of no relevance for the challenges and next (first-order) practical step to make the corporate branding successful. And it could also be seen as an expression of challenging the authority and knowledge base of management from a somehow irrelevant position and dubious perspective with no practical consequences. Sometimes management may also be inclined to regard reactions from members of the organisation in this way, as when they ignore their disagreement as they did to some extent with regard to the Type Zero initiative.

While such a view about alternative opinions tries to reinforce a management perspective in search of finding better means to reach a successful result, epistemologically speaking it builds on a superior and dominating perspective that tries to define knowledge and truth according to managerial intentions. This, of course, limits the managerial perspective and accordingly the questions and actions that may follow from the Type Zero experience to finding the right answers for management.

## **1.2 Insight *of* management and not only *for* management of corporate branding**

My aim in this project is not to suggest one more better way to succeed with a branding project, as several authors, consultants and brand managers have done well before me, although some of the insight provided in this project may contribute with knowledge that could have managerial implications for better branding practice. With a phrase inspired by the scholars, Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott (2003), from their research in critical management, the aim is not to produce insights and knowledge *for* the management of corporate branding, but rather knowledge *of* management, which implies a position that operates with a distance to the taken-for-granted assumptions and rationality in contemporary

management perspectives on corporate branding. My intention is to question some of the contemporary approaches to corporate brand management and suggest an alternative perspective on to how we may understand the theory and practice of corporate branding.

This implies a perspective on corporate branding that is less coloured by a managerial and control-oriented focus. Instead, my interest is to explore the assumptions inherent in contemporary perspectives on corporate branding and find out what activities are realised in practice in a company that employed a major corporate branding effort. My intention is therefore among other things to identify and discuss the taken-for-granted assumptions in various corporate branding approaches in the literature, but also among both managers and employees at Novo Nordisk. The contrast between my story of Type Zero and the management version relates not only to basic assumptions in each perspective, but also the extent to which a corporate branding initiative is viewed as a controllable activity. The case of managing corporate branding at Novo Nordisk plays a central role and will be in focus throughout this project. I will discuss both theoretical and empirical sides of how managerial approaches to corporate branding employ certain beliefs about what is the right way to succeed, as for example demonstrated through the approach to Type Zero, and further how such beliefs have organisational implications.

My starting point here is a discussion of integrative issues in the Type Zero experience. While the story opens up some common integrative issues, it also indicates some more challenging integrative aspects of corporate branding. The Type Zero story, as it is told, may lead to question like: Are there aspects that were overlooked that somehow have an influence on the relationship between a corporate branding strategy and the members of the organisation? And if there are

such aspects, as for instance certain assumptions or conditions, how may they be identified and understood? And how do they then impact on the realisation of such a strategy? Allow me to illustrate and indicate some possible answers to these questions in the following sections by addressing some integrative issues in the story.

### **1.3 Contemporary approaches to corporate branding**

As indicated, the corporate branding managers at Novo Nordisk defined the Type Zero initiative as a success before, during and after the experience at IM. And the preparation and plans, indeed, were considerable and a lot of prestige and resources were invested which, according to the managers, left nothing to chance. At the IM (2005), the hotel was dressed up and every step was carefully planned to make the launch of the new Type Zero corporate branding strategy as predictable as possible.

Their strategic plan outlined a comprehensive branding initiative on how to succeed in Novo Nordisk's primary markets based on an organisation-wide effort. The plan was tested in advance among patients and medical doctors. The branding strategy was furthermore built on an implicit assumption that internal support in the organisation was already in place or could easily be generated because the plan did not include any knowledge about reactions to the initiative among the members of the organisation. The corporate branding managers were certain and had not considered the possibility of missing support in the organisation, not even as a worst case scenario, because their preparations gave them no reason to question the power of the branding initiative among the members of the organisation.

The managerial approach to Type Zero initiative included several significant characteristics that come from a classical marketing perspective (e.g. Kotler 1997; Keller 2003). Classical in the sense that it is based on rather similar assumptions and knowledge to that developed from product branding. The marketing perspective to corporate branding is quite well described by its proponents as well as its opponents. Both highlight some common characteristics that are considered as essential to manage a successful corporate branding effort.

Examples of such characteristics are typically concerned with finding effective means to a fixed end, making sure that top management supports it, finding an appealing slogan or tag line, communicating a massive campaign across a range of channels primarily to customers, arguing for the benefits of branding, and making a spectacular launch where employees typically receive some artefacts as symbols of the brand to make them brand ambassadors. Proponents of the classical marketing perspective often tend to be prescriptive, outlining in detail the necessary steps to take (e.g. Kapferer 2003; Keller 2003; Kotler 1997; Schultz and Kitchen 2000). The central managerial concern is to control as many aspects of a branding effort as possible to make it succeed, with linear means-end thinking. Simon Torp (2009), researcher in marketing and communications, notes that managerial control is the same as integration with a focus on managing as many aspects of branding as possible, such as behaviour, activities and communication. Torp, however, also questions and discusses how far an organisation's managerial integrative ambition may extend by indicating that there are aspects that cannot be controlled in such a management approach.

Part of my focus on integration is about *managerial integration*, that is, when a central concern of a corporate branding effort is integrating as many sides as possible under managerial control. It is likely, in view of the Type Zero story, that

the management of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk was generally focused on control and reaching a successful result, based on tests of customers and all kinds of preparations. The debate among the members of the organisation about the new corporate branding initiative was also a part of the plans to control the implementation of the new brand, but as the story indicates the support of the members could not be automatically assumed. Torp notes that recently the integration endeavour has extended from the external sides of a company to internal integration, including the aim of controlling the culture and members of an organisation (2009:191). There are possibilities, but also limitations, of managerial integration particularly with regard to how members of the organisation may support the strategic intentions of management. Various scholars have emphasised the importance of involving the members of the organisation in a corporate branding effort beyond the kind of thinking that presupposes control (e.g. Ind 2004; Bergström 2002; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006, 2008; Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005; Schultz et al. 2005; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2008).

The opponents of the classical marketing approach to corporate branding generally maintain that an organisation is something radically different from a product brand, which therefore implies that other characteristics and qualities have to be considered in the pursuit of a valuable corporate brand. For example, they emphasise that corporate branding as a dynamically evolving process (Schultz et al. 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2008) and highlight that it involves more fundamental and strategic questions about the company than are found in a marketing approach. They argue for corporate branding as “a *process* through which an organization can continually work out its *purpose* – a purpose that is meaningful to *people* inside and outside the organisation” (Schultz et al. 2005:16). Whereas the proponents of a classical marketing perspective typically focus on external

customers and on how to find the most effective means to reach a successful *result*, the opponents focus less on the *result* and more on involving both internal and external stakeholders in the on-going corporate branding *processes* as a way to continually manage and create the brand. Rather than being a question of control, integration here takes other forms. Hatch and Schultz (2003), for example, point out that integration between an organisation's vision, culture and image is of central importance to the successful management of a corporate brand. The question of integration in perspectives that emphasise the social processes, rather than superior managerial control, focuses on how to involve stakeholders in the on-going corporate branding activities (e.g. Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2008; Schultz et al. 2005; Davis and Dunn 2002).

The Norwegian professor Erik Oddvar Eriksen (2000), who has focused on the conditions for contemporary management, argues against relying on a managerially superior perspective because the basis of legitimacy has changed for management in organisations. Managers today cannot rely on superior perspectives and privileged knowledge and just command things to happen because members of the organisation often require good reasons, involvement and legitimate explanations to be convinced. Better educated employees, new ways of management, teamwork, and more transparent organisations influence the basis for legitimacy and establish some other conditions for management which are different from the traditional basis where strategies and decisions could be controlled and implemented through the organisational hierarchy and simple models of authority and rationality. Eriksen's thesis is that the necessary basis of legitimacy increasingly needs to be established through open and trustworthy communication with central stakeholders, such as the members of the organisation. According to Eriksen, it is not an option to reject some degree of involvement and open dialogue among the members of the organisation by



referring to an unquestionably superior position and perspective on for example corporate branding. A similar line of thinking is suggested by various scholars from a critical theoretical perspective, who discuss how disciplines of management reinforce particular assumptions devoted to the improvement of managerial practice often as carriers of a certain kind of rationality (see Alvesson and Willmott 1999; Alvesson and Deetz 2006). Such rationality not only influences how stories are told but also defines the kind of knowledge that is accepted as legitimate according to the dominating perspective. Involvement of the members of the organisation is also recognised in the branding literature, but often as a means to reach in the goals of corporate branding (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Ind 2004; Hatch and Schultz 2003).

One possible answer to the question about what aspects were overlooked that somehow have an influence on the relationship between a corporate branding strategy and the members of the organisation may have its roots in the discussion above. There are limits to managerial integration because social processes and legitimacy among members of the organisation cannot be controlled. Critical approaches to management try to reveal the assumptions on which much strategic management thinking is built and suggest alternative ways of understanding both the conditions and possibilities for management. Such approaches is often characterised by suggesting a less superior but more reflective perspective. Let me briefly illustrate how the corporate branding management at Novo Nordisk reflected on the Type Zero experience to further indicate their perspective inspired by a critical perspective.

#### **1.4 What did management of corporate branding say about Type Zero?**

To the small extent that the experience was discussed openly among the brand managers in search of overlooked aspects, it was only at closed meetings with

very few participants. On one of these occasions after IM 2005, the vice-president of corporate branding generally described the Type Zero results as a success with what she saw as “some minor challenges regarding the semantics of initiative” as it was framed (Department meeting in Copenhagen 2102 2005). She suggested that some members of the organisation could not fully understand the meaning of the Type Zero concept and the way the corporate branding strategy was presented and intended to work. The other way around was never considered as a possibility, such as that the corporate branding management and the proposed Type Zero initiative was based on premises that possibly misunderstood the organisation and its members. And the possibility of dialogue between management and the members of the organisation about reaching a common agreement about the meaning and purpose of the initiative was not an option that was brought up either. Management’s reflections about the initiative were primarily concerned about further control and even about controlling the meaning of the Type Zero initiative, as well as finding a plausible reason for some of the difficulties in the organisation. There are, however, limits to controlling the members, and especially controlling meaning, according to contemporary communications theory (e.g. Torp 2009; Christensen et al. 2008; Christensen et al. 2005; Habermas 1984, 1987).

The approach to how members of the organisation are related to a corporate branding initiative is seen as crucial by Hatch and Schultz (2008). They make a distinction between putting the employees behind the brand and putting the brand behind the employees, and they argue for the latter because culture and the members of an organisation are, as they frame it, “silent partners” in corporate branding processes. Antorini and Schultz emphasise that “the corporate brand is managed in the interaction between people. The corporate branding process is therefore a social process that bounces back and forth within the organisation’s sense-making and sense-giving processes” (2005:226). This indicate that the

processes, and particularly the social processes of corporate branding, are dynamic and changing in relation to the specific situation and can therefore not easily be controlled by management.

## **1.5 Considering the advancements in the contemporary communications field**

One common argument in contemporary management and communications theory is that questions of semantics and meaning are constituted in regard to social relations (e.g. Stacey 2006; Weick 1995; Habermas 1984, 1987; Christensen and Morsing 2010; Torp 2009). Semantic questions regarding meaning and understanding are therefore not defined with reference to just one party in a given situation. The meaning of a corporate branding strategy cannot be imposed upon an organisation or defined exclusively with reference to a privileged perspective. In the case of Type Zero, these arguments mean that managers of corporate branding could not solely determine and control the meaning and anticipate the reactions among the members of the organisation and therefore could not put them behind the brand either.

Following this line of thought draws attention to an alternative explanation that looks beyond the management perspective which, to the extent that they considered the challenges of the initiative, tried to isolate them as problematic simply for one party. Instead, it suggests, in line with Eriksen's argument about legitimacy as a condition for management and in line with critical approaches being sceptical about superior management perspectives, that the meanings and beliefs among the members of an organisation are somewhat decisive when a corporate branding strategy is employed.

As an indication of a reason for the rejection in the case of the Type Zero initiative, it may suggest that communicative aspects, such as reaching mutual understanding among the members of the organisation, were not sufficiently considered. Christensen and Morsing (2010:63) and Christensen et al. (2009) emphasise how the dominating approach and ideal of communication in contemporary communication disciplines, like corporate branding, to a great extent ignores developments and advances in the field of communication. Torp (2009), who views corporate branding as an example of integrated communications, and Christensen and Morsing (2010) point out that the one-sided approach is often based on premises about how it is possible to control the receiver side of strategic efforts. They also point out, however, that both receiver and sender are constitutive for the meaning, process and result of a strategic effort, which implies that the receiver side cannot be controlled but needs to be taken into consideration. They further note that there is a lack of research and interest in studying the receiver side of strategic efforts.

These arguments not only challenge the corporate branding manager's definition of the whole Type Zero situation, but also open up for more general considerations about the possibilities and limits of controlling an integrated, coherent and consistent corporate brand. Epistemologically, corporate brand management seems to assume and suggest a privileged perspective that the members of the organisation should agree with or at least comply with. This epistemological assumption is realised in some approaches to corporate branding through linear managerial processes which assume that the members automatically understand, appreciate, communicate and ultimately live the brand; brand ambassador and brand champion are concepts that to some extent emphasise this ambition.

The corporate branding management at Novo Nordisk did not see the Type Zero project as having a critical problem, but rather as just needing a minor adjustment to boost its success. Neither did they consider or reflect on the managerial approach to corporate branding. In fact, it took several months before the managers of the branding department reluctantly and silently recognised that the Type Zero initiative should be cancelled because of the major lack of support in the organisation. And even after that, several members of the branding department were still arguing for Type Zero as the only right brand for Novo Nordisk.

## **1.6 The two sides of integration**

Until now I have presented my version of the Type Zero story by highlighting details from the launch, and by giving voice to top management and the members of the organisation. I have indicated how management's perspective on corporate branding could be seen as a superior managerial integrative effort influenced by a result and control-oriented marketing approach. This perspective was briefly challenged and contrasted with perspectives that focus on social processes and people to indicate other integrative sides of corporate branding.

I especially emphasised the communicative qualities, such as reaching mutual understanding and legitimacy among members of an organisation, as also influencing the basis for corporate branding. This further indicates a tentative answer to my initial first question, namely that there are other important aspects that influence the relationship between a corporate branding strategy and the members of the organisation. Insight within the field of communications could be a way to understand factors, assumptions and conditions for a corporate branding initiative because management cannot alone determine its meaning and success. This is as an indication of an answer to my second and third initial question.

The initial discussion has tried to draw up the general lines from which this project will progress. From an empirical starting point, I have indicated that the empirical case had a gap between management's strategy on corporate branding and the way the members of the organisation understood it. The managerial approach was framed as a question of managerial integration by considering some limitations inherent in a marketing-oriented management approach to corporate branding that focused on control. In the following, I will clarify the social communicative processes of corporate branding from a contemporary communications perspective.

Whereas elements under the control of the management no doubt play a central role, the preoccupation with these can overshadow the issue of how corporate branding gets integrated among the members of an organisation. Even close approximations of the optimal configuration of the possible tangible elements do not automatically ensure that every member of an organisation becomes a committed supporter of a corporate brand because, as the author on corporate branding Nicholas Ind expresses it, "even the tightest structures cannot create an Orwellian world where every employee thinks and talks in the same way" (Ind 2001:19) and later continues "employees need to feel that it is their brand, that they understand it in their own terms and contribute to its development" (2001:125).

Besides managerial integration, I suggest focusing on the issue of *social integration* to complement an understanding of corporate branding. This aspect of integration is traditionally addressed as a key concept within the field of sociology, where it is related to terms like consensus, social order, and solidarity but also to terms like discensus, conflict, and power. Leading sociologists, such as Talcott Parsons, David Lockwood, Anthony Giddens, and Jürgen Habermas, have

suggested ways to understand and deal with social integration. I will apply social integration as Habermas explains it because he not only situates social integration into a broad theoretical and historical context, but also bases it on some fundamental communicative processes that may complement an understanding of the managerial integrative sides of corporate branding.

Social integration, according to Habermas, may briefly and basically be explained as the communicative process that aims at creating *mutual understanding* which then causes *solidarity* and *coordination* among members of a social group. I suggest that it is essential to consider social integration as complementary to the dominant managerial integrative approaches to corporate branding, because some strategies, and especially corporate branding strategies, ideally communicate on behalf of all the members of an organisation. A corporate branding strategy which is not integrated in this sense, with an emphasis on mutual understanding and coordination, and therefore deviates from the organisation by promoting activities and expressing pictures that are not understood by its members may cause a gap between the branding promises and how the members of the organisation actually perform. This gap is recognised in many versions as, for example, the vision–culture gap (Hatch and Schultz 2001). My thesis is that managing corporate branding to a great extent presupposes social integration among the members of the organisation because the corporate brand aims at communicating a consistent and unified picture of the whole company which cannot solely be achieved through controllable means. While this aspect of integration has not been explicitly discussed in the literature on corporate branding, it may be argued that other managerial integrative efforts in organisations to some extent presuppose social integration. It may further be argued, as will be illustrated later on, that a number of contemporary scholars identify and discuss issues that resemble and relate to social integration (e.g. Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2008;

Christensen and Morsing 2010; Christensen et al. 2009; Torp 2009; Hulberg 2006; Torp 2009).

The German sociologist, philosopher and critical theorist, Jürgen Habermas, developed the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) (1984; 1987). His theory is a communicative theory that suggests an alternative perspective on society, organisations and people than normally included in sociological perspectives. The basis of his theory, which also underpins social integration, includes the suggestion of what is called the communicative rationality. This form of rationality is another form of rationality than the purposive rationality that is included in many approaches to contemporary management thinking. According to Habermas communicative rationality underpins knowledge, experience, and the way we understand and act in the world. The theory offers a perspective that makes it possible to understand how we constitute and define situations between people, not only in society, but also in organisations. Communicative rationality is basic in his theory and is also assumed to be more fundamental than other forms of rationality that many approaches to management are typically based on. The core of the theory is a claim about how we as actors may raise claims about the validity of statements about intelligibility, facts, norms and sincerity. Each of these four claims to validity, which will be clarified further, are basic and therefore also a part of how social integration is accomplished in an organisation, according to Habermas (1984, 1987). I will demonstrate how Habermas' insight can be used to better understand the social sides of a corporate branding effort and also indicate how managers and employees and I may understand the same corporate branding effort differently. Allow me to explain the focus, assumptions and overall purpose of the project.



## 1.7 Focus, key assumption and overall purpose

This project explores the conditions and assumptions for corporate branding and develops an argument about a reciprocal relation between a corporate branding strategy and the organisation that adopts it. It *focuses on* how a corporate branding strategy is integrated among the members of an organisation. Integration is understood and explored in two different but related ways as social and managerial integration. It is argued that these two integrative aspects are central, connected and inevitable in a way that influences how a corporate branding strategy becomes realised in an organisation. While I argue that the managerial integrative sides of corporate branding are an essential part of how it is approached and understood, I also argue that there are limitations to managerial integration. My focus is therefore also concerned about the social integrative sides of corporate branding that relate to the members of the organisation.

*The key assumption* is that central characteristics of corporate branding determine that it is both understood and approached as a managerial and social process. It further builds on the premise that the on-going communicative processes and actions among the members of the organisation leading to social integration are constitutive for how a corporate branding strategy becomes realised.

*The overall purpose*, based on this assumption, is to explore social and managerial integration of corporate branding and indicate how we can understand the factors that influence the success or failure of a corporate branding strategy in an organisation. The focus and overall purpose will draw on central insights from contemporary communications theory by Habermas and his suggestion of communicative rationality.

## 1.8 The overall research question

The focus on integration of a corporate branding strategy is guided by the following overall research question:

*How is a corporate branding strategy integrated across an organisation like Novo Nordisk?*

The overall aim is to explore social and managerial integration of a corporate branding strategy across an organisation in theory and in practice.

Hence, two aspects of *integration* are included in the question. The focus on a *corporate branding strategy* underlines, on the one side, that a new or changed corporate branding strategy is conceived and introduced to an organisation. Contemporary perspectives on corporate branding are analysed by focusing on the integrative aspects of corporate brand management in relation to realising the objectives and intentions of a strategy in an organisation. Integration here is concerned with managerial integration, that is, the planned processes following from a corporate branding strategy intended to accomplish its strategic objectives. The inquiry explores perspectives on strategy, tactics and various operational actions that are initiated to integrate a corporate branding effort across an organisation to identify central managerial assumptions and possible implications following from contemporary perspectives on corporate branding. The inquiry will, for instance, explore what corporate branding is and how it should accomplish its goals according to corporate brand management in theory and practice.

A corporate branding strategy, however, also builds on the support of the members of the organisation to succeed. My focus is therefore, on the other side, also on

how the members of the organisation integrate a corporate branding strategy. Integration is understood as reactions from the members of the organisation that may be in agreement or disagreement with the integrative effort following a corporate branding strategy. Social integration focuses on how the members of the organisation understand a corporate branding strategy, its relevance and validity.

The focus on the aspect of *integration across the organisation* therefore addresses managerial integration according to the strategy and corporate brand management on the one side and social integration among the members of the organisation on the other side, and the possible relationships and differences between these two aspects of integration. In other words, the purpose is to focus on strategic intentions and assumptions, and correlate them with organisational conditions and assumptions. To offer a detailed answer to the overall research question, two theoretical and two empirical sub-questions further specify the direction of the inquiry.

### **1.9 Theoretical sub-questions**

The theoretical inquiry is undertaken to provide a background of theoretical insights and reflections that may develop knowledge about corporate branding and further inform and give guidance to the empirical inquiry. The theoretical sub-questions focus on the integrative qualities of corporate branding as they are approached in the literature on corporate branding. Furthermore, they explain the concept of social integration and relate it to managerial integrative approaches to corporate branding.

The two theoretical sub-questions are:

- 1. How are corporate branding processes in an organisation related to managerial and social integration?*
- 2. How is corporate branding influenced by social integration among the members of an organisation?*

The first sub-question analyses integrative aspects of corporate branding in general and of corporate brand management in particular. The intention is to distinguish and discuss some basic integrative qualities and critically examine these with regard to their conditions and possible implications for corporate branding processes in organisations. Parts of the contemporary corporate branding literature are reviewed to inquire about the central managerial and social integrative qualities and aspects that are emphasised. The inquiry will include literature on corporate brand management, marketing, integrated marketing communications, brand building and contributions that focus on the organisational aspects of branding among the members of the organisation (e.g. Keller 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Blamer and Greyser 2006; Hatch and Schultz 2001, 2003, 2008; Ind 2004; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Christensen et al. 2009). These and other perspectives are critically examined with regard to how corporate branding strategies are managed and the members of the organisation are integrated in a corporate branding process. The review will furthermore locate correlations and differences between managerial integration and social integration.

The second sub-question is answered by introducing Habermas' insight on social integration (Habermas 1984, 1987, 2001). Social integration is explained and its

relevance for corporate branding is elaborated. The extent to which social integration may possibly provide an alternative way to understand corporate branding processes in an organisation is examined. Especially the communicative basis of social integration is explained to provide a critical and constructive discussion of the conditions and assumptions for managing corporate branding. The discussion will be related to the implications and conditions for corporate branding processes identified in the first sub-question.

Besides contributing in part with an answer to the overall research question, the theoretical inquiry also suggests using elements of Habermas' theory of communicative action as a framework to guide the empirical inquiry regarding how a corporate branding strategy has actually been integrated across the organisation of Novo Nordisk, so as to provide insight into both managerial and social integration. The empirical analytical perspective will primarily be based on the theory of communicative action and the previous theoretical discussions of corporate branding.

### **1.10 The empirical sub-questions**

The empirical inquiry is a case study of how corporate branding gradually emerged and became institutionalised at Novo Nordisk. It explores managerial integration and social integration in practice by analysing three central corporate branding efforts at Novo Nordisk. It focuses on corporate brand management and the related social processes among the members of the organisation. The empirical inquiry operates with a distinction between the corporate branding strategy executed by corporate brand management on the one side and the emerging organisational processes on the other side, reflecting the difference between managerial and social integration. It serves the purpose of drawing an analytical

distinction between the officially planned corporate branding efforts representing the organisation and the reactions among the members of the organisation.

Besides being an analytical distinction, this also reflects the common way that corporate branding activities are managed, organised and put into practice, also in this case at Novo Nordisk. A corporate branding department normally holds the formal and managerial responsibility, often supported by top management, for corporate branding strategies and activities in an organisation, and therefore plays a crucial role in initiating and facilitating corporate branding concepts, campaigns and processes. However, identifying corporate branding as a departmental activity neglects other aspects of corporate branding. Corporate branding relates to the whole organisation and all its members as co-creators of the brand across an organisation (Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Schultz et al. 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007). Considering corporate branding as cross-organisational implies that corporate branding in the widest sense works across the whole organisation. Consequently, the department, although important, is just one contributor to the corporate branding processes, because other functions, departments, affiliates and members may also influence and contribute to the processes in an organisation. Corporate branding is therefore understood as an emerging social cross-organisational process with contributions from both the corporate branding department and the members across the organisation. This installs a distinction between corporate branding as a function located in a department from which corporate brand management is carried out, typically with corporate brand management as responsible for initiating and planning the overall strategic direction of a corporate branding effort, and as an cross-organisational *process* involving members of the organisation. It is against this background, that I examine the managerial and social integrative processes of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk.

This distinction is also reflected in the material in the empirical inquiry between the corporate branding material *representing* the managerial strategy, as an expression of corporate brand management, often conceived by the corporate branding department, on the one hand, and *reactions* from members across the organisation, which also contribute to the corporate branding process, on the other hand. This distinction makes it possible to identify both managerial and social integrative aspects of corporate branding activities across an organisation by analysing examples of both representations and reactions. The empirical materials that identify examples of how the corporate branding initiatives are promoted, in accordance with the strategic objectives of corporate branding, are denoted *representations* because they represent the strategic decisions, as examples of corporate brand management, about how the company should be profiled and presented to the stakeholders.

The empirical materials that provide examples on how members of the organisation react to the corporate branding initiatives are denoted *reactions* because members of the organisation that have not initiated and planned a corporate branding initiative are receivers who may react in a disinterested, supportive or challenging way depending on their understanding of a corporate branding effort. While the difference between representations and reactions underlines that corporate brand management cannot calculate or predict how the members of the organisation will react, it also indicates the relationship between managerial strategies and processes among the members of the organisation. The empirical inquiry reflects the distinction in the two supportive empirical research questions:

1. *How does a corporate branding strategy develop across the organisation of Novo Nordisk?*
2. *How do the members of the organisation react to the corporate branding strategy at Novo Nordisk?*

The basis for answering the empirical sub-questions is an overall case study including three embedded cases. The embedded cases are three different strategic corporate branding initiatives that took place during my study at Novo Nordisk. They are denoted according to their accompanying corporate branding concepts, respectively: 1. *Changing the Course of Diabetes*, 2. *Type Zero*, and 3. *Changing Diabetes*. A strategic corporate branding initiative is a focused strategic effort with the purpose of realising corporate branding in the organisation. The sub-questions are answered partly by providing an overall case story that describes how corporate branding emerged at Novo Nordisk to offer some detailed insight into corporate brand management and how corporate branding became an institutionalised part of the business for the company. Critical attention will be given to how the strategic aims of management were developed and introduced to the organisation. Whereas the first question is concerned about providing insight into the planned managerial processes, the second question focuses on the emerging processes among the members of the organisation and how they react. Hence, the empirical inquiry will explore various aspects of both managerial and social integration related to the initiatives through an analytical framework based on Habermas' theory of communicative action and insight from contemporary literature on corporate branding.

As mentioned, the CEO at Novo Nordisk had identified several external factors affecting the company as primary reasons for the strategic focus on corporate



branding. However, to get an understanding of these factors and the emerging concern about corporate branding related to my theoretical and empirical inquiry, allow me to elaborate some background information about the company and its entry into corporate branding. In what follows, I will present a brief historical review and some central characteristics of Novo Nordisk to introduce the central case company of this study. Throughout the project, examples from the case company will be used partly to illustrate theoretical arguments and partly for a more detailed interpretation of corporate branding.

## **1.11 Characteristics of Novo Nordisk and its entry into corporate branding**

### **Novo Nordisk's history in brief**

Novo Nordisk's history dates back to 1922, when research by August Krogh, Nobel Prize winner and professor at the University of Copenhagen, and H.C. Hagedorn, a specialist in the regulation of blood sugar, resulted in the successful extraction of a small quantity of insulin. This initial accomplishment was the basis for starting production, and in 1923 they founded the company Nordisk Insulinlaboratorium (Nordisk). Engineer Harald Pedersen, who joined Nordisk in 1923 to build machines for production, had a disagreement with Hagedorn and was fired in 1924. Thorvald Pedersen, who was also working for Nordisk, followed his brother, and the two of them managed to establish another company producing insulin in 1925. The brothers named their company Novo Therapeutisk Laboratorium (Novo). Over the next 65 years, the two companies competed to be the first in the market with new products for the treatment of diabetes.

Both Nordisk and Novo began to diversify and develop other products. Novo became the world's largest producer of industrial enzymes, and Nordisk developed drugs for the treatment of haemophilia and growth disorders. In January 1989,

Novo and Nordisk decided to join forces and merge the companies. Having competed with each other for more than 65 years, the two companies could now concentrate their combined forces on developing new products for treating diabetes and on conquering world markets. The new company was called Novo Nordisk A/S.<sup>7</sup>

Approximately 10 years later, Novo Nordisk had built two strong lines of business, one in healthcare and one in industrial enzymes. In 1999, management decided to split Novo Nordisk into two separate companies, one focusing on healthcare and the other on enzymes for industrial applications. On November 14, 2000, Novo Nordisk and a new company named Novozymes began operating as two separate listed companies (see Appendix 13.9 for a brief overview of Novo Nordisk's history).

This has enabled both companies to increase their operational freedom, but also to focus on what they do best. Part of the motive for the demerger was to sharpen the profile of the separate companies for customers and stakeholders. At the same time, a new team of executive managers, headed by CEO Lars Rebien Sørensen, was inserted to take the company into the next century. The demerger, in fact, opened a window of opportunity for corporate branding in both companies. It was as far back as early 2000 that the first decision to focus on corporate branding was made at Novo Nordisk. But while Novo Nordisk's branding activities remained very much the same as before the demerger, Novozymes managed to differentiate its identity relatively quickly, departing significantly from the style of the old company.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.novonordisk.com/about\\_us/history/history.asp](http://www.novonordisk.com/about_us/history/history.asp) visited 120707

After the demerger, the new Novo Nordisk vision defined the company as “the world’s leading diabetes care company with products and services in other areas where we can make a difference”.<sup>8</sup> The vision emphasises the primary ambition of the company focusing on diabetes, but also opens up for new opportunities in other product areas. The vision furthermore characterises the working culture at the company by underlining: “A job here is never just a job. We are committed to being there for our customers whenever they need us. We will be innovative and effective in everything we do. We will attract and retain the best people by making our company a challenging place to work. Our values are expressed in all our actions. Decency is what counts. Every day we strive to find the right balance between compassion and competitiveness, the short and the long term, self and commitment to colleagues and society, work and family life”. The vision expresses how the culture, values and people are connected not only to daily actions but also to the ambition of being “the world’s leading diabetes care company”.

### **Novo Nordisk today**

Novo Nordisk’s main business is diabetes products, but in fact the company pursues three product areas: diabetes products (70%) and products for haemophilia and hormone treatment (30%). In 2007, during my study, Novo Nordisk provided insulin for 12–14 million people: 6.5 million in Europe, the US, Japan and Oceania, and 5.5–7.5 million in the rest of the world. Besides supplying products to the world market, Novo Nordisk also tried to reach people through health programmes aimed at increasing awareness, education, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes. The company estimates that through these activities, it got in touch with about 28 million people in 2007.

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<sup>8</sup> Novo Nordisk vision (see Appendix 13.1 on vision).

In terms of annual turnover, full-time positions and international image, Novo Nordisk is a rather small company compared to the big players in the global pharmaceutical industry. Despite this, Novo Nordisk sells its products in 179 countries across the world and competes with leading pharmaceutical companies such as Eli Lilly and Sanofi Aventis. While its close competitors have diversified product portfolios with many brands, Novo Nordisk has a focused product portfolio and just a few brands. In the period from 2001 to 2007, Novo Nordisk increased its annual turnover from DKK 23 776 to 41 831 million. This gives the company an annual growth rate measured on sales averaging 15%. In the same period, it increased its workforce of full-time employees from an average of 16 000 to 25 516 in 2007, with 12 000 working in Denmark and the rest in 78 other countries.

To manage its global presence, Novo Nordisk operates with an organisation divided into four overall functions: Research and Development, International Operations responsible for marketing and sales, Finance, and finally Corporate Stakeholder Relations responsible for people and reputation. This last area is also responsible for corporate branding.

Novo Nordisk's activities within the function of Corporate Stakeholder Relations are particularly proactive focusing on creating legitimacy (or "license to operate" as it is called in the company) among its stakeholders. It is on the cutting edge in the development of Corporate Social Responsibility, including both a social and environmental policy and a policy of taking good care of its employees. A long series of awards proves that the company has outperformed competitors with regard to social responsibility, for example by being recognised at the top of the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, various reputation indexes, and best employer indexes.

This is partly reflected in the vision but also in the principles that describes how the company is governed. It operates with a triple bottom line and the Novo Nordisk Way of Management (NNWoM). The triple bottom line is a broad business principle, whereby the company strives to conduct its activities in a balanced responsible way, financially, environmentally and socially. The triple bottom line approach is built into the corporate governance structure, management tools and individual performance assessments. The Novo Nordisk Way of Management is a framework outlining how the company does business. It consists of its vision, values, commitments, fundamentals and methodology (see Appendices 13.1 and 13.2). The framework outlines how all members of the organisation are meant to conduct themselves and the business of the company. These overall characteristics are the background against which the importance of corporate branding gradually emerged in internal reports and at meetings between the demerger in 1999 and the launch of Type Zero in 2005.

### **The early branding activities**

To raise awareness about the new Novo Nordisk after the demerger, management decided to change the corporate visual identity (CVI) of the company. The British consultancy group Enterprise helped Novo Nordisk to define a brand promise that could support its position and focus.

The brand promise was called Being There. “This promise emphasized the company’s close relationship with its stakeholders. It meant aligning the company’s core businesses around Being There for the medical practitioners, patients, employees, and for the wider global community through social responsibility. The launch of Being There began with a corporate campaign called I Wish” (Schultz et al. 2004:5). The I Wish campaign was a creative interpretation

of the brand promise of Being There. “Mike Rulis, the vice-president and head of corporate communications, recalled its original perspective: “The I Wish campaign took the view of the patient, for whom we were there. In the campaign, real patients with diseases tell their stories. By telling the story of their diseases and their way of coping with it, they were indirectly telling the story of Novo Nordisk” (Ibid.:4). The early branding campaign focused on diabetes patients and was intended to engage the whole organisation and its stakeholders, but it never achieved recognition across the organisation.

### **The image of Novo Nordisk**

Novo Nordisk’s activities in the CSR area, however, have never caught the attention of the wider public and neither has it really taken advantage of the potential of this area. Despite its early branding activities, it was mostly known only by medical specialists. Having an image that was unfortunately not reflected and recognised by its stakeholders all over the world did not match Novo Nordisk’s ambitions for an image as a global company present in 179 countries. There was a growing realisation in Novo Nordisk that to compete as a global company in the pharmaceutical industry in the twenty-first century it would have to draw positive attention to itself among governments, politicians, the media, general practitioners and diabetics, because these stakeholders all influence its business.

It is against this background that top management decided to deal with the branding challenges to attract attention to the company. And it is also against this background that I will gradually reveal and analyse important sides of how Novo Nordisk managed their corporate branding activities. Chapter 6, a case story on corporate branding at Novo Nordisk, provides further background and context about these corporate branding activities.

### **1.12 Recognition of the Novo Nordisk branding activities**

But before I continue to discuss challenges related to corporate branding in general and in particular at Novo Nordisk, it is both appropriate and reasonable to mention that today (winter 2012) Novo Nordisk has a recognised corporate branding strategy called *Changing Diabetes* seen from my point of view. Various scholars also recognise Novo Nordisk's corporate branding strategy and accordingly discuss its significance related to their specific interest (Hatch and Schultz 2008, Karmark 2005; Sandstrøm 2003; Christensen and Morsing 2010). Regardless of perspective, this branding strategy, however, was not created through a process that resulted in a success straightaway, as some scholars suggest. On the contrary, several challenging difficulties had to be overcome before a successful strategy and brand was reached. It is especially the difficulties and the different initiatives put forward in non-linear iterative processes that make the empirical focus on the management of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk a good case. Insights into such challenges are rather uncommon in the literature on corporate branding (an exception is Haig 2005 who lists the 100 biggest brand mistakes of all time).

### **1.13 The branding activities at Novo Nordisk – an atypical and interesting case**

While the Type Zero initiative is interesting in many ways, several other aspects also make the corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk worth studying closer to explore the relationship between a corporate branding strategy and the members of the organisation. First, the company increased the strategic importance of corporate branding as a central activity for its business during my study. Novo Nordisk changed their corporate brand activities from a focus on design and visual expression to a company-wide effort meant to involve every member of the organisation. This gave a unique opportunity to follow the on-going branding

activities. Second, there were various initiatives and approaches to managing corporate branding which both competed with and replaced each other during my study. All of them aimed at introducing corporate branding on the organisational agenda within a relatively short period. The Type Zero story is an example of one of the earlier initiatives. The different competing branding initiatives are quite unusual but also particularly interesting, partly because they are unmentioned by scholars who have focused on branding at Novo Nordisk and partly because several influential managers for various reasons preferred to put some of the non-linear processes behind them. While the Type Zero experience is almost forgotten in the organisation today, the extraordinary situation with regard to this initiative especially piqued my curiosity. Perhaps, the scholars who have focused on branding at Novo Nordisk never heard about Type Zero because they primarily relied on the corporate brand managers and they preferred to tell their version of the experience.

As I gradually realised that there were several different and sometimes conflicting interpretations about corporate branding initiatives at Novo Nordisk, both in the organisation and among different scholars, and specifically different ways of talking about Type Zero, I saw these perspectives not as counterproductive and problematical, but rather as productive in various ways, as for instance possibly opening room for discussion both in the organisation and in this project. Among the various initiatives, Type Zero was noticeably the most ambiguous, complex and spectacular corporate branding effort, which is also why it is included and extensively explored in this project. It represents a certain perspective on what corporate branding is and how it should be approached and managed.



## **1.14 Outline of project**

### **1. Introduction**

The introduction has presented the research focus, problem and purpose of the project. Through an insight into the story of Type Zero, various questions and perspectives were discussed in relation to involving the members of an organisation in a corporate branding effort. A managerial approach to corporate branding was contrasted with a contemporary communicative perspective to illustrate how the basis of legitimacy for realising managerial strategies has changed. While it was indicated that a central characteristic of contemporary corporate branding efforts is how they build on managerial integration, it was suggested social integration should be considered as central for how corporate branding efforts are realised in an organisation. Social integration was briefly introduced through a communicative perspective based on Habermas and it was indicated that communicative rationality could contribute to a new basic understanding of the social processes of corporate branding across an organisation. The empirical case of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk was introduced as relevant for an inquiry, particularly because it included three strategic branding initiatives involving challenges of social and managerial integration across the organisation. The main argument of the project was indicated as a specific suggestion that a corporate branding strategy is influenced by both managerial integration and (more basically) social integration among the members of the organisation. The introduction has further indicated the theoretical and empirical scope of the inquiry.

### **2. Corporate branding and integration**

This chapter demonstrates that corporate initiatives are integrative in character. It focuses in particular on the possibilities and limitations of corporate branding as

an effort based on managerial integration. It provides an inquiry into the literature that focuses on the internal processes of integrating corporate branding among the members of an organisation and suggests considering both managerial and social integration. Finally, the chapter offers a definition of corporate branding that accounts for both aspects of integration and emphasises how corporate branding is based on social processes among stakeholders.

### **3. Social integration**

The chapter presents the concept of social integration as it is conceptualised in parts of Habermas' theory on communicative action as a basis for suggesting a complementary perspective on how corporate branding processes should be understood. The central argument of the project is explained by demonstrating the relation between strategic and communicative action as basic for how we can understand social processes including the corporate branding processes in an organisation.

### **4. A Habermasian framework for exploring managerial and social integration**

The chapter presents and discusses a systematic framework based on Habermas' theory of communicative action and its validity claims as a way to analyse social and managerial integration in a case about corporate branding at Novo Nordisk. The framework is explained and supplemented with three additional interpretive principles as an interpretive repertoire for the empirical inquiry.

### **5. Research approach and method**

This chapter outlines a theoretically informed research approach and method. It reflects on the character of the research and the complex process of studying corporate branding during a relatively long period through participatory

observation. It also discusses the role of the researcher and the relationship to the company of Novo Nordisk besides the aspect of being sensitive to empirical material in a reflected way. Finally, it describes the time, scope as well as the considerations for including various empirical materials in this project.

## **6. A case story on corporate branding at Novo Nordisk**

The chapter tells constructive and critical story about the emerging corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk by following three important strategic corporate branding initiatives in the organisation. It serves as contextual background and a point of departure for the detailed analysis of the three corporate branding initiatives in the next chapter. The story provides, to the extent that is possible, a complete picture in which the three initiatives as parts can be related and understood.

## **7. Analysis of three strategic initiatives**

This chapter provides detailed analyses of three strategic corporate branding initiatives in accordance with the framework and interpretive repertoire based on the previous theoretical, empirical and methodological discussions. Conclusions from each initiative are discussed in relation to social and managerial integration, and also related to the overall story of the emerging corporate branding strategy and process at Novo Nordisk.

## **8. Summary of empirical findings**

The analyses are summarised and compared in an overview of the three initiatives. The chapter reflects on the interpretations from the analyses and the character of the knowledge produced. It furthermore discusses the relevance and value of bringing social integration forward in an analysis of corporate branding empirically.

## **9. Conclusion**

The conclusion briefly recalls important insights from the theoretical and empirical inquiry and presents them in a succinct form and discusses possible managerial implications. The chapter ends with some reflections on the character of the project and routes for further research.

## **2 Corporate branding and integration**

Brands are everywhere. They are debated and hated, bought and sought. Whatever we may think of them, they are a part of our everyday lives. For customers, they serve as a navigational tool so we can distinguish our preferred product, service or organisation among others (Bernstein 2003:1134). To members of an organisation, they create a sense of differentiation and belonging (Olins 2003). The object of branding was traditionally a product or a service, but today almost everything can be branded: people (McNally and Speak 2003), organisations, places (Pedersen 2005), and also regions and countries (Olins 2003). Corporate brands and corporate branding are contemporary phenomena that cling to our way of life. They are loaded with meaning and are about social relations (Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005; Antorini and Schultz 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2003, 2008; Christensen and Morsing 2010).

Today there are competing theoretical and practical approaches to the field of corporate branding which differ in the kinds of problem that they address, in their fundamental principles, and in their derived managerial implications (e.g. Heding et al. 2009; Schultz et al. 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2003, 2008; Keller 2003; Olins 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Ind 2004; Kapferer 2003; Ind & Bjerke 2007; Hulberg 2006; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008; Christensen and Morsing 2010; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009). They diverge in their choice of framework and in how they conceptualise the object of their domain – that is, how they define what they are actually studying. In fact, ever since corporate branding entered the corporate agenda in the 1990's academia and practice have addressed corporate branding from a number of different disciplines which has generated an array of competing and overlapping perspectives. Although the perspectives seem different at first sight, the influence from marketing is often obvious. Some

perspectives acknowledge the heritage from marketing, while others try to distance themselves from it.

Developments in the field of corporate branding have not resulted in a lot of accumulated knowledge but rather people with different perspectives have tried to establish their own approaches and specific conceptions. This conceptual and practical proliferation in the field has been recognised but not in any way resolved (Heding et al. 2009). Some scholars who have considered the development field either conceptualise it under the primary influence of the heritage from marketing (e.g. Balmer and Greyser 2003) or try to suggest an alternative perspective that recognises marketing contribution along with other disciplines (e.g. Schultz et al. 2005; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hulberg 2006). Marketing professor, Kevin Keller, suggested that we need to find a perspective that can manage to integrate the various disciplines and contributions to the field (2003). His suggestion is still relevant today, when new insights tend to propose perspectives that not only try to integrate disciplines but also offer new theoretical perspectives with practical implications, for instance on how to integrate internal and external stakeholders (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Davis and Dunn 2002). The issue of integration has become relevant in various ways from conceptual understanding of corporate branding to the planning, implementation and evaluation in practice (Ind 1998; Hatch and Schultz 2001, 2008; Christensen and Morsing 2010; Schultz et al. 2005).

Schultz et al. (2005) framed the development of the corporate branding as a move towards the second wave of corporate branding, with the first wave conceptualised as a marketing oriented perspective and the second wave as a strategic and cross-functional perspective focusing on people and processes (e.g. Antorini and Schultz 2005:221). Recently Hatch and Schultz (2008) have also suggested the coming of

a third wave focusing on the entire enterprise of a company that “encompasses the interest and expectations of the full range of a company’s stakeholders and makes corporate branding a strategic asset of increasing importance to corporate boards, CEOs, and top management” (2008:206). While these waves are broadening the corporate branding field in terms of disciplines, stakeholders, value and impact, they also accentuate the need to understand how the various perspectives may contribute to corporate branding.

It seems that many perspectives on corporate branding have a contribution to make, but it also seems that there is no common understanding of how these perspectives, which often recognise but also exclude each other, may cooperate and coordinate their efforts. The move towards new ways of framing the various conceptual, managerial and organisational issues is often seen through various integrative perspectives. Keller’s ambition was to integrate the developments within the field of corporate branding under a marketing perspective, a perspective that Balmer and Greyser (2003) have pursued with the concept of corporate level marketing. It is not my intention to suggest a superior perspective that may integrate all other conceptions of corporate branding, but to analyse managerial and social integration of corporate branding among the members of an organisation from a critical, constructive and communicative perspective.

## **2.1 A critical constructive communicative perspective on corporate branding**

The critical, constructive and communicative perspective that guides this part of the inquiry into the established knowledge in the field of corporate brand management is based on the combination of a *critical approach* inspired by critical management studies (e.g. Alvesson and Ashcraft 2009; Alvesson et al. 2009; Alvesson and Willmott 2003; Durberley and Johnsson 2009), a *constructive*

*approach* (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz 2000) that underlines the productive and positive dialogue with the existing knowledge of corporate branding and is therefore not just aimed at criticising existing knowledge without really offering any alternative perspective, and lastly a *communicative perspective* following from Habermas' theory of communicative action and the suggestion of intersubjective communication based on mutual understanding which will be clarified further.

This implies that the inquiry will try to reveal the taken-for-granted knowledge, and question some of the established truths in the field, but also open up for a constructive dialogue on alternative ways to understand some the challenges in the field inspired by parts of the theory of communicative action. On the one hand, I will relate to the considerable number of strategic and marketing-oriented perspectives on how to manage and control corporate branding efforts, and on the other hand to the branding literature about involving members of the organisation and achieving their understanding, support and commitment. Based on the critical, constructive and communicative perspective, the inquiry explores some common and central communicative qualities in the literature about integrating corporate branding across an organisation. These qualities are mostly overlooked or only briefly described in contemporary branding literature. However, as will be argued, it is important to take them into account when a corporate branding strategy is employed, because they, as it will be argued, influence corporate branding initiatives.

These communicative qualities are not related only to branding. They are also an implicit or explicit aspect of common everyday social interactions between people. From the perspective of this project, this implies that realising and managing a corporate branding strategy is considered as susceptible to some basic



communicative qualities underlying social interaction as we know it. The intention, however, is not to juxtapose corporate branding to ordinary communicative interaction between people, because there are differences, but to discuss some basic communicative qualities that are inevitable and that influence corporate branding and corporate brand management. The communicative qualities are hardly ever explicitly taken into account. They are so common that they more or less are assumed to function frictionless without needing any consideration – even in everyday interaction. The fact that they are common and basic in an interaction, but also easy to ignore and take for granted, makes it relevant to focus on them because they may contribute with a deeper understanding of the social processes related to corporate branding.

The communicative perspective is a way of exploring this possible challenge between managing a corporate branding effort and the understanding and beliefs among the members of an organisation. If the central purpose of corporate branding is to manage a valuable representation of the whole organisation to its stakeholders, as is often assumed among leading scholars, then there is also a risk of promoting a representation which is different from the beliefs of the members of an organisation (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2003; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008; Ind 2004; Urde 2003; de Chernatony 2002).

### **The communicative perspective in brief**

The next chapter will explain the communicative perspective in detail, but for the purpose of understanding the discussion on integrative aspects of corporate branding in this chapter, I will provide a brief outline here. The perspective basically builds on Habermas' theory of communicative action. This means that communication is regarded as a process of reaching mutual understanding among participants involved in both communication and action. Communication is

therefore not exclusively a strategic question of one party defining and controlling the meaning and outcome of a situation (e.g. Christensen et al. 2009; Torp 2009; Christensen and Morsing 2010).

The perspective involves the assumption that any participant engaging in communication and action is accountable for the claims that they make and the actions they take (Habermas 1987). This implies that the everyday practices of any individual capable of speech and action can be tested against a common background of communicative rationality (Habermas 2001). This communicative rationality involves the aspects of validity and inter-subjective recognition among the people involved. Central to the perspective are the processes of reaching mutual understanding by referring to implicit or explicit validity claims. The validity claims are concerned with the aspects of intelligibility, facts, norms, and sincerity which are basic the qualities.

The communicative perspective, as outlined, underpins the key argument of the project which will be further elaborated in the next chapter. It suggests, as already indicated, that the power of a corporate branding strategy is based in the underlying process of communication and action across an organisation. The communicative perspective is thereby not a traditional communicative perspective focused on finding channels, messages and persuasive means between a sender and receiver as understood in a linear approach to communication. Rather it is a perspective that focuses on the constitutive parts of communication that enable mutual understanding to emerge through validity.

## **Purpose and outline of chapter**

It is my intention to analyse contemporary approaches to corporate branding and corporate brand management and discuss the possibilities and limitations of managerial and social integration with a focus on the process of how corporate branding is managed as a strategic and social activity that establishes mutual understanding and beliefs among the members of an organisation. The chapter is structured as follows:

- First, a number of characteristics of corporate branding are explained including an explanation is about how *the corporate* implies the question of *integration*.
- Second, an outline of the state of affairs in the field of is provided to indicate how the question of managerial integration is a part of managing corporate branding.
- Third, a discussion is undertaken of how members of an organisation are related to managing a corporate branding process, including how it involves the question of social integration.
- Fourth, a discussion of the aspects of mutual understanding as basic to involving the members in a corporate branding effort is provided.
- Finally, a definition of corporate branding based on both managerial and social integration is suggested.

A clarifying remark should be added before entering into the inquiry. The inquiry should not be understood as an advocacy for corporate branding or an uncritical analysis in the field based on an assumption about corporate branding being a superior omnipotent management technology that may bring everlasting competitive advantages to contemporary organisations if it is managed in the right way. On the contrary, I consider corporate branding as an interesting

contemporary management phenomenon permeating both organisations and society. My purpose is therefore neither to criticise nor to reinforce the phenomenon; it is rather to study the phenomenon and its integrative and communicative aspects and enter into a dialogue from the critical, constructive and communicative perspective.

### **The literature and branding terminology**

I intend to draw primarily on the literature from the field of corporate branding, corporate communications and integrated marketing communications. Scholars in the field of corporate branding conceptualise and focus on individual perspectives about corporate branding, such as corporate brand management, strategic brand management, corporate brand building, participatory brand building, internal brand building or just corporate branding, etc. These different ways of conceptualising the field focus on specific parts of corporate branding, but also overlap to a great extent. The literature on corporate brand management about how to manage brands also has a lot to say about internal brand building and vice versa. My focus here is on how corporate branding strategy and effort are integrated in organisations with a specific interest in managerial and social integration from a communicative perspective. The focus implies that my field of interest can be generally categorised as internal brand building. However, the literature included comes from a broader basis than contemporary literature on internal brand building because other related perspectives are also relevant for my focus, such as corporate brand management, strategic brand management, integrated communications, participatory brand building, etc. These related fields are therefore also included to explore how a corporate branding strategy integrates into an organisation. Before I continue to explore and discuss aspects of how managerial integration is a part of managing corporate branding, I will briefly

explain my use of the terminology about corporate branding to reduce the ambiguity and clarify the different terms used.

*The corporate branding phenomenon* is used to designate a broad understanding of corporate branding as it appears and is constructed in theory and practice without giving preference to a specific perspective. There may be several and even competing definitions, but the phenomenon respects this condition and makes it possible to talk about corporate branding without advocating any specific perspective. Hence, using the term *the corporate branding phenomenon* makes it possible to reflect about it generally as a theoretical and practical occurrence related to organisations.

The term *corporate branding* is initially understood in accordance with Schultz et al. as “a process through which an organisation can continually work out its purpose – a purpose that is meaningful to people inside and outside the organization” (Schultz et al. 2005:16). This understanding of corporate branding reflects the characteristics in the second wave of corporate branding and underlines the importance of the on-going social processes among the internal and external stakeholders that influence how an organisation creates its meaningful purpose. This constitutes corporate branding as a part of the central strategic processes related not only to the mission and vision of an organisation, but also to its identity. At the end of this chapter, I will suggest a definition of corporate branding based on the discussions about managerial and social integration.

The terms *corporate brand management and managing corporate branding* refers to the process and activity of managing the brand for a purpose. The purpose could, for example, be attracting attention to a company about being a leader in diabetes care. Managers are normally identified as those who manage and control

corporate brands, but ideally every member of an organisation can contribute to corporate brand management. An employee who talks about the company's leadership in diabetes care also contributes to managing corporate branding. This understanding expands corporate brand management from being the task of managers to include other members of an organisation who also contribute to the purpose of a corporate branding initiative. My focus on how a corporate branding strategy integrates in an organisation relates to this understanding of corporate brand management.

The term *the corporate brand* is the sum of the corporate branding activities realised through corporate brand management aimed at creating brand equity. It is typically condensed into a promise that the company makes to the world, like for example the promise of *Changing Diabetes* at Novo Nordisk which the whole organisation then is supposed to understand and deliver to the world.

The term *the corporate branding strategy* is used to denote the overall intentional and planned way to create, maintain and develop the corporate brand internally and externally through corporate brand management and brand building. The Novo Nordisk corporate branding strategy of being recognised as a world leader in diabetes care is an example with strategic and managerial implications internally and externally. Closely related is the term *corporate branding initiative*, which describes the particular activities included in and supporting a strategy. At Novo Nordisk, there were three different attempts to launch and realise a company-wide corporate branding strategy. These are denoted as corporate branding initiatives because they appeared as parts of the whole process of making corporate branding a strategic part of the business in the absence of an overall strategy. Besides using the term *initiative*, I also use the terms corporate branding *effort* and corporate

branding *endeavour* to denote on-going processes and activities related to achieving the goals of a corporate branding strategy.

## **2.2 Corporate branding and the question of integration**

The meaning of *corporate* correlates with the meaning of *integration*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term corporate originates from the Latin word *corpus* meaning body. The derived verb “incorporate” typically means integrate and include. Corporate means “united into a whole” and integrate means “to render something whole”. This correlation in meaning suggests that corporate activities somehow imply the aspect of integration or integrative activities concerning the whole. Integration is about unifying diversity into a whole and about managing differences within a unity according to the scholars Christensen and Morsing (2005:31). A number of questions can be raised with regard to integration into a whole. What are the scale and scope of that which is being integrated? What are the limits of integration? How is integration managed? And what are the possible benefits? Corporate activities seem to imply various questions of integration that are answered in various ways according to perspective (e.g. Christensen and Morsing 2005, 2010; Cornelissen 2004). And this is also the case in the field of corporate branding, where the question of integration accompanies many perspectives implicitly or explicitly.

If corporate branding is integrative in character – what then is being integrated? How is integration accomplished? And what are the possible challenges of integration with regard to corporate branding? Some scholars of corporate branding do not discuss the question of integration, but implicitly assume it in various ways (e.g. Keller 2003; Balmer and Gray 2003; Balmer 2001). Other scholars discuss the issue of integration explicitly and relate it to their specific

perspectives (e.g. Schultz et al. 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2003; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006, Ind 1998).

Practically and conceptually, there are numerous integrative possibilities. Concern about corporate-level concepts and their integrative implications has led different scholars to suggest integrative approaches and frameworks for handling corporate challenges (e.g. Balmer and Greyser 2003; Hatch and Schultz 2001; Ind 1998; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006; Einwiller and Will 2002; Proctor and Kitchen 2002). Balmer and Greyser recognise that corporate-level concepts offer a breakthrough in the conceptualisation of organisations as they open a window that throws light on the essence of organisations (2003:2). They demonstrate that corporate-level concepts, like corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate identity, corporate image, etc., denote an area of concern that is strategic and integrative in effect (2003:348).

The question of integration has, in fact, been answered and conceptualised in many and different ways of understanding and managing corporate branding. Corporate branding has been understood as based on a multidisciplinary foundation, including various juxtaposed disciplines, with the challenge of finding ways of integrating these disciplines into a coherent and relevant framework (e.g. Schultz 2005:17); as a matter of corporate brand building that integrates culture and employee behaviour (e.g. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Urde 2003; Harris and de Chernatony 2001); as a question of aligning organisational structures (Hatch and Schultz 2001; Balmer and Gray 2003; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006) exemplified by integrative models that suggest how to handle corporate brand management, for instance the AC2ID model by Balmer and Greyser (2003) and the VCI model by Hatch and Schultz (2001). Related to these perspectives are approaches to integration understood as organising, where



Christensen and Morsing (2005) suggest integration as a question centralising power and expression, and Einwiller and Will (2002) as a question of establishing organisational functions and cross-organisational teams. Looking outside the organisation, Csaba (2005) and Balmer and Gray (2003) suggest integration has an organisation-wide scope including other organisational entities than organisations. Recently, it has been suggested that the concept of enterprise branding integrates all the stakeholder relationships that constitute an organisation (Hatch and Schultz 2008). From different communicative perspectives, Integrated Marketing Communications has suggested integration as controlling and aligning all the communication activities of a company into a coherent and consistent corporate branding effort (Kitchen and Pelsmacker 2004; Proctor and Kitchen 2002). And the internal and external distinction of companies has also led scholars to suggest integrating internal and external messages (Ind 1998), and in later interpretations between internal and external stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007). The examples included are not exhaustive, but they illustrate the scale and scope of some of the prominent and explicit suggestions on understanding the integrative challenges related to corporate branding. All these appealing suggestions have different but also to some extent related assumptions about what is to be integrated, how to integrate it, and the possible rewards of such integration.

In contrast to all the suggestions on how integrative efforts may benefit organisations, there are also scholars that question the possibility of integration and discuss the challenges (e.g. Torp 2009; Christensen et al. 2005; 2008; Christensen and Morsing 2005, 2010). Across these different perspectives and approaches, it is possible to identify various examples of both managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy.

## **The possible limits of managerial integration**

Christensen and Morsing (2005) consider the word corporate literally and point out that the purpose of corporate activities is to embrace and integrate the whole organisation. They argue that corporate activities try to centralise and control other activities. In their view, integration is a synonym for organising. They notice the risk of centralising and see it as a question of panopticism. Panopticism is the systematic control of people through subtle and often unseen forces according to the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Corporate branding initiatives that conceptualise the identity of an organisation into one simple formula or catchy slogan, and through powerful means control and implement it across an organisation, may to some extent be seen as an example of panopticism because such an initiative defines situations and frames words with the purpose of controlling and expressing the meaning of a brand. An example would be when the Type Zero brand material expressed the following about people with diabetes: “People who are Type Zero are empowered, optimistic and live full lives in spite of their disease. Type Zero transcends all cultures, ages, and types of diabetes” (Type Zero brand brochure: 2005). This was an attempt to control the meaning of the initiative. The material said in an indisputable way what Type Zero was and what it was not. Type Zero was not a clinical term denoting a medical illness, but it was a way of talking about and characterising people with diabetes. The brochure can be understood as an example of managerial integration with the purpose of determining the possible interpretation and meaning of the new branding initiative among both the members of the organisation and people with diabetes.

Christensen and Morsing question the aspect of integration and the dominance of corporate activities and argue that the benefits are not always predictable or

general, as is often assumed in management. They argue that corporate activities may lead to differences between what is said and done because everything cannot be controlled according to a corporate perspective which leads them to conclude that hypocrisy might be the possible outcome in some situations. This difference is considered as a question of sincerity in the theory of communicative action which in this context is a question of how a corporate branding strategy is in accordance with the shared beliefs and actions across the organisation. The issue of sincerity will be explained in detail in the next chapter. Christensen and Morsing indicate that corporate activities in general cannot always define a situation in accordance with a privileged perspective, but should reflect on and consider the conditions for defining situations and communicating and acting in an integrated way across an organisation. They thereby emphasise that although corporate matters ideally relate to the whole organisation, it is questionable whether an organisation can express itself in a unified, coherent and consistent way that is in full accordance with members of the organisation. In other words, they seem to suggest that integration between corporate initiatives representing the organisation on the one hand and reactions among members of an organisation on the other hand is a challenge that can cause difficulties with regard to double standards or insincerity. Such integrative challenges relate to how members of the organisation support corporate purposes (see also Urde 2003; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006, 2008). While Christensen and Morsing draw attention to an important issue and the possible limitations with regard to the integration of corporate efforts, they do not suggest how such challenges are supposed to be managed.

### **2.3 Corporate branding and managerial integration**

This section will demonstrate that while corporate branding has its basic roots in marketing, it is also developing into a cross-disciplinary perspective and activity.

It is argued that this development accentuates the need for understanding the possibilities and limitations of managerial integration.

### **Predictions for corporate branding**

Branding has usually been taken care of by marketing, but as new objects of branding have emerged and the domain has expanded, other perspectives have entered the field. New approaches have both complemented and challenged the dominance of marketing. Corporate branding began emerging as a field of study and practice in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Stephen King's seminal article *Brand-Building in the 1990s* (1991) stressed that the challenges of the coming century required a different kind of branding. His article provided, according to Balmer and Greyser, "a synopsis of the attributes, significance, and trails involved in the metamorphosis of the branding concept from being a product-focused construct to one that applies to corporations" (2003:259).

Although not influential at the time, King's insights noting the difference between the product brand and the company brand, as it was initially called, marked the beginning of an increased focus on the challenge of branding organisations. From the beginning, this difference has implicitly and explicitly been a catalyst encouraging academia and practice to contribute to the rather new emerging field. Numerous authors have used the difference to underpin their specific perspective on corporate branding (e.g. Sandstrøm 2003; Balmer 2001; Balmer and Gray 2003, Schultz et al. 2005; Aaker 2004). King managed to outline some significant differences between product branding and corporate branding, such as questions about marketing's influence on corporate branding and the right way to manage

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<sup>9</sup> It was not until around 1995 that the notion of corporate branding was formed. This notion became the preferred label because it is capable of covering not only the organisation and the company as the object of branding, but also a wider variety of corporate entities such as corporations and their subsidiaries, and groups of companies.

corporate branding so that it embraces all members and their activities across an organisation.

Although King's ideas did not resonate significantly among his colleagues of that period, he provides us with an interesting entrance not just to the field of corporate branding but also to integrative managerial challenges, because many of his suggestions are still important today. For instance, he predicted that facing the challenges of the nineties would "involve designing and controlling all aspects of the company, leading people and activities well beyond the traditional skills of the marketing department" (1991:6). This forecast indicates the company-wide significance of corporate branding and that cross-organisational managerial integration could be a subject for further consideration. He also foresaw the need for a multidisciplinary approach, which today is the focus among a number of contemporary researchers that try to work out comprehensive conceptions that can embrace (or should I say integrate) the field of branding (e.g. Schultz et al. 2005, Balmer and Greyser 2003). He even predicted that company brands would be complex, require cross-organisational support, and have greater strategic impact than their product brand counterparts.

While King provided a range of interesting considerations and indeed anticipated developments to come, he did not clarify the implications of his predictions. If one follows the ideas from King about company branding and controlling all aspects of the company but also about leading people and activities well beyond the traditional skills of the marketing department, it seems close to a suggestion about how corporate branding could be understood as both a managerial and a social process in an organisation. To put King's insight into perspective, I will address some important marketing assumptions influencing corporate branding. The

purpose is to emphasise some aspects of a marketing perspective that may illustrate the possibilities and challenges of managerial integration.

### **Marketing's influence on corporate branding**

Marketing's influence in corporate branding is inevitable and still clings to many perspectives on corporate branding and influences how they become managed. According to marketing professor, Philip Kotler (1997:xxxiv), marketing's disciplinary basis is a combination of management, economics, mathematics and behavioural science. Kotler only devotes little reflection as to how these various disciplines integrate and influence marketing. He notes that economics provides marketing with concepts and tools for seeking out the optimal solutions in the use of scarce resources; mathematics provides an exact language for relating variables; behavioural science provides the tools for understanding consumer behaviour, while management supplies the guidelines and tools for satisfactory solutions for the issues facing managers. However, this conception of marketing does not include any discipline that focuses on the social processes among the members of an organisation although these could be relevant, except for the influence from behaviourism. All things considered, the disciplinary basis of marketing is rather coherent and consistent as it primarily relies on a quantifiable science.

Generally, marketing and some marketing-oriented perspectives on corporate branding rely upon this disciplinary basis. Such marketing-oriented perspectives start by limiting corporate branding to questions of how to optimise means to a fixed end. This is, for example, emphasised by behaviourism, which supposes that human behaviour can be predicted in accordance with a scheme of stimuli and response, so that branding becomes a calculable and manageable endeavour. If behaviourism could in fact determine the behaviour of human beings, then the outcome of a branding effort would be rather easy to forecast. Marketing's

disciplinary basis, unifying four almost entirely quantifiable sciences, tends to reduce the individual to a predictable calculable being. Some researchers tend to regard management of corporate branding solely from the perspective of marketing and thereby reduce the social aspects of branding to a question of control and strategic management internally and externally (e.g. Keller 2003; Balmer and Greyser 2003). However, this is questionable because several characteristics of corporate branding are qualitative and social in character, as observed by some contemporary researchers (Gjølås-Andersen 2001; Gjølås-Andersen and Karmark 2005; Ind & Bjerke 2007; Antorini and Schultz 2005; Hatch and Schultz 2008; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008). From a critical point of view, one may reflect on the limits of marketing and the implications in the following way: “Strategic management should not necessarily just focus on the ideological effects and the consequences for managers [...], but should also investigate the substantive effects of the subjects acting according to the strategic management concepts” (Levy et al. 2003:100).

Even the best calculations cannot predict the outcome of branding because there are too many unknown aspects not accounted for. Professor of marketing, Kevin Lane Keller, who builds on a marketing perspective, introduces his book, *Strategic Brand Management*, in the following way: “Branding is not rocket science” and continues “even if someone were to follow all the guidelines in the book – and all the guidelines were properly specified – the success and failure of a brand strategy would still depend largely on how exactly the guidelines were translated into strategy and how the strategy was implemented. Nevertheless, good marketing is about improving the odds for success” (2003:xv). Even Keller seems to recognise the limits and possibilities of brand management. Although coming from a marketing perspective, Keller seems to suggest that he is aware of the difficult question of translating guidelines into a strategy and then implementing it

properly, because an organisational context is difficult to include in a marketing framework suggesting a method of one fits all. When he further suggests that branding is about improving the odds for success, he indicates that there are, in fact, aspects outside the influence of marketing. Among these aspects is marketing's focus on how to integrate an organisation and its members in a corporate branding strategy. Integration according to marketing is primarily an ambition of advancing its functional importance within an organisation. Let me indicate this ambition and its limits.

### **Integration according to a marketing perspective**

It is often spelled out that modern organisations face a world of complexity. When trying to manage this complexity they differentiate internally so that specialised functions and departments can cope with different tasks. In this way, internal organisational differentiation corresponds to external complexity (Luhmann 2000; Lawrence and Lorch 1967). Models like the value chain (Porter 1985), the balanced scorecard (Kaplan and Norton 1992), and others demonstrate a simplified version on the internal organisational differentiation which should be able to meet the challenges of external complexity. Since complexity is reduced by internal organisational differentiation, organisations consist of many functions and departments that handle various tasks based on different disciplines and rationalities.

Marketing is normally anchored in a department that takes care of a specific function in the value chain. Phillip Kotler (1997) outlines various roles of marketing in an organisation from a functional contribution as a part of a value chain to a central function in an organisation. At the highest level, he considers marketing as a managerial integrative and strategic function organised around the customer to which all other organisational activities should be subsumed.



Although marketing is an important activity for organisations, it has not generally been elevated to a superior managerial and organisational function turning all other functions into support functions, as Kotler suggests. Rather, marketing activities have remained located in a function with tactical and operational influence tied to its functional remit. Some scholars on corporate branding notice the limitations of marketing, like King did (1991), and use them to advance their particular area of interest (e.g. Schultz 2005; Ind and Bjerke 2007).

If corporate brand management is based on a marketing perspective, this may imply that the possible strategic and cross-organisational impact of corporate branding is limited, as well as the understanding of the internal social processes following from a corporate branding effort. The social processes of corporate branding may in fact challenge the assumptions of a marketing perspective because marketing has little to say about these processes from its disciplinary background and strategic management approach.

### **Integrated Marketing Communications**

Recently, the question of how marketing can escape its functional iron cage has gained increased attention through the perspective of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) (e.g. Pickton and Broderick 2001; Kitchen and de Pelsmacker 2004; Thorsen and Moore 1996; Schultz et al. 1993) or in short Integrated Communications (IC) (e.g. Schultz and Kitchen 2000; Torp 2009, Christensen et al. 2008). Various researchers have repeated the ambition of making marketing a central function in an organisation. Reminding us of Kotler's view, IMC and IC advocate an integrated approach to all communicative activities in a company. IMC or IC generally accentuate the need for integrating all other activities under a strategic marketing perspective, thereby also eliminating the old gap between PR and marketing (Kotler and Mindak 1978). IMC uses integration

as a unifying concept in which other communication activities are brought together and assumed to match a marketing logic. IMC promotes a long list of advantages in taking an integrated approach to communications in organisations, and uses this as a major driver in the theoretical and practical advancement of the subject of integration. Coordination, coherence and consistency across all functions that communicate are often emphasised as the advantages of IMC. However, some scholars (Christensen et al. 2009; Christensen et al. 2008; Torp 2009) have questioned the possibility and rewards of IMC based on an argument about how the communicative assumptions of IMC neglect recent developments within contemporary communications. “While representing a significant communication ideal, integration in communications is simultaneously beyond reach – at least if the full process of communication is taken into proper consideration” (Christensen et al. 2009: 117). They further consider the tight managerial control suggested in the IMC perspective as limiting, with the negative consequences of organisational inability to react to changing environments.

King’s insights about company branding requiring skills beyond the marketing department are reflected in recent developments in the corporate branding field (e.g. Schultz et al. 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007) and in the critique of the IMC perspective (e.g. Christensen et al. 2008; Torp 2009). Although marketing’s ambition about being a central cross-organisational function has gained increased attention under the IMC approach, it is questionable whether it can achieve its ambition without a broader disciplinary basis that also includes the recent developments in other fields, for instance the communications field. So marketing is still tied to its functional remit in the value chain and therefore often also located in a marketing department or function in an organisation with limited influence on the whole organisation, despite its ambitions. IMC’s suggestion of centralising and controlling all communication activities in organisation may also

face challenges from other disciplines and functions in organisations that manage corporate purposes, such as human resources, corporate branding, and corporate communication. A corporate activity, in fact, requires the ability establish an internal cross-organisational understanding to involve members across an organisation, which is not only beyond the skills of the marketing department and its functional and disciplinary basis, but also beyond managerial control (Hulberg 2006:67). “Centralised control is not only difficult and costly to impose when complexity is high [...], it may also be an oxymoron in organisations that value mutual trust and commitment. When people are managed and controlled in a top-down manner, they rarely feel impelled to contribute with new ideas and suggestions” (Christensen et al. 2008:437).

It will be difficult to unite and control corporate activities like corporate communications and corporate branding according to a marketing perspective not only because they are built on a another and broader disciplinary basis with cross-organisational implications, but also because marketing cannot offer developed suggestions about how to manage the internal social processes that are a part of such cross-organisational ambitions. By contrast, recent developments within the field of corporate branding build on a cross-disciplinary basis that also has the ambition of a being or becoming a cross-organisational activity.

### **Strategic perspectives on corporate branding and managerial control**

If one considers the titles of books about branding published over the last 15 years, it seems that King was right when he envisaged that the strategic impact of corporate branding would become greater. Instead of being simple identifiers or labels for products concerned about tactical and operational matters, brands and branding are increasingly being regarded as of strategic importance in theory and practice. Book titles, indeed, indicate that branding has developed into a strategic

concern that involves the whole organisation and not just the marketing department (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008). This implies that the role of branding has become a strategic concern for the whole company. In fact, for some companies, like Branson's Virgin, branding has even become the core *raison d'être* of the company. Strategic perspectives on corporate branding that argue for the importance of branding to the whole organisation often assume that a corporate branding strategy will automatically achieve the purpose and the potential benefits in an uncomplicated way like a traditional marketing process (e.g. Keller 2000; Kapferer 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000).

Corporate branding is frequently framed as a question of getting a managerial strategy right, based on an assumption about how the right strategy will lead to the predicted outcome (e.g. Keller 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000). Understanding corporate branding in this way builds on an instrumental form of rationality which focuses on a means–end perspective. Questions about effective means to reach corporate goals are then answered with knowledge which considers corporate branding as merely a managerial and technical question that regards the organisation as an object which needs managing to achieve a given purpose. This approach is common in marketing, where linear means–end thinking is dominant (e.g. Kotler 1997; Keller 2003).

When instrumental rationality is dominant in corporate brand management, it focuses on finding the most effective means to accomplish its purpose. Leveraging concepts and campaigns in the organisation are often seen as a way and an automatic process to get support of the organisational the members. Such a corporate brand management approach reduces the organisation and its members to being parts of what could be called a “well-oiled machine”. The adequacy of

relying on this approach may be questioned, since organisations do not resemble machines and campaigns do not automatically create understanding among the members of an organisation (e.g. Schultz et al. 2005; Urde 2003; de Chernatony 2002).

Strategy thinker, Henry Mintzberg, has pointed out some fundamental fallacies of strategic planning and control. His main argument is that strategy cannot be planned because planning is about analysis and strategy is about synthesis (Mintzberg 1994). This controversial statement does not mean that he rules out the possibility of strategy, but rather that he argues against a one-sided conception of strategy as a flawless instrument tailored to managing organisations. Instead, he claims that strategy cannot be seen as the best way of doing things but can sometimes be a good way, which needs to be matched with appropriate contexts. He argues against the opinion that strategic planning needs to be detached from operations in order to be truly strategic. Others in the field of strategy have also questioned the instrumental and linear model of strategy, but Mintzberg has “been particularly prominent in arguing that the actuality of a strategy is better characterised as an emergent rather than planned organisational phenomenon. Mintzberg emphasizes the recursive processes of learning, negotiation and adaptation by which a strategy is actually created, and suggests that the planning–implementation distinction is unsustainable” (Levy et al. 2003:95). Mintzberg demonstrated that a well-functioning strategy is influenced by the social processes in an organisation. His conclusions may seem controversial from perspectives that start with framing corporate branding as an effort that can be managed using a linear strategy, but they do emphasise aspects outside the control of strategic planning that influence corporate branding (e.g. Bjerke 2007; de Chernatony 2002; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008).

What seems to be missing in some perspectives on corporate brand management is a reflection on how it is possible to conceive and manage a strategy that ideally integrates the whole organisation in a valid way. This problem arises because a corporate branding process relates to the members of an organisation, who may hold different beliefs and interpretations about the organisation and how it should be branded. Such beliefs are important because they either support or challenge the corporate branding effort. Schultz et al. (2005) note that organisational culture, stakeholder relationships, and employee involvement were all neglected in the first approaches to corporate branding, which were significantly influenced by marketing. They further point out that the field was basically divided up into a product-driven tactical and visually oriented approach and a strategic and integrated approach where the former approach blocked an important conceptual discussion of corporate branding as a strategic concept (2005:13). Recognising corporate branding as an activity with a strategic impact on the whole organisation raises other challenges than those that can possibly be controlled and accounted for in a marketing approach.

Strategic approaches to corporate branding are somehow at a crossroads here, which opens the possibility for a changed understanding of what it is to manage corporate branding strategically. This may be seen as reducing the control-oriented approaches framed as strategic to a question of tactics and operational matters. Understanding the strategic implications of corporate branding by taking contemporary conceptual developments into account, as indicated by Schultz et al. (2005), may change the meaning of the term strategy in this context from being driven as a superior discipline, like marketing, primarily based on linear means-end assumptions and instrumental rationality, to becoming a cross-disciplinary and cross-organisational way of thinking and trying to take account of the processes that create corporate branding across both the internal and external parts of the

organisation, including marketing and other disciplines (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007).

This change of strategic thinking and Mintzberg's point are particularly relevant to corporate disciplines and practices which aim at having the whole organisation as their object. Various scholars suggest the members of organisations do not automatically integrate a strategy in a linear process because members may hold different beliefs about its relevance and how to integrate it in their context (e.g. Schultz 2005; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008; Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005). Hence, a corporate branding strategy is influenced by mutual understanding and beliefs among the members of an organisation (e.g. Davis and Dunn 2002; Ind 2004; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Hatch and Schultz 2001). A strategic linear logic may contribute with planning the representation of an organisation in a branding process, but it can explain and anticipate neither how a strategy emerges through corporate brand management nor how the members of an organisation will react.

### **A strategic perspective on the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding**

Some scholars on corporate branding primarily concentrates on the strategic and external aspects of corporate branding (Keller 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Kapferer 2004). This is noteworthy because the external aspects of corporate branding are outside the control of the organisation to a large extent. A similar argument was also a key point in Ronald Coase's article from 1937, "Theory of the firm". He asked the simple question of why companies exist when the market is considered to be the perfect mechanism for exchange and coordination of services and products. The simple answer was that organisations and companies are capable of coordinating and integrating activities in a more

competent and competitive way than the free market. This point is classical and emphasises the importance of recognising how the organisation and its members are considered in strategic efforts like corporate branding.

Some other scholars recognise that it is impossible to predict and control the success internally and externally when a corporate branding strategy is implemented because contextual circumstances influence success, such as how the branding processes emerge (e.g. de Chernatony and Cottam 2008; Schultz et al. 2005). What is noticeable is that it seems that the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding that are, to a certain extent, more likely to be managed, are taken for granted in some parts of the literature based on an assumption that a corporate branding endeavour is automatically shared and understood across an organisation (e.g. Keller 2003; Joachimstahler and Aaker 2000; Aaker 2004). But relying on implicit assumptions or tacit knowledge as to how to manage and mobilise the organisation in a corporate branding effort is a precarious matter because it cannot be taken for granted without making an effort to understand the social conditions for integrating it in an organisation (Schultz 2005; Hatch and de Chernatony, Ind 2004; Davis and Dunn 2002; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008, Harris and de Chernatony 2001).

This aspect is further accentuated, if a strategic initiative expects that every member of an organisation should act as a brand ambassador (Ind 2004). Corporate branding is not self-explanatory and neither is every member of an organisation automatically an expert on corporate branding. In fact, normally only a few members of an organisation are experts and possess profound knowledge about corporate branding. Furthermore, there is no automatic mechanism which ensures that a corporate branding strategy is well understood and implemented in



an organisation, although even grand strategies depend on organisational support and anchoring as pointed out by Mintzberg (1994).

Ind and Bjerke (2007:151) refer to an interesting research result by Gallup, an international research company, which explored employee engagement among US employees in 2005. Among the results, was the notable fact that 69% of the employees were not engaged and psychologically committed to their jobs - which was explained as employees that were “sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but not energy and passion – into their work” (Ibid.). This may illustrate the retention and development of employees, but it may also indicate how difficult it is to create commitment and engagement for corporate strategies like corporate branding.

Several scholars elaborate on the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding and emphasise that they cannot be taken for granted but require careful consideration (e.g. Ind 2004; Gjøls-Andersen 2001; Davis and Dunn 2002; Harris and de Chernatony 2001, de Chernatony and Cottam 2008; Ind & Bjerke 2007, Schultz 2005; Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005), but it is much more common that scholars recognise the importance of internal aspects, but neglect to explain these aspects and how they relate to managing corporate branding in an organisation (e.g. Keller 2003; Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Kapferer 2004).

While Aaker and Joachimstahler, for example, suggest that “a successful brand strategy needs to capture the soul of the brand, and this soul resides in the organisation” (2000:41), they fail to say how this “soul” is to be identified and managed. Logically speaking souls are esoteric and cannot be managed or captured. To engage the organisation behind the brand, they suggest using internal role models which “are stories, programmes, events or people that perfectly

represent the brand identity – they hit the bull’s eye” (2000:76). However, it also to some extent remains implicit how these role models become brand representatives.

In his book about Strategic Brand Management, Kevin Lane Keller recognises that internal branding is equally important as external branding understood as “positioning the brand internally, that is, the manner by which the brand positioning is explained and communicated internally” (Keller 2003:156). He argues that “companies need to engage in a continual open dialogue with their employees” (2003:159) and “branding should be perceived as participatory” (ibid.). But although Keller underlines the internal aspects as equally important as the external, his book is predominantly about external branding with the consumer in focus. In fact, of the 788 pages only around 20 pages focus on the internal organisational dimension and these mostly refer to the work of others. At first glance Keller seems to offer an approach with some thorough considerations about the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding. But a closer look reveals that the participatory open dialogue with the employees is a top-down perspective of just informing the employees. Furthermore, he appreciates that “some firms have pushed B2E (business-to-employee) programmes through corporate intranets and other means” (ibid.). Keller’s coverage of the internal dimension is limited and it is therefore difficult to get a clear picture of how informing employees and pushing B2E programmes match his suggestion of an open participatory dialogue.

In arguing for a participatory approach to corporate branding, Ind and Bjerke illustrate the limitations and potential of marketing’s role in internal brand building: “If marketing has a strategically strong role it may have the power to influence decision-making in these other areas [those mentioned areas are finance, logistics, research and development, engineering and sales], but it will remain a

process of negotiation that is dependent on the depth and quality of brand understanding and commitment in the organisation and also the ability of marketers to influence the integration of the brand into the organisational fabric. When corporate cultures are more brand-resistant, even effective marketing analysis is no guarantee of the ability to align and deliver the 4Ps. The power of other organisational viewpoints can work against integration and undermine brand building, so that it is equated only with promotion” (2007:42f).

Managerial integration understood as controlling a corporate branding effort from a superior Archimedean point is impossible based on the previous conceptual and practical discussion of assumptions influencing the possibilities and challenges for contemporary management of corporate branding. King was right, when he envisaged the development and challenges to come.

### **Corporate branding as a cross-disciplinary and cross-organisational process**

Apart from the heritage from marketing, King also foresaw that contemporary perspectives on corporate branding would rely on a broader disciplinary basis. Besides marketing, Schultz identified organisations theory, strategy and finance, identity theory, and communication as important disciplines contributing to the field (2005:31). These disciplines have different agendas and even conflicting interests with regard to managing corporate branding. She notes that this can lead to dilemmas and even paradoxes in theory and practice (Ibid.:54). Schultz et al. (2005) suggest that the tensions between the various perspectives should be kept alive and propose a balanced approach that focuses on the processes of corporate branding rather than the specific perspectives. In further consideration of the state of affairs in the field, Schultz et al. observe that “corporate branding was translated into practice before the conceptual foundation was sufficiently clarified” (Schultz et al. 2005:12). They argue that “due to its cross-disciplinary origin,

corporate branding on the one hand becomes a shared point of reference for a number of convergent developments within each of the disciplines, and on the other hand the notion of corporate branding is influenced by strong centrifugal forces each seeking to bend the concept towards their own point of view” (Ibid.).

There is a tendency towards freeing corporate branding from marketing’s dominating influence and recognising the potential of a multidisciplinary basis. As many perspectives try to influence and specify the remit and meaning of corporate branding, it begins to resemble other meta-concepts like management, communication, etc., which acquire meaning according to the specific perspective that employs them. Such a cross-disciplinary basis is a challenge for the management of corporate branding because it creates a question of how to balance and integrate contributions from the different disciplines in a constructive way. Such integration cannot be forced through as indicated, but needs to be based on some deliberate consideration and argumentation to make it credible without evoking resistance or turf wars between the disciplines and function. Actually, it seems to be necessary to establish a degree of *mutual understanding* on what corporate branding is and how it should be managed at the conceptual as well as the practical level with respect for the contributing disciplines. “The challenge in the move to the second wave of corporate branding is to find ways of integrating these disciplines into a coherent and relevant framework for corporate branding. This framework must transcend the influence of each discipline and avoid an oversimplified conception of branding” (Schultz et al. 2005:17).

The challenge for management of corporate branding in practice somehow reflects the disciplinary challenge emphasised by Schultz et al. and therefore becomes a question of what perspective to rely on or how to accomplish coordination between different perspectives, instead of just managing one superior perspective.

Such a challenge is difficult because of the different perspectives based on different assumptions with different beliefs about the right way to understand and manage corporate branding. This may cause a tension between managerial integration focused on control and social integration among members of the organisation and aimed at reaching mutual understanding.

At Novo Nordisk, for instance, I experienced internal differences in the way corporate branding was understood related the different backgrounds in different departments and affiliates, for example between the people in the US, who were primarily marketing or sales-oriented, and the people at headquarters in Denmark, who were oriented towards the overall reputation of the company. In fact, it may be almost impossible for a corporate branding department to impose its specific perspective by force, even though it is supported by top management, because a corporate branding effort cannot avoid being susceptible to different interpretations as shown by the Type Zero story (see also de Chernatony and Cottam 2006, 2008). Although Aaker and Joachimstahler are influenced by a marketing perspective, they note that managing corporate brands requires exceptional coordination and motivational skills, because the brand manager has no direct line authority over the people involved in implementing the brand across the organisation (2000:6). This is not a key issue in their writings, but nevertheless they observe that it is important that everybody in an organisation understands what the corporate branding is about. However, the lack of formal authority, the multidisciplinary background, and the cross-organisational outreach of corporate branding mean that it can be difficult to establish a clear understanding of corporate branding and define what it means even from a superior managerial position. When King envisaged that company branding should control activities well beyond the marketing department, he neither considered the possible

difficulties of managing corporate branding across an organisation nor did he specify the possibilities and limitation of achieving control.

“The organisation has to accept the virtues of lower control in exchange for higher commitment” (Ind and Bjerke 2007:111). This statement may appropriately indicate a dilemma that summarises and characterises the tension indicated between managerial and social integration, before I proceed to discuss how mutual understanding and social integration influence corporate branding.

## **2.4 Corporate branding, mutual understanding and social integration**

If we instead turn to those scholars who discuss and try to account for the internal organisational aspects of a corporate branding strategy, it appears that they, in various ways, focus on how the employees understand and become involved in the social process of integrating corporate branding in the organisation (e.g. Ind 2004, Davis and Dunn 2002; Gjøls-Andersen 2001; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Ind & Bjerke 2007; de Chernatony 2002; Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008). The issue of understanding is often not considered thoroughly or discussed explicitly, but is rather either mentioned now and again in relation to internal brand building and corporate brand management or, most frequently, just implicitly assumed.

Let me briefly recall that the communicative perspective employed here focuses on how validity may establish the mutual understanding that creates social integration of a corporate branding effort in an organisation. This focus is rarely explicitly discussed in the branding literature, but there are some indications. There is a difference between mutual understanding and just understanding. While mutual understanding emphasises the reciprocal assumptions exemplified through intersubjective agreement about validity, understanding does not in the same way

underline this reciprocal condition. Understanding is frequently either a question of corporate branding managers that need to understand the importance of the employees and the culture for the corporate brand or a question of the need for employees to understand the brand, as in the Type Zero story. However, my interest here is mutual understanding with a focus on the reciprocal condition because you cannot order or control understanding either way (Hulberg 2006:67; Christensen et al. 2009; Habermas 1984). This section focuses on mutual understanding between a corporate branding effort and the members of an organisation, including focusing on the related validity claims of intelligibility, fact, norms and sincerity to the extent that these terms and related issues are emphasised in parts of the literature on internal aspects of building and managing corporate branding.

When scholars consider the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding related to understanding among members of the organisation, they typically emphasise or mention various issues, such as establishing participation (e.g. Ind 2004; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Harris and de Chernatony 2001), involvement (e.g. Gotsi and Andriopoulos 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2003; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Urde 2003; Christensen et al. 2008), identification (e.g. Einwiller and Will 2002; Harris and de Chernatony 2001), enactment (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001), and sometimes understanding (e.g. Ind 2004; Davis and Dunn 2002; Hatch and Schultz 2001) with regard to not only the corporate brand but also the corporate branding processes.

The rewards that may follow from managing these issues and getting your internal act together, as it is sometimes called from a managerial point of view, are numerous, such as reducing the gap between the brand promises of the organisation and the performance of its members (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2003;

Harris and de Chernatony 2001), creating brand ambassadors and people that live the brand (e.g. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Hulberg 2006), enabling people to deliver the brand by supportive behaviour (e.g. King 1991; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Hatch and Schultz 2001, 2003; Davis and Dunn 2002; Gotsi and Andriopoulos 2007), getting commitment and engagement (e.g. Balmer and Gray 2003; Urde 2003; Hatch and Schultz 2003; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Ind and Bjerke 2007), obtaining consensus (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Torp 2009), and making sure that the organisation achieves an coherent, consistent and coordinated corporate brand (e.g. Christensen et al. 2008; Torp 2009; Einwiller and Will 2002; Bernstein 2003; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Davis and Dunn 2002). The relationship between the first issues mentioned and the rewards is not necessarily a linear causal one. Involvement, for instance, does not always create brand supportive behaviour that is coherent and consistent, but depends on how the members of an organisation both understand and possibly agree with the proposed branding effort. Type Zero, for example demonstrated, that involvement and dialogue at the meeting did not create the expected results.

### **The challenge of establishing mutual understanding**

Corporate branding implies an assumption about the possibility of an organisation acting and expressing itself as an integrated whole to some extent; or at least an assumption about unfolding a corporate umbrella (Kitchen and Schultz 2001) under which interpretations of the organisational identity are made possible within certain limits of the corporate brand. The *integrative* ambition in *corporate* initiatives can be difficult to accomplish because especially big organisations consist of many people with different activities and interpretations in local contexts across countries, functions and departments (e.g. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Christensen et al. 2008; Torp 2009).



Managing corporate branding is about making certain choices about which characteristics to include and exclude in the representation of the organisation. Consequently, a corporate branding initiative is a decision about a preferred representation that integrates those qualities of an organisation that are considered as the most appropriate for the brand while at the same time neglecting others. Ind and Bjerke suggest that “branding is concerned with a synopsis, not the whole story, and in creating a synopsis things are inevitably lost” (2007:25). But branding is also about how the whole story relates to the brand, as demonstrated in the different suggestions on how to align the behaviour of employees with the brand (Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006). While the tension between the brand as a representation of the whole organisation, and the organisation as an expression of the brand opens a gap for multiple interpretations, it also indicates the potential for reaching mutual understanding.

How, then, can a corporate branding department conceive a corporate brand so it represents the whole organisation and its members? And how is it possible that such a representation will be a credible expression of the organisation? If every employee and manager should ideally be able to support such a representation of the organisation, then it raises the questions of recognition and validity among the employees and managers. One could say that ideally every member should be able to see himself or herself as an author of the representation. The problem of representation is that there is no single or simple way of integrating everybody’s beliefs about the brand, despite the fact that corporate branding may ideally build on such an assumption, because members of the organisation may hold different interpretations about the brand (Harris and de Chernatony 2001:442; Davis and Dunn 2002; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008).

People across an organisation may understand the organisational identity differently and react according to their own interpretation of the corporate brand based on their social and functional background, which may “result in inconsistent brand-related understandings” (Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006:774). A representation is therefore related to interpretations and beliefs among the members of an organisation, but is not necessarily consistent with them, because “we never know how employees evaluate ‘realities’ “(ibid.:778). A central assumption in the part of branding literature that focuses on members of the organisation is that they need to act in accordance with and support the brand (e.g. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006; Ind 2004). While it is rather common assumption from a managerial point of view, there is also recognition of both the challenges and limitations of how the members may then actually understand a brand and a branding effort.

Davis and Dunn, for example, emphasise that “getting your employees to understand the brand promise and align their behaviours around that promise is an essential part of building a brand-driven business that delivers sustainable, profitable growth” (2002:222). Control and managerial integration is indicated here but in fact they modify the possible degree of control. They further argue that “one of the most overlooked drivers of behaviour is the spoken and unspoken beliefs employees hold as truths about an organisation” (2002:224), and that these beliefs determine decisions in the organisation’s day-to-day activities. Through the concept of brand assimilation, which “involves developing a set of activities designed to increase the probability that employees will behave in a way that is consistent with the brand over time” (2002:222), Davis and Dunn suggest a way of influencing these beliefs and truths that are beyond control. “At its core, brand assimilation involves educating employees about the brand and inspiring them to behave in a way that is consistent with it” (2002:225). By suggesting education,

understanding, truth and beliefs as drivers of the brand, Davis and Dunn implicitly relate to the theory in sociology where these aspects influence social integration (e.g. Parson 1951; Habermas 1987, 2001). They also somewhat reflect the argument about validity, mutual understanding and social integration in this project, as will be elaborated in the next chapter.

They admit that there can be barriers to brand assimilation: “In some organizations, you cannot assume that every employee is intrinsically motivated to exhibit brand-driven behaviours just because they are pointed in the right direction” (2002:225). They indicate that situations occur with a possible difference between the official corporate branding strategy and the reactions among the employees. Davis and Dunn’s position seems to indicate that the employees can be influenced, but at the same time addresses the challenge and question of how. They suggest various ways to influence employees but do not suggest that it is just a matter of power and controlling how the employees understand the brand. To some extent they recognise that the processes are reciprocal and thereby support the argument in this project about how strategies do not automatically get integrated into organisations.

Besides emphasising understanding of the brand as central, they also consider understanding of the corporate branding process as important and underline how this relates to the context of the employees and their activities. “With great branded companies, all employees clearly understand what their brand’s promise is and what role they need to play in bringing that promise to life. This understanding allows each employee to know what decisions or actions will reinforce the brand or denigrate the brand relative to their day-to-day experiences” (Davis and Dunn 2002:2). Davis and Dunn suggest that a clear understanding of the brand promise is important for employee actions and further elaborate on what

employees then should be able to understand in the following way: “[They] have to understand what a brand is, what your brand stands for, and what their role is in delivering the brand promise. (...) You must then present a persuasive and convincing argument about the value of the brand and ensure that the employees understand the impact of the brand and its positioning on their individual activities” (2002:223). Although Davis and Dunn’s sometimes express their considerations about understanding in slightly prescriptive terms that may indicate an intention of trying to control how members understand the brand, they also explicitly emphasise the importance of providing convincing arguments to the employees. Their concern about arguments and the individual context point towards the mutual aspects of the corporate branding processes. While Davis and Dunn’s considerations about the internal organisational aspects of corporate branding indicate a practical way of managing the challenge, they also implicitly relate to a balance between the possibilities and limits of managerial and social integration.

They do not assume that the members of an organisation will automatically support a corporate branding strategy, but suggest an approach that may increase the probability of understanding and support over time. Their argument may support my argument about how reactions among the members, understood in terms of the coupled validity claims, are important in underpinning a corporate branding strategy. The beliefs among the members of an organisation may not only be the drivers, but in fact be the basic foundation of a corporate branding effort.

## **Understanding and the possible gap between a corporate branding effort and members of an organisation**

Other scholars also consider understanding as important, often in relation to the possible gap between a corporate branding effort and members of an organisation (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2001; Harris and de Chernatony 2001). The possible gap, often articulated together with the challenges of implementing a brand and various ways to reduce it, indicates that branding efforts are initiated and executed to some extent in recognition of the challenges involved in getting the members of the organisation to understand and support a branding effort. When a branding effort is developed and executed with only minor participation by the members of an organisation, it may lead to a deeper gap than in cases where the members of the organisation are closely involved in the processes of developing and executing a branding effort. While the interest in the gap and the advantages of overcoming it is noteworthy, it seems that the challenges are rather complex.

Harris and de Chernatony, for example, emphasise the importance of employees, by noting that they “can either reinforce a brand's advertised values or, if inconsistent with these values, undermine the credibility of advertised messages. It is therefore crucial to look inside the organisation to consider how employees' values and behaviour can be aligned with a brand's desired values” (2001:442). A difference can cause issues concerning the sincerity of an organisational expression. A similar point about reducing a potential gap between is noted by Davis and Dunn: “The marketplace will recognize if you do not have your internal act together” (2002:24). In their comparison of Fortune Magazine's ranking of “best companies to work for” with Fortune's list of “most admired companies”, they note that the same companies are at the top of both lists. From this, they infer that the companies at the top of both lists understand the power of their brand, both internally and externally.

In a suggestion for a tool kit for managing corporate brands, Hatch and Schultz recognise the gap as possible misalignment between vision and culture “when senior management moves the company in a direction that employees don’t understand and support” (2001:130). They further elaborate on the different subcultures of a company and suggest that “the engineers in your R&D department will have a different set of values and priorities than those held by the sales and marketing department. Top managers need to be sure that the vision that inspires them – they, too, have a subculture – will resonate throughout the company. A vision that speaks only to the R&D staff will not inspire a company that is dependent on salespeople. The key is to understand the organizational values that are shared across the company. Successful corporate visions pick up on those shared values” (2001:130). Hatch and Schultz suggest a way to handle this challenge by asking some diagnostic questions that reveal how management can understand the differences and thereby close the gap. They recognise the possible misalignment between the culture and vision as a vital challenge, and indicate that management needs to recognise how different understandings influence the brand. This is also indicated when Hatch and Schultz suggest that the brand is rooted in the organisational identity which cannot be changed overnight through branding efforts (2008:47). “Convincing employees to deliver on promises that affect how they see themselves is a much bigger challenge. Whether you aspire to change the organizational culture or to profit from the unique aspects of your organizational identity, knowing who you are as an organization and how your stakeholders see you is a first step toward successful corporate branding” (2008:47). The relevant point here is that “knowing who you are” as an organisation can only be based on a degree of mutual understanding about the organisation among its stakeholders. Knowing something about something, for instance about an organisation, relates to a basis of intersubjectively anchored understanding, some would call it socially

constructed knowledge, which is susceptible to validity among those stakeholders that may support or challenge such understanding. Such understanding does not emerge arbitrarily but is socially anchored among those who recognise the accepted “truths” about an organisation.

Inherent in the Hatch and Schultz discussion is an indication of the double challenge of managing brands that in this project is reflected in my focus on mutual understanding as reciprocal: “The problem that most brand managers eventually face: to manage a brand effectively, you must either adapt the organisational culture to the brand or adapt the brand to the culture. Either way, getting the brand behind the employees is an important first step” (2008:147). This implies that the employees, the culture and the related understandings anchored in the organisation cannot be circumvented or controlled in the pursuit of a corporate branding: “Many managers mistakenly believe that the deep layers of culture are amenable to the techniques by which tangible assets managed” (2008:136).

Hatch and Schultz develop a perspective that can be seen as a recognition of the reciprocal dependency between a corporate branding effort and the employees, when they suggest getting the brand behind the employees. The importance of the employees moves into the centre to which a branding effort relates. This is in contrast to the way other branding scholars consider the relation between the corporate brand and the employees. The “living-the-brand” concept, for instance, to some extent suggests putting the brand behind the employees because it is understood as a process in which the employees’ commitment is based on their ability to understand and identify with the corporate brand (Ind 2004:123). “Living the brand requires commitment and sincerity, and that means that it has to permeate the whole organization” (Ind 2004:125). However, Ind also seems to indicate the challenges between managerial and social integration when he

suggests “the more participative the definition process, the greater the chance that people will feel like the brand is their own” (2004:123).

Hatch and Schultz (2008) provide an approach that balances the need for control with the social sides of the organisation. They turn the conventional way of approaching the employees on its head in a way that, from my perspective, moves the question of both managerial and social integration into the centre of how branding can be understood. This is quite clear in these two quotes: “Putting your brand behind the employees may be the single most important thing you can do. Only when your employees blend corporate brand thinking with their daily work practices will customers experience the significance of your brand in their lives” (2008:229). “When culture aligns with vision, employees personalize top management’s aspirations for the organization. They have the aspiration to go well beyond following the boss’s orders; they bring creativity into their work and corporate branding efforts” (Hatch and Schultz 2008:128). Hatch and Schultz indicate that the employees are more fundamental to the branding process than the brand, and most importantly they also say that the brand is much more likely to be managed than the employees.

“You cannot tell people to believe in something” (Ind and Bjerke 2007:115) because beliefs among members of an organisation about, for example, corporate branding are based on convincing arguments and not on simple managerial control about what to believe in (e.g. Eriksen 2000). “Once companies recognise their internal audiences as mature and sophisticated, they are less tempted to indulge in wish-based initiatives and concentrate instead on reality” (Ind 1997:98). And such a reality must be based on mutual understanding among the members to be recognised as “real”. Sophisticated audiences most likely only involve themselves in branding efforts that they understand and believe in accordance with the



believed reality and perspectives for the future. It can be a difficult process to establish a brand based on what people believes in, but Ind suggests that the advantages are worth the effort. “If the words used to define a brand are not authentic to the organization they will never become intuitive. Intuition can only occur when the brand is an accurate reflection of what people believe. Thus defining a brand is a search for truth” (Ind 2004:85). The social processes that establish validity with regard to “reality”, “truth”, mutual understanding, and how we define situations and relate to the world and people around us, are complex matters that Habermas’ theory of communicative action offers us a way to understand, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. As indicated in this discussion, the importance of recognising the mutual aspects of branding and other communicative efforts is basic, even though they are outside managerial control.

“Yet, there is always integration going on on the part of the receiver, whether the messages sent are integrated and coherent or not. As Buhl (1991) has explained so well, the reception of corporate messages is not a passive activity through which an audience is trying to figure out what the author meant to convey. Rather, it is a process through which the receiver tries to make sense of a piece of communication by linking it to a context that is familiar or meaningful. (...) Reception, therefore, is always a creative process that cannot be planned and managed by the sender”, Christensen et al. (2009:213). While these social processes of establishing meaning and understanding are complex and difficult to manage, they are also the processes that may appeal to the members of the organisation with regard to how they get involved and participate in a corporate branding process. Ind and Bjerke recognise that “brand definitions are not really definitions until they acquire contextual meaning by being adopted by individuals” (Ind and Bjerke 2007:42).

To sum up, understanding is not addressed frequently in the branding literature and neither is it clear what it means. Davis and Dunn (2002), Ind (2004), Ind & Bjerke (2007), Hatch and Schultz (2001, 2003, 2008) provide some considerations on how mutual understanding matters in a corporate branding process, but the issue of understanding is mostly overlooked, although to some extent this key concept is an implicit assumption in corporate branding efforts. Various scholars recognise understanding as either a challenge of controlling how the members of an organisation understand a branding effort or of how the members actually understand branding efforts. This difference is often either seen as a gap that needs to be managed or as a condition that is a part of the social processes of establishing mutual understanding and beliefs about a corporate branding effort. The discussion indicates that managerial integration is inadequate for understanding and managing the social processes of a corporate branding effort. Issues that emerge as reciprocal between members of an organisation, such as questions of understanding, truth, sincerity, beliefs and the definition of a brand, require an approach that recognises the social processes because these processes are basic. Being sincere or authentic is, according to Ind, the antithesis of marketing, because authentic performance “tells it like it is” (Ind 2004:213). Recognising the social dynamics of corporate branding through social integration tells it like it is and comes closer to what the brand and branding processes are based on when the members of an organisation are taken into account. This chapter ends with a suggestion of how corporate branding can be identified.

## **2.5 Defining corporate branding**

“Corporate branding is one of those things that everyone believes is important, yet there is very little consensus on what it means” (Ind 1997:2).

A simple inquiry in the corporate branding department at Novo Nordisk seemed to confirm the above statement from Nicholas Ind. In November 2005, one year after the department was established, I asked people working in the department two questions. One question was to define corporate branding; the other was to list as many authors as possible in the field of corporate branding. The idea was to get an indication of how corporate branding was understood and the authors who might have influenced their understanding. The questions could also indicate whether members of the corporate branding department were able to answer these straightforward questions, which probably could be raised by anybody in the organisation.

The surprising fact was that the 14 people included in the little experiment in the corporate branding department, the experts in branding at Novo Nordisk, came up with very different answers to these two questions. In terms of a common definition of corporate branding, I found 12 more or less significantly different understandings. With regard to references to the branding literature, one author was common in five of the answers. Otherwise, different authors were mentioned, and interestingly enough most of them had never been categorised as authors on corporate branding. In terms of a common reference to authors and a definition, this indicated that the people working on corporate branding had a fairly small common base of knowledge, or maybe they had a broad base of different knowledge, about branding.

The result can be interpreted as meaning it is possible to be experts on corporate branding in practice without agreeing on a common definition and without building on a shared knowledge base in terms of references. It seems that what really mattered was a common goal and not so much a common understanding or

terminology on corporate branding. Whether this might cause difficulties in the short or long run is another empirical question in this specific case, but there are scholars that recommend that managers need to be more brand literate (e.g. Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000). There are in fact several scholars who suggest that the people responsible for corporate branding need profound knowledge about corporate branding to be able to educate, inspire and integrate the brand across an organisation (e.g. Davis and Dunn 2002; Ind and Bjerke 2007). The answers seemed both to confirm and elaborate on Nicolas Ind's insight about there being very little consensus as to what corporate branding actually means, as well as emphasising that there is some confusion surrounding corporate concepts, as pointed out by Balmer and Greyser (2003). While the example can also be interpreted as illustrating the multidisciplinary basis in practice, with skills beyond the marketing department as foreseen by King (1991) and later conceptualised by Schultz et al. (2005), it could also indicate that the conceptual foundation is missing in a corporate branding department.

### **Considerations for a corporate branding definition**

The state of affairs in the field of corporate branding implies a development towards the second, and now third, wave of corporate branding as contemporary perspectives that can include the expanding theoretical and practical dimension of the corporate branding phenomenon. The effort to include still more aspects of the complexity of corporate branding as a social process and a phenomenon based on a broad base of cross-disciplinary heritage, implies that corporate branding is difficult to define. However, based on the discussions in this chapter, I suggest that a corporate branding definition can be based on the latest developments in the field and suggest how Schultz et al. understood corporate branding, which was “as a process through which an organization continually works out its purpose – a purpose that is meaningful to people inside and outside the organization”

(2005:16) as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. While this understanding explains corporate branding as an on-going process related to a meaningful purpose which is relevant for internal and external stakeholders, it also rather concisely sums up the previous considerations and the perspective on corporate branding suggested in this chapter. Especially the emphasis on processes of working out a meaningful purpose demonstrates the aspect of a creating a shared understanding among the constituents of the brand. Regarding corporate branding as a process is also suggested by Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark, who define it as “all the processes that are intended to enhance the value of the corporate brand, externally as well as internally” (2005:156).

However, it is also relevant to elaborate on some of the aspects of the understanding from Schultz et al. and address a few others. Because corporate branding is the branding of an organisation, which is a social entity of members, for many different stakeholders, including members of the organisation itself, it implies that corporate branding is both internally and externally oriented. It not only tries to create lasting relationships with external stakeholders, but also represents the internal stakeholders of the social entity to themselves. This aspect of corporate branding is particularly relevant, because the official representation of the brand causes reactions among the members of an organisation that relate to how they understand a suggested branding effort. A corporate branding effort therefore involves the question of how to represent a social entity in a credible and valid way in agreement with the members of the organisation. An answer to this question cannot be managed instrumentally through managerial integrative activities, like branding a product or a service, because members of an organisation influence the brand with their interpretations and contributions to a corporate branding process. While corporate brand management sometimes tries

to reify an organisation so that it resembles a commodity in the widest sense, it cannot circumvent the social process that establishes validity.

Hence, corporate branding represents and integrates the whole organisation as a cross-organisational activity and is therefore not just a departmental or managerial effort. Corporate branding involves members across the organisation in various processes (e.g. Ind 2004; de Chernatony 2002; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Gotsi and Andriopoulos 2007), but a corporate branding department may, and often does, hold the formal responsibility for initiating, inventing and sustaining corporate branding activities across an organisation.

The discussion in this chapter has emphasised two other aspects of corporate branding: managerial and social integration. While the different managerial efforts that try to control a corporate branding processes were identified as managerial integration, the social processes among the members of the organisation that create mutual understanding were identified as social integration. These two aspects can be combined by different connotations of the word deliberate as will be explained below.

### **A definition of corporate branding**

The following definition is suggested based on the previous discussions and clarifications:

*Corporate branding is the deliberate and deliberative process that tries to create, express and disseminate in an advantageous way a valid representation of the organisational identity internally as well as externally.*

The definition emphasises that corporate branding is a *process* that relates to the fundamental question of the organisational identity based on the internal culture and the external image of an organisation. The identity is socially constituted

because it both expresses a cultural understanding of the organisation and mirrors the images of its stakeholder (Hatch and Schultz: 2004:377ff).

The adjective *deliberate* refers to an emphasis on corporate branding as a purposeful managerial process aimed at creating an official representation of the organisation as explained in the concept of managerial integration. The word *deliberative* refers to an emphasis on the on-going nature of the social processes aimed at reaching mutual understanding about the corporate brand and the corporate branding processes. Emphasising that the *process tries to manage a valid representation of the organisational identity* implies that the processes are open to critical assessment in relation to a shared understanding among internal and external stakeholders. The emphasis on *internally as well as externally* says that corporate branding is not just about external representation, but also about the social processes that underpin the external representation among the internal members of an organisation. The phrase *in an advantageous way* emphasises that branding efforts are meant to bring benefits to an organisation, such as increased brand equity.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has, from a critical, constructive and communicative perspective, analysed and discussed the integrative aspects of corporate branding by focusing on managerial and social integration in parts of the contemporary literature on corporate branding, corporate communications and organisational communications. At the outset, it was demonstrated that corporate branding efforts imply the question of integration in different ways. It was demonstrated that managerial integration in corporate branding is based on a marketing-oriented approach that focuses on how to control as many aspects of branding as possible. The possibilities and limitations of managerial integration were emphasised, and it was indicated that managerial integration cannot control the social processes of a

corporate branding effort in an organisation. Social integration was therefore briefly introduced through a discussion of the possibilities for members of an organisation to establish mutual understanding about a corporate branding effort. Two central aspects of understanding were identified: how members of the organisation are supposed to understand the brand and branding effort in accordance with a managerial perspective; and how members actually understand a corporate branding effort. The chapter has further discussed corporate branding as a cross-organisational process, and not solely a departmental and managerial matter, to further accentuate the processes of understanding because corporate branding departments usually hold no formal authority over other departments in an organisation. Finally a definition was suggested that includes both the managerial and social integrative aspects of corporate branding based on the previous discussion about the integrative aspects of branding. Table 2.1 summarises the important aspects of the analyses and discussions in this chapter by contrasting managerial and social integration.



**Table 2.1 Differences between managerial and social integration**

<b>Integrative aspects of corporate branding</b>		
<b>Integration</b>	<b>Managerial integration</b>	<b>Social integration</b>
<b>Managerial approach</b>	Corporate branding processes can be controlled	Corporate branding processes can be influenced through valid arguments
<b>Understanding</b>	Understanding of branding is taken for granted or depends on getting members of the organisation to understand a branding effort	Understanding is not taken for granted but requires internal processes of establishing validity among the organisational member
<b>Orientation</b>	Externally oriented	Internally and externally oriented
<b>Strategic approach</b>	Linear means–end approach	Developing (emergent) approach
<b>Disciplinary basis</b>	Influence from marketing	Influence from multiple disciplines
<b>Organisational basis</b>	Departmental or managerial anchoring of branding	Cross-organisational anchoring
<b>Strategic influence</b>	Tactical and operational	Strategic, tactical and operational
<b>Primary focus of a corporate branding effort</b>	Focus on the official branding effort (representation)	Focus on both official branding effort and organisational reactions
<b>Rationality</b>	The purposive rationality	The communicative rationality

The next chapter goes on to explain parts of the theory of communicative action and how mutual understanding is the basis for social integration.

### 3 Social integration

It is common that approaches to corporate branding do not apply theories that explicitly start from an assumption about corporate branding being a social activity, and neither do they base themselves on or commit themselves to a rationality tailored for managing social phenomena. An exception is Hulberg (2006), who illustrates how sociological paradigms can be integrated with corporate branding. Hulberg emphasises how the intentionality and success of a corporate brand are influenced by the ability to identify and account for different world views of the stakeholders and deal with these challenges. Another exception is Hatch and Rubin (2006), who address the brand as a social text and consider hermeneutics and interpretive theory as a method to develop a deeper understanding of the opportunities to realise a brand's potential.

On the contrary, it is common to propose managerial strategies that build on a logic that is implicitly supposed to manage and function in the social reality of the organisation. The social dimension often remains implicit, overshadowed by a set of strategic concerns of how it can be managed. However, the limits of relying solely on a strategic approach have been pointed out even by scholars who have contributed to strategic management thinking (e.g. Mintzberg 1994; Simon 1996; Morgan 1997). The complexities of involving an organisation in a corporate branding initiative reach beyond mere strategy as indicated in the last chapter and by several authors on corporate branding (Ind 2004; Gjøls-Andersen 2001; Schultz 2005; Davis and Dunn 2002; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Hatch and Schultz 2008; Ind and Bjerke 2007; de Chernatony and Cottam 2008).

This chapter offers a perspective and theory that is based on an extended understanding of social phenomena like corporate branding. The idea is to propose

a perspective that can complement the understanding of corporate branding beyond the strategic perspectives concerned about managerial integration that to some extent rely on a marketing oriented approach (e.g. Kapferer 1997; Keller 2003; Joachimstahler and Aaker 2000). This is not to disregard the strategic perspectives, but to complement them with another form of rationality adequate for understanding and managing social phenomena. Such a perspective is mostly overlooked or remains implicit in the field of corporate branding.

This chapter demonstrates the relevance of sociological insights to the study of corporate branding and to this inquiry. In fact, it can easily be shown that the study of sociology and corporate branding have several things in common. An immediate analogy between sociology and corporate branding is that they both consider social systems as their object. While sociology is the study of social systems, corporate branding tries to impact social systems.

This chapter is structured in the following way: First, social integration is briefly located in sociology. It is explained why a focus on social integration is appropriate for studying corporate branding in organisations by juxtaposing sociological perspectives with contemporary literature on corporate branding and strategy. Second, I will provide an introduction to the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas's *Theory of communicative action* and explain the value of considering his approach to social integration. It should be noted that it is by no means the intention to provide an exhaustive treatment of his complete theory, but only to consider parts relevant for this inquiry.

The purpose of using parts of Habermas's theory of communicative action is to explain how managerial and social integration in an organisation influences management of corporate branding. The analytical potential and the implications

of selected parts of his theory will be demonstrated and in particular I focus on how corporate branding is socially integrated into an organisation. Although Habermas comes from critical theory, it is not the intention to criticise and deconstruct the management of corporate branding. Criticism will only be relevant to the extent that it highlights the advantages of adapting parts of Habermas's theory in a constructive way or can serve as relevant background. In explaining the theoretical approach, particular attention will be given to the notion of *communicative action* in contrast to *strategic action*, because this difference is of central importance.

The clarification of selected parts of Habermas's theory and the analytical potential for this inquiry will be linked to a discussion of some central challenges related to managing corporate branding so as to emphasise and illustrate the relevance of the theory. Furthermore, for the purpose of clarification, I will also draw attention to some examples from management and organisation theory. As will become clear, a number of limitations and challenges in contemporary corporate branding perspectives make it relevant to consider and employ parts of Habermas's theory. Besides demonstrating the potential of his theory, this chapter provides the basis for the next chapter which suggests a framework as a heuristic for exploring practice.

### **3.1 The question of social integration in sociology and in corporate branding**

According to Dag Østerberg, sociology is the science of social integration. In his book, *Metasociology* (1988), he argues that sociology was a reaction to liberal ideas, which focused on the state and the control of individuals. By contrast, sociology focuses on social integration, interaction, cohesion, coordination,

stability and balance in social systems, focusing primarily on society, but also on organisations and groups.

Regardless of any particular sociological perspective, the themes of sociology are appropriate for studies and reflections in organisations, because the social aspects and dynamics in organisations bear resemblance to those existing in society. Just like society, an organisation requires knowledge and insight in its social system to develop – for instance knowledge about how to enhance competitiveness, ensure coherence and solidarity among actors, as well as coordination of actions. Studies concerned with organisational culture and identity that have served as background for some developments within the field of corporate branding also suggest that insight into the dynamics of the social system of the organisation is important (e.g. Albert and Whetten 1985; Schein 1992).

In a management discipline like corporate branding, which aims at managing the identity of the whole organisation, knowledge of social aspects can be valuable to support and make sure that a branding effort becomes credible across the organisation. The themes of coordination, cohesion and coherence can also be identified in the literature on corporate branding (e.g. Ind 2004; Davis and Dunn 2002; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; de Chernatony and Cottam 2006; Hatch and Schultz 2003).

The French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who is usually regarded as the first sociologist because he coined the term "sociology", was concerned with the problem of social stability in society. He emphasised the interconnectedness of the various social elements as constitutive for society. Building on the thoughts of Comte, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) found that the individual had to be socialised to be a member of society. Durkheim regarded

education as a necessary way to socialise individuals and teach them to interact with each other. Society was united into a whole by means of social integration based on the socialisation of individuals through education. Education and knowledge have traditionally been seen as important means for securing social integration in both society and organisations. A parallel way of thinking is also underscored by some authors in the field of corporate branding when they emphasise that organisations need to educate people to contribute to branding the organisation (e.g. Davis and Dunn 2002:225) and Ind (2004:140ff) when he suggests that training, appraisals and rewards are important for engaging employees. Being socialised through education and training is also typically what new members of organisations go through when they participate in introductory courses that provide them with the basic shared knowledge of the company. The introductory programme at Novo Nordisk, in which I participated when I started, had no explicit education or training regarding the corporate brand of the company. Human Resources, who were responsible for the introductory programme, later began to make learning about corporate branding part of the training programme to educate new employees as brand ambassadors when a new corporate branding initiative was gradually implemented.

The pursuit of interconnected elements in sociology as emphasised by Comte has its analogy in both corporate branding and the management literature. Attention is drawn to specific elements conceptualised in models that are believed to influence the competitiveness and success of an organisation. An example in the field of corporate branding, which can be characterised as managerial integration, is Aaker and Joachimstahler's (2002) brand leadership model, accounting for brand architecture, brand position, brand building programmes, and organisational structure and processes.

In management and organisation theory, several well-known models serve as guiding frameworks for the interconnected elements with varying degrees of social aspects, for example, the value chain, which denotes the generic value-adding activities of an organisation (Porter:1985), and the organisational diagram, which designates the hierarchy and its functional responsibilities. In the nineties, Kaplan and Norton suggested *the balanced scorecard* (1996) as a management tool that took into account various strategic and social elements as constitutive for managing an organisation. They included traditional financial measurements, but also recognised the importance of including the social elements of the organisation, such as education and organisational learning. Kaplan and Norton's framework includes social aspects of the organisation, under which corporate branding is located because, as they argue, future value is created through stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, employees, and through processes such as technology, corporate branding and innovation.

Another example of interconnected elements is Hatch and Schultz's VCI model (Vision, Culture and Image) initially called the corporate branding tool kit. The model is based on social elements constitutive for the organisation in its corporate branding processes (2001). Building on research on 100 companies around the world, they propose "that a company must align three interdependent elements – call them strategic stars – to create a strong corporate brand: vision, culture and image" (2001:130). These elements are each related to a different constituency: vision is understood as "top management's aspirations for the company" (2001:135), culture "as the organization's values, behaviours, and attitudes – that is, the way employees all through the ranks feel about the company they are working for" (ibid.), and image as "the outside world's overall impression of the company. This includes all stakeholders – customers, shareholders, the media, the general public, and so on" (ibid.). In suggesting the need for alignment between



these elements and the related constituencies, Hatch and Schultz explain that a strong corporate brand depends on alignment between these interconnected elements. They further propose taking account of the alignment of the strategic stars by using a series of diagnostic questions to management, employees and stakeholders. From a sociological perspective, the diagnostic questions implicitly serve as a means to identify not only the alignment between the strategic stars but also the integration between the strategic stars and the members of an organisation. Their position can be seen as a suggestion of how to advance the strategic management of corporate branding through an integrative framework that focuses on the underlying alignment or misalignment between the constituencies of the brand. When they recommend aligning what is called the essential interdependent elements, they thereby also address the central stakeholders of the organisation and their interpretations of the organisation and brand. Although the model suggests a strategic integrative framework, it also includes elements that build on a basis of mutual understanding and relate to the question of social integration. This may be illustrated in this quote where the vision and strategic direction of the company are related to understanding and support among the members of the organisation in what is called the vision–culture gap: “This misalignment develops when senior management moves the company in a strategic direction that employees don't understand or support. The gap usually emerges when senior management establishes a vision that is too ambitious for the organization to implement” (Hatch and Schultz 2001:130).

As indicated, frameworks and models may try to incorporate social elements to a varying degree. What seems to be of interest is identifying and relating the various constitutive elements of organisations (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2001; Kaplan and Norton 1996). While it seems quite clear that both social and strategic elements are important, it is less clear how to understand the social elements and the

relationships between the social and strategic elements of organisations. The social dimension of an organisation often becomes a predominantly implicit assumption based on managerial integration for realising strategic goals.

Hatch and Schultz suggest vision, culture and image not as social elements but as strategic elements, but their elements are in fact to a great extent based on interpretations and meaning which are accomplished through social interaction. An example of a balanced approach between a managerial and social approach is indicated by Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006), who suggest that leaders should act as role models in the brand building process and mediate between the brand structures, such as vision, image and culture, to create commitment among the employees and also set up control mechanisms that monitor the development of the brand among internal and external stakeholders.

Comte's concern with the interconnectedness between different social elements in social systems is the central focus of modern functionalism (e.g. Talcott Parsons 1951). Parsons' basic concern is how social order is maintained in social systems through interdependence, i.e. how a social system depends on its various constitutive elements being in balance. "The most general and fundamental property of a system is the interdependence of parts or variables. Interdependence consists in the existence of determinate relationships among the parts or variables as contrasted with randomness of variability. In other words, interdependence is *order* among the components which enter into the system" (Parson and Shils 1951:107).

Parsons proposes a general analytical model of interconnected variables for analysing societies, organisations and groups. What is called the AGIL model focuses on four basic functions that social systems need in order to exist and be in

balance. He contends that a social system can only maintain its balance through the basic functions of *Adaptation* (the problem of acquiring sufficient resources), *Goal Attainment* (the problem of settling and implementing goals), *Integration* (the problem of maintain solidarity or coordination among the subunits of the system), and *Latency* (the problem of creating, preserving, and transmitting the system's distinctive culture and values). The AGIL model suggests central variables that influence social systems such as an organisation.

The model could also add valuable knowledge to this inquiry, if the aim were to explore how a corporate branding unit alone relates to an organisation and its subunits by acquiring resources, setting goals and establishing coordination in accordance with the organisational culture and values, instead of exploring how corporate branding as a social communicative process integrates across an organisation. When Parsons frames integration as a problem of maintaining solidarity or coordination among subunits of a system, he distinguishes two important aspects that also are emphasised by Habermas's theorising on social integration, as will be demonstrated. However, the problem with Parsons' AGIL model in general, and his approach to integration in particular, is that its main focus is on maintaining balance and stability, closely followed by control – a focus that excludes dynamics and processes of change in a social system (Parsons:1951). It would be inconsistent to use or build on a static model to explore corporate branding as a dynamic phenomenon. Another problem is that Parsons offers very little guidance as to how we can explore the interconnected elements in his AGIL model in practice.

Taken all together and without going into further detail, it can be noted that important themes in some of the literature on sociology bear some resemblance to important issues in corporate branding. Questions about cohesion, coordination

and alignment in corporate branding resonate with similar topics in parts of sociology. The perspectives on knowledge, education, frameworks, and AGIL provide us with partial perspectives on relevant elements that somehow relate to the question of integration. However, sociology's focus on abstract theoretical accomplishment and interconnectedness between elements constituting or influencing social systems is difficult to translate into the study of how social integration can be explored in the everyday practices of an organisation. Corporate branding consists of processes of on-going activities and communication that an appropriate theoretical approach must be able to take into account.

Relationships between themes in sociology and corporate branding indicate that sociological insights are relevant for the study of organisations in general and, more important, of corporate branding in particular (see also Hulberg 2006). In what follows, Habermas' account of communicative rationality will be explained and discussed in detail, because he offers a perspective that is able to provide insight into managerial and social integration of corporate branding.

### **3.2 The theory of communicative action**

Habermas continues the work of his sociological and philosophical predecessors and in particular develops a theory based on a thorough discussion, analysis and synthesis of various important insights for which three main sources can be identified. First, analytical language philosophy, based on Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of language games, and John L. Austin's and John R. Searle's speech-act theories are discussed in connection with how we relate to the world through language. A second important source is American philosophy – notably Charles S. Pierce's pragmatism and George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism<sup>10</sup> in relation to how language creates reality and how we perceive the world. Third,

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<sup>10</sup> Mead's insights in social psychology, especially from his *Mind, Self and Society*, are referred to in discussions about organisational identity (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2004).

phenomenology is used, especially insights from Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schütz, to account for how social reality is structured through the notion of lifeworld. Habermas' position incorporates the linguistic turn which was initially motivated by the conviction that philosophy required a sound epistemological and methodological foundation that could account for the role of language in constituting reality. The purpose here is not to discuss in detail how his various predecessors are included in his theory, but only to point to the fact that Habermas positions his theory in relation to these important figures in the tradition of philosophy and sociology. This gives an indication of the assumptions and theoretical background that lie behind his theory. On this basis, he manages to conceive a social theory relevant for the social sciences. In particular, his idea of an extended form of rationality based on reason makes his theory adequate for understanding social phenomena.

Habermas has contributed to philosophy, sociology, and political science. His main work *Theory of communicative action* from 1981<sup>11</sup> is a substantial and complex theory that is widely acknowledged for its contributions to the social sciences. This work is overwhelmingly long (around 900 pages published in two volumes), broad in scope, and very dense in argumentation, but several of his theoretical accomplishments are relevant for the field of management, organisation and communication studies (e.g. Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Leeper 1996; Burkhart 2007; O'Donnell, O'Reagan and Coates 2000, Forester 2003; Alvesson and Willmott 2003). Although relevant in many aspects, his theoretical insights are only partly taken into account in this project. Among many themes, his theory includes a significant contribution to understanding how social integration is based on the underlying

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<sup>11</sup> English translations in 1984 and 1987.

forces of communication. In what follows, it is especially this aspect of his theory that is considered in relation to corporate branding in organisations.

### **The question of rationality**

Habermas' main work was caused by crises in modern society in the seventies, in which rationality was not accepted without argumentation. His comprehensive answer to the rationality crisis involves fundamental reflections that influence the way we understand the role of action, communication, rationality and knowledge. These reflections are not only relevant in relation to the crisis in the seventies; in fact, they are still of current interest and importance for both society and organisations. While proponents of post-modernity have generally claimed that rationality is under pressure even within organisations, it can be argued that current organisations and societies are still to a large extent managed according to a conventional understanding of rationality. What has changed as rationality has been challenged, however, is an increasing recognition of the need for both complementary and alternative forms of rationality (Eriksen 1999; Levy et al. 2003). Advocates of a post-modern view have a point in questioning the dominance of a one-sided approach to rationality and management, but their aim has primarily been to deconstruct the established order, often without offering any adequate alternative. Habermas, who also argues against the primacy of the dominant approaches to rationality, in fact offers an alternative and complementary approach through his theory of communicative action. As I will try to illustrate, there are several reasons for including knowledge from the theory of communicative action in the study of corporate branding. Of particular interest is how communicative action as the basis for social integration can provide valuable knowledge with analytical implications for exploring corporate branding in organisations. While Habermas' focus was on society and not specifically on the modern company or organisation, he nevertheless recognises that his insights

also include and have significant relevance for the processes and activities that take place in organisations (Habermas 1989:310).

While his contribution to the discussion of social integration is in focus in what follows, it will also be necessary to clarify some related concepts and distinctions of his to offer a systematic account of his approach. Such a clarification is both necessary to understand the potential of employing parts of his theory and to explain how social integration is embedded in his theory. However it should be noted, it is difficult to offer a fair presentation of Habermas' comprehensive work in a concise way. Some might object that just focusing on selected parts dismantles his theory, given the amount of work he has produced, when there is so much more to consider and learn from. Although a selected presentation and discussion of some of his key concepts and insights cannot do full justice to his theory, I will argue that it provides us with useful knowledge in the study of organisations in general, and of corporate branding in particular (e.g. Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Leeper 1996; Karsten 2006; Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Toledo 1986; Kersten 2000; Burkhart 2007; Forester 2003; O'Donnel, O'Regan and Coates 2000).

### **3.3 The communicative rationality**

The adequacy of Habermas's theory for studying social phenomena is based on his epistemological and ontological position. His approach to knowledge about social reality is not based on a subjectivist or on an objectivist account, but on what he calls an intersubjectivist account, which at its core considers knowledge about reality as socially constituted. Habermas' position incorporates a stance that distances itself from the Cartesian paradigm of the solitary thinker – *solus ipse* – as the nexus for reflection on knowledge. This implies that his position is different from what is called methodological solipsism, where the subject observes and

reflects on the object – a position of which another great philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, is a good example.

Descartes and Kant have been radically challenged by their successors, e.g. by Hegel's account of the social character of consciousness. Habermas' as a rational thinker in the tradition of modernity advocates a dialogical or intersubjectivist position in his understanding of rationality. The aim of his intersubjectivist position is to propose another kind of rationality that "displaces both subjectivist accounts that cling to Cartesian conceptions of monological selfhood and objectivist accounts that ignore the agent's perspective entirely" (Habermas 2001:vii). Habermas argues that the subject–object model is insufficient to account for social actions, because it presupposes that reality and even social relations can be objectified into a series of means and ends. The subject–object model, which is the basic assumption in the purposive rationality that is widely incorporated in both natural and social sciences, is challenged because other people also occupy the world as dynamic actors with their own plans of action and not as invariable objects.

Instead of locating rationality in a monological acting subject relating to the world, Habermas locates rationality in a subject–subject relationship. This position is characterised by subjects reaching common agreement about how the world is constituted through communication. Habermas locates the roots of rationality in the structures of everyday communication. He proposes a rationality which is always present and renewing itself in the communication between actors to account for social actions and reality. He speaks about *communicative rationality* and *communicative action* as the basis for understanding both the social and the physical world. Communicative rationality implies that reality is constituted as a shared point of reference between individuals in interaction reached through



communicative action and not through reference to an Archimedean point defined by a solitary subject.

Communicative rationality implies that in principle knowledge can always be challenged, criticised and revised with reference to reason. In this sense, rationality becomes procedural, that is, concerned with processes, because it is not the content of a communication but rather the way we reach mutual understanding and common definitions of situations that guarantees the quality of knowledge. The rational then becomes that which the strongest arguments support. While this will not guarantee that we have found the “right” answers, it will ensure that we can always revise our answers and results if there should be a good reason to doubt them.

Habermas’s position is epistemologically based on an assumption about intersubjectivity which implies that communicative rationality in processes between social actors creates knowledge and common definitions of situations. The epistemological approach is based on a three-world ontology depending on which kind of knowledge and world relation that is in focus. I will elaborate on his ontology later, but note that it bears a resemblance to social constructivism.

Although it may seem obvious to rely on a procedural and intersubjective-based account to understand and study social phenomena, because the objects of such study are often processes of interaction between subjects, the subject–object model and purposive rationality still is widely used in social science today. It is common that business literature on management, marketing and branding rely on a traditional approach to rationality to a considerable extent (e.g. Kotler 1997; Keller 2003; Pickton and Broderick 2001; Balmer and Greyser 2003).

There may be several reasons for this, such that an intersubjective account is not broadly shared in the literature on business, is more complex to adapt, and has not been considered as providing complementary and valuable knowledge. And it may be considered in practice as a difficult and time-consuming process to reach intersubjective agreement and balance between different perspectives on a project, such as a corporate branding initiative, with the business goal of reaching an effective result. However, corporate initiatives that are in disagreement with the culture and understanding may in different circumstances be forced to employ some degree of intersubjective approach to reach support among the members of the organisation. The relevant question for managers is, of course, how intersubjectively anchored managerial initiatives need to be to achieve their purposes, because not all projects require the same degree of organisational anchoring to be successful.

It is appropriate to employ Habermas's theory in relation to exploring corporate branding activities in organisations for several reasons. The epistemological and ontological assumptions and the intersubjective account match an understanding of corporate branding understood as a social phenomenon. The procedural aspect in Habermas's theory provides a qualified way to understand the on-going processes and activities in corporate branding processes. Habermas' approach to actions and rationality is a cardinal point in his theory. His extended approach to rationality and the notion of communicative action is constitutive for social integration. In the next section, therefore, I will explain communicative action and communicative rationality in some detail.

### **3.4 Communicative and strategic action**

So far, I have assumed that corporate branding is influenced by communicative rationality in the organisation without explaining what is meant by this in any

detail. Explaining how communicative action and strategic relates to managerial integration and social integration provides an argument for understanding this influence. To substantiate this argument, it is necessary to clarify and discuss some important distinctions and concepts from the theory of communicative action and relate them to corporate branding. The point of departure is a closer look at Habermas’ way of distinguishing various kinds of actions and their related rationality.

The central concept in his theory is *communicative action*, that is, a type of action with the purpose of creating understanding between people. This type should be understood in contrast to *strategic action*, which is a type of action with the purpose of creating results. An important point is that communicative action is a necessary precondition for strategic action, or, put in a different way, strategic action depends on communicative action for its success (1984:285f). It is this point in particular that supports the assumption about how corporate branding is influenced by social integration in the organisation. Habermas suggests a typology for categorising actions in a discussion and critique of Max Weber’s theory of action, in the following way:

**Figure 3.1 Types of Action**

<div> <div>Action orientation</div> <div>Action situation</div> </div>	Oriented to success	Oriented to reaching understanding
Non-social	Instrumental action	-
Social	Strategic action	Communicative action

(Habermas 1984:285)

By combining *action situation* with *action orientation*, Habermas identifies three types of basic actions. While actions oriented to understanding are social, actions oriented to success include both non-social and social actions.

Success is understood as “the appearance in the world of a desired state, which can, in a given situation, be causally produced through goal-oriented action or omission” (ibid.). Actions oriented towards success are based on the purposive-rational model of action that “takes as its point of departure the view that the actor is primarily oriented to attaining an end (which has been rendered sufficiently precise in terms of purposes), that he selects means that seems to him appropriate in the given situation, and that he calculates other foreseeable consequences of action as secondary conditions of success” (ibid.). A corporate branding strategy is an example of an activity oriented to success relying on purposive rationality. But the sequential process of managing projects through the phases of analysis, planning, implementation and control is another example (e.g. Kotler 1997; Keller 2003; Kapferer 2003). In the field of corporate branding, but also in management and organisation theory in general, actions are primarily oriented towards success.

Non-social action oriented to success is denoted as *instrumental* when we consider it “under the aspect of following technical rules of action and assess the efficiency of an intervention into a complex of circumstances and events” (Habermas 1984:285). This implies that instrumental actions are characterised by the way they objectify means and ends, without taking account of social aspects, such as the people involved in interaction in the situation. A well-known example of instrumental action as a management and organising principle can be found in Friedrich W. Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), which focuses on time-and-motion studies of employees, who are reduced to and observed as simple machines handling pig iron in the harbour of New York. Managing a

corporate branding effort using an instrumental approach is an example of managerial integration that assumes that the organisation is a well-oiled machine and its members are controllable objects that will automatically deliver the brand in accordance with the prescription in a strategy.

In contrast to instrumental action, strategic action is a type of social action. Habermas explains: “We call an action oriented to success *strategic* when we consider it under the aspect of following rules of rational choice and assess the efficacy of influencing the decisions of a rational opponent” (Habermas 1984:285). The typical assumption of rational choice theories is that human beings are purposive and goal-oriented and make rational calculations based on hierarchically ordered preferences to maximise utility. Social order is considered as the result of rational choices made by utility-maximising individuals. While rational choice theories for strategy in organisations, for instance, provide managers with a degree of clarity and transparency in their activities, it is questioned whether they can take everything into account.

An example of strategic action is the well-known, but also much-criticised hyper-rationality assumed in neoclassical economics and marketing. Such approaches often reduce the social dimensions of organisational interaction to quantifiable terms conditioned by a clause about all other things being equal or “externalities”, thereby avoiding having to take account of the complexity of social reality. An open question is in what cases the reduction over-simplifies social reality too much, with the consequence of neglecting important qualities.

A related problem can be identified in the corporate branding field when planners try to conceive corporate branding based on assumptions originating from product branding (see for example Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Keller 2003).

Understanding the challenge of corporate branding as a question of large-scale product branding strategy misses the special qualities and assumptions related to corporate branding (e.g. Schultz 2005). The recent proposal of a “second wave” of corporate branding recognises the limits of a marketing approach and suggests an increased focus on people, processes and purposes as important aspects of corporate branding (Schultz et al. 2005).

Several scholars demonstrate that an assumption of purposive rationality is insufficient to understand the social processes in an organisation. In my opinion, it is inadequate and limiting to look at each other as just a means to realise our own goals and to reduce social processes to a game of utility-maximising individuals pursuing their own goals. Rather, such processes have to be understood in relation to the conditions that constitute interactions between people in organisations, markets and societies, e.g. formal and informal norms, values and laws that constitute social reality. The activity of pursuing goals oriented to success, the core of purposive rationality, is carried out in relation to conditions constituted by common agreement, such as the rules of the market.

An example of such conditions is the pharmaceutical industry, which has to comply with advertising rules and restrictions on how companies may promote their products on the markets in different countries. The rules constitute a framework with specified conditions with which all companies have to comply if they want to compete and pursue their goals. Another example in organisations is the emphasis on how a corporate branding campaign must be based on the shared values of an organisation, because these comprise the common framework and conditions of an organisation that involves its members. The risk of neglecting or going beyond the common framework in a corporate branding effort is that the stakeholders of an organisation can experience inconsistency between the promise

and the performance of the organisation, as indicated by various scholars (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2003; Harris and de Chernatony 2001). One possible consequence of relying on a strategic means–ends model is that the values and motives behind action are represented as private needs and wants. However, if values and motives are to be agreeable to others, then the interpretations are related to the question of intersubjective recognition according to Habermas (1984, 1987).

In the field of corporate branding, there are perspectives, often based on marketing assumptions, that try to conceptualise and reduce corporate branding to a rational and quantifiable activity (e.g. Martensen and Grønholdt 2004). In contrast, there are other perspectives that acknowledge that not everything can be reduced to calculable objects. In my opinion, it is not a question of whether qualitative or quantitative approaches should be dominant with regard to corporate branding; rather, these perspectives complement each other because organisations need both. This point can be illustrated by the on-going activities in a corporate branding department. A corporate branding department typically needs hard measurable facts to reveal its successes and argue for the future allocation of resources to the department in competition with other functional units in an organisation. However, it also needs to know how to create beliefs and social impact in an organisation, something that cannot be inferred directly from hard facts and numbers. In *Models of My Life* (1996), Herbert Simon points out that most people are only partly rational, and are, in fact, in the remaining part of their actions both emotional and irrational. In 1945, Simon proposed the notion of bounded rationality, because agents are not optimal and agents' behaviours across isomorphic task domains are not constant. Bounded rationality points to the fact that people experience limits in formulating and solving complex problems. Simon

proposes that researchers try to look for all the data they can to uncover the underlying processes, instead of limiting their focus to conspicuous data.

What Simon points out, what product-branding approaches to corporate branding miss, and what in general escapes the conventional framework of strategic action cannot be accounted for in conventional approaches to action based on purposive rationality. Habermas's suggestion of *communicative action* based on a *communicative rationality* as a type of social action oriented to reaching mutual understanding is a way to explore and account for other aspects of a corporate branding initiative.

“By contrast, I shall speak of *communicative action* whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action, participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual success; they pursue their individual goals under the conditions that they can harmonize their plans of actions on the basis of common situation definitions. In this respect, the negotiation of definitions of the situation is an essential element of the interpretive accomplishments required for communicative action” (Habermas 1984:285f).

One important point is that the only purpose of communicative action is achieving understanding and common situation definitions, and not some goal external to the process. In communicative action, people recognise each other not as objects for strategic actions but as equal subjects in interaction. Furthermore, it is indicated that coordination of action is accomplished through reaching understanding and not in relation to the strategic actions of a single person. About actions oriented towards reaching understanding, Habermas further explains: “By communicative action, I understand symbolically mediated interaction. It is governed by binding



norms that define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and that must be understood and acknowledged by at least two acting subjects. (...) Whereas the effectiveness of technical rules and strategies depends on the validity [*Gültigkeit*] of empirically true or analytically correct propositions, the validity [*Geltung*] of social norms is ensured by intersubjective recognition that is based on a consensus about values or mutual understanding” (Habermas 2001:12).

This quotation indicates the social assumptions in and the implications following from his theory. It emphasises that communicative interaction requires at least two acting subjects, in interaction governed by binding norms that define reciprocal expectations, i.e. values in an organisation. It also points out that understanding is not restricted solely to the speaker or the hearer. Rather, mutual understanding is ensured by intersubjective recognition, which means that both participate in constituting situation definitions. In fact, we cannot talk about communication only in relation to a sender or a receiver, as is presupposed in some traditional models of communication (e.g. Mattelart and Mattelart 1998). For Habermas, symbolically mediated interactions include all actions that can be made intelligible in language. Because understanding is reached through language, Habermas suggests that “reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech” (Habermas 1984:287).

Proposing that “intersubjective recognition is based on a consensus about values” may be a way to understand an often repeated argument in the corporate branding literature about organisational values, or what are called brand values, as a common set of references on which a corporate branding endeavour should be based if it is to be authentic and credible. Since a corporate branding endeavour represents organisational identity on behalf of the whole organisation, it seems appropriate to suggest that it should be based on mutual understanding,

intersubjective recognition and coordination of actions in the organisation. However, some scholars on communication and branding also note that advances in communications theory are often neglected (e.g. Christensen and Morsing 2010; Torp 2009; Christensen et al. 2009).

Habermas emphasises the aspect of action coordination as an important result of mutual understanding in communicative action. “The problem of action coordination occurs as soon as an actor can carry out her plan only interactively, that is, with the help of the action of at least one other actor” (Habermas 1998:221). In fact, when actors coordinate their actions by way of mutual understanding, they harmonise their plans of action in accordance with common situation definitions. Coase, as mentioned, suggests that transaction costs are definitely reduced in a company thanks to coordination (1937). However the advantages of action coordination cannot be ensured only strategically. If both actors coordinate actions strategically, then they may well end up in a sub-optimal situation, as shown by the prisoners’ dilemma in game theory. Scholars in the field of corporate branding typically underline the importance of coordinating actions to provide commitment, coherence and consistency across the organisation, but primarily seen from a strategic perspective (e.g. Aaker and Joachimstahler 2000; Keller 2003; Davis and Dunn 2002). Communicative action and communicative rationality as a way of coordinating actions go beyond the traditional forms of coordination and provide knowledge that may be an entrance to understanding how commitment among the members of an organisation that undertakes a corporate branding initiative can be established.

### **3.5 Strategic action depends on communicative action**

The distinction between strategic and communicative action is a pivotal point in the theory of communicative action. It provides us with a way of comprehending

what constitutes social order in society and organisations. I will explain how the distinction makes it possible to understand the inherent rationality in action in everyday practices in an organisation and indicates important social aspects of the relationship between a strategy and the organisation that adopts it. Communicative rationality is not subject to any calculus and cannot be enforced, but ensures the process of communicative action towards reaching understanding.

“Processes of reaching understanding aim at an agreement that meets the conditions of rationally motivated assent to the content of the utterance. A communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of opponents. Agreement can indeed be objectively obtained by force; but what comes to pass manifestly through outside influence or use of violence cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*” (Habermas 1984:287).

Corporate brand management may rely on force if it implements a strategy in an organisation without involving the members of an organisation, but the use of force does not ensure that the full potential of the strategy necessarily becomes realised in the organisation. Involving the members of the organisation in delivering and living the brand has occupied scholars that focus on how to engage the organisation in the branding process (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Ind and Bjerke 2007; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006).

Habermas actually provides a rational basis for understanding social reality in organisations and society beyond the iron cage, to paraphrase Weber, of the purposive rationality. According to Habermas, strategic action is “a limiting case of communicative action; it occurs when ordinary language communication

between interlocutors breaks down as a means of maintaining consensus, and each assumes an objectifying attitude toward the other. For strategic action is based on rules for the purposive-rational choice of means; and, in principle each actor can make this choice by herself. Maxims of behaviour in strategic action are determined by the interest of maximizing gains and minimizing losses in the context of competition. In this case, my other is no longer an alter ego whose expectations I can fulfil (or disappoint) according to intersubjectively recognised norms. Rather, she is an opponent whose decisions I seek to influence indirectly by means of punishment and rewards” (Habermas 2001:12f).

Identifying strategic action as a limiting case of communicative action bears resemblance to Simon, Mintzberg and others who consider strategy as offering an incomplete and partial picture of what actually goes on in an organisation. Communicative action is suggested as the basic modus of action, on which other forms of action depend, such as strategic action. Consequently, Habermas asserts that other kinds of actions are parasitic on communicative action. This point is central for this project because it underlines and supports the idea that realising a corporate branding strategy through corporate management depends on social integration – that is, mutual understanding accomplished by communicative action.

In Habermas’ own words: “... the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the original mode of language use, upon which indirect understanding, giving something to understand or letting something be understood, and instrumental use of language in general, are parasitic” (Habermas 1984:288). The point is that strategic action and instrumental action depend on communicative action and mutual understanding. This means that strategic action can only be accomplished and effectuated if communicative action is already

presupposed. This can be illustrated by a classical example where a person acts strategically by telling a lie. Naturally a lie will only make sense and function against a background of mutual understanding and honesty. By dividing ideal types of action into the social and non-social actions and juxtaposing these with orientations to success and understanding, he manages to extend the traditional approach to rationality. Understanding other forms of actions as parasitic underlines the necessity of ensuring conditions for establishing mutual understanding between actors and across organisations according to Habermas. Parts of the literature on corporate branding also indicate the limitations of solely relying on a strategic approach (e.g. Ind 2004; Davis and Dunn 2002; Gjørsl-Andersen 2001; Ind and Bjerke 2007). This long quote from Ind illustrates the point concisely:

“Even in the tightest structures you cannot create an Orwellian world where every employee thinks and talks in the same way. Nor would it be desirable to do so. The power of a brand lies in giving employees the freedom to use their imaginations within the constraints set by the organization’s values. So the badge is just a badge. If the design of the badge is good then it can help an organization stand out from its competitors and indicate its provenance. But the badge is not the brand. In fact the truism is that the brand exists in the mind of stakeholders – they, rather than the company, determine the nature of the brand relationship. The inference is that although the company intends to communicate an idea of brand through its sign and symbols, there is no guarantee that consumers and other audiences will read them in the intended way. People cannot help using their different personal and cultural experiences to decipher what they see” (2004:19f).

Ind indicates that there is more to corporate branding than control. The organisational values may set constraints but their legitimacy is also based on

intersubjective recognition among the members of the organisation. It seems to indicate that branding is determined by the interpretive processes among people – processes that can be explained through communicative rationality. Communicative action, then, provides us with a way of understanding the social dimensions of an organisation beyond the purposive rationality inherent in strategic approaches. The next section further pursues the implications of communicative action and its relation to the world.

### **3.6 The three worlds and three plus one claims to validity**

Because our relationship with the world cannot be accounted for in the subject-object model, Habermas suggests the extended notion of communicative rationality that distinguishes between three forms of relationship to the world, with three related forms of validity attached. He talks about a) the objective, b) the social, and c) the subjective world, borrowing the notion of three worlds from Karl Popper (Habermas 1984:84f). Speakers and listeners operate with a reference system of equally primordial worlds, as Habermas' denotes them, which are mutually presupposed in communication processes. These formal world concepts signify the relationship between actors, the world and various forms of rationality.

- a) The concept of purposive rationality “presupposes relations between an actor and a world of existing states of affairs. This objective world is defined as the totality of states of affairs that either obtain or could arise or could be brought about by purposeful intervention” (Habermas 1984:87). An actor can, “on the one hand, form *beliefs* about existing states of affairs through the medium of perception, and can, on the other hand, develop *intentions* with the aim of bringing desired states of affairs into existence” (ibid.). In relating to the world of states of affairs, an actor relates to one world in which he can either bring his intentions and beliefs into accord with what is the case in the world or he

can try to succeed in bringing what is the case in the world into agreement with his intentions and beliefs. In either case, it can be assessed whether an actor expresses assertions that fit or misfit the world. So an actor can make assertions that are either true or false, and he can perform interventions that achieve or fail to achieve the intended effect in the world. Propositions about the relationship between actor and world can be judged by criteria of truth and efficacy. If for example a pharmaceutical company claims that it is a world leader in diabetes care, then the proposition can be judged either true or false according to the facts. Such an assertion represents either a belief or an intention of the company that can be rendered true. The concept of strategic action, in which actors relate to each other in a purposeful rational manner, that is, pursuing their ends and trying to influence others, is also included in the objective world. The point is that the objective world includes that which an actor relates to in an objectifying manner. An actor relating to the objective world resembles the Cartesian monological subject, relating to one world and realising his own plans without preceding coordination of action with other subjects.

- b) By contrast, the social world is defined as the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal relationships. “The concept of normatively regulated action presupposes a relation between an actor and exactly two worlds” (Habermas 1984:88). An actor can take up relations to the world that can be assessed in terms of rightness. Either actions are “judged according to whether they are in accord with or deviate from an existing normative context, that is, whether or not they are right with respect to a normative context recognised as legitimate” (Habermas 1984:89). Or norms “are judged according to whether they can be justified, that is, whether they deserve to be recognised as legitimate” (ibid.). On the one hand, organisational values can be legitimate

and have social currency if the members of an organisation acknowledge them as valid. On the other hand, actors can be assessed in relation whether they act in accordance with the values of an organisation. The social world consists of a normative context that indicates “which interactions belong to the totality of legitimate of interpersonal relations” (ibid.). Actors who recognise a norm as valid belong to the same world. That a norm has social currency and is valid, “means that it *deserves* the assent of all those affected because it regulates problems of action in their common interest” (ibid.). This implies that a corporate branding effort communicating on behalf of the whole organisation relates to the social currency in the organisation to be in agreement with the members of the organisation. If it deviates from the normative context, it risks lack of support in the organisation. A corporate branding campaign that presents an organisation as a world leader in diabetes care on the one hand relates to the objective world through facts, and on the other hand also relates to the social world as to whether the members of the organisation recognise the claim as legitimate. Comparing the annual turnover with that of other companies can validate the facts about being a world leader in relation the objective world. If members of an organisation experience and ascribe social currency to the same assertion *world leader in diabetes care*, for example with regard to how they recognise the values and norms in the organisation as world-class, then the assertion will be legitimate and right in the social world as well. The example illustrates that actors can adopt both an objectivising attitude to something being the case or not being the case in the objective world, and a normative attitude to the rightness of the legitimacy of an expression.

- c) The subjective world is defined “as the totality of subjective experiences to which the actor has privileged access” (Habermas 1984:91). The subjective



world is only assessable when an actor makes a presentation of the self to others through what is called a dramaturgical action. “The actor evokes in his public a certain image, an impression of himself, by more or less purposely disclosing his subjectivity (Habermas 1986:86). In dramaturgical action, actors can disclose their subjectivity and steer their interactions by regulating mutual access to their subjectivities. The sociologist Erving Goffman was the first to develop a theory of impression management on how to steer self-presentations to audiences. “The scale of self-presentations ranges from sincere communication of one’s intentions, desires, moods, etc., to cynical management of the impressions the actor arouses in others” (Habermas 1984:93). A corporate branding campaign resembles a self-presentation of an organisation to others. The authenticity and sincerity of the self-presentation of an organisation is not just a question of one actor’s privileged access to a subjective world, but also depends on the social currency among the members of the organisation, because the members have knowledge about the internal organisation. The question is how we can assess whether an actor is sincere and authentic in relation to the subjective world. Habermas notes that consistency between word and action, called promise and performance in the branding literature, indicates whether or not an actor is sincere and authentic – sincerity understood as a real expression of the inner states and intentions of the actor, and authentic understood as genuine expression where the actor is not a victim of his own self-deception. Organisations making self-presentation, i.e. through corporate branding efforts, often try to control how much of their internal world they want to disclose to the outer world. An inquiry into corporate statements indicates that organisations prioritise sincerity and trustworthiness because it is among the most repeated values in organisations, but cannot always substantiate their declared words with actions (Bordum and Hansen 2005). Especially corporate branding efforts may have a problem with sincerity

because they sometimes paint a rosier picture of the company than can be validated in reality.

What is it then we do in communicative action? “In communicating, we represent facts about the world, we express our subjective states, and we interact with others; and these three functions correspond to the three validity claims of truth, sincerity and rightness” (Habermas 2001:xxiii). This once again underscores the aspects of rationality and intersubjectivity: “for to say that understanding an utterance is knowing the conditions under which it is acceptable entails that a speaker-hearer does not fully understand a given utterance unless she knows what could be offered to back up the claims raised in the utterance. And constructed in this way, the acceptability condition cannot be determined independently of an intersubjective practice of argumentation and justification” (ibid.). Habermas proposes the concept of communicative action as central because it includes all three formal world relationships and related validity claims. The point is that actors always “integrate the three formal world-concepts (...) into a system and presuppose this system in common as a framework of interpretation within which they can reach understanding” (Habermas 1984:98). These explanations are summarised in Table 3.2:

**Table 3.2 World, relation, validity and action orientation**

<b>World</b>	<b>Relation</b>	<b>Validity claim</b>	<b>Action Orientation</b>
Objective	States of affairs	Facts	Success
Social	Norm governed relations between subjects	Norms	Understanding
Subjective	Internal experiences related to the subject	Sincerity	Understanding

“The communicative model of action presupposes language as a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation” (Habermas 1984:95). In the case of nonverbal instrumental action, such as behaviour where an actor runs, or uses a hammer and performs the purposive rational activity of hammering nails into a wall, are also related to communication because they only make sense to us when they are interpreted in the communicative medium of language and meaning. We would not be able to understand behaviour like running and hammering if it was not through the medium of language. In fact, actions of all kinds can be rendered into words if they are rational. “Whatever can be meant can be said. The converse, however, does not hold. Not everything that can be said is necessarily expressible nonverbally” (Habermas 2001:4). In fact, we cannot avoid or escape language and meaning because language and meaning constitute our world as we know it; the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once said that we are condemned to

meaning (*condamnés au sens*)<sup>12</sup>. So action, communication and rationality are intimately interwoven: to understand behaviour or an expression is to grasp its role in norm- and rule-governed interpersonal activity. Thus action, communication and rationality presuppose sharing a form of life with one's dialogue partner. Such forms of life are not stipulated arbitrarily, but have the status of conventions and norms that can be rendered clear through knowledge about our rationality. This implies that actions following from a strategy are also subject to claims of validity.

When Habermas asserts that “whatever can be meant can be said”, he assumes that we have mastery of a specific rule competence such as natural language. If what is said does not give any meaning, this may be caused by a lack of mastery of the language. New employees in organisations are often confronted with an organisational language that they gradually adopt and learn to master.

This leads us to a fourth claim to validity, denoted: *intelligibility*. “It is a claim that is in fact redeemed as long as the course of communication proceeds undisturbed; it is not merely an accepted premise; communication that is unintelligible breaks down” (Habermas 2001:93). When organisations employ corporate branding, they also enter into a terminology and complex system of concepts and expressions that in some way relate to and make corporate branding operational. Some examples are brand promise, brand equity, brand ambassador, brand asset, etc. If this brand language and terminology is unclear or unintelligible, communication may break down and the pragmatic meaning and consequences disappear. Management terminologies, such as corporate branding often operate with inside congenial universes of expressions that are hard to render intelligible outside the group of experts using them. And even experts may sometimes be doubtful about how to use and understand their professional terminology because it may be used in

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<sup>12</sup> *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945).

different ways, thereby making it unintelligible. At Novo Nordisk, several examples demonstrated that the brand terminology had different meanings depending on the people speaking like in the corporate branding department where the members came up with 12 different explanations. This demonstrated the relevance of the fourth validity claim – intelligibility. Reaching understanding through all four claims to validity functions as a mechanism for coordinating actions through the participants in interaction coming to an agreement concerning the claimed *validity* of their statements (Habermas 1984:99).

### **3.7 Action types related to social and managerial integration**

Communicative and strategic actions are basic and may explain the various social actions that take place in society and in social groups like organisations, according to Habermas. They are based on different rationalities and ways of coordinating and integrating actions. Let me briefly explain how managerial and social integration are related to communicative and strategic action.

Managerial integration is here suggested to be based on strategic action that builds on the purposive rationality as typically assumed in strategic management and some approaches to corporate branding where a predefined purpose can be reached through managerial processes. Social integration, on the contrary, according to Habermas, is the coordination of social action, as demonstrated, accomplished through communicative action as a process of reaching common and binding definitions of situations and mutual agreement without the intervention of force but with reference to the validity of statements.

Habermas does not use the term managerial integration and does not elaborate on the strategic conditions for and challenges facing management in organisations specifically. He focuses primarily on social groups and society, and he uses the

term system integration, which relates to another central distinction that describes two different social domains, the system and the lifeworld. The lifeworld may in a simple way be explained as resource and a basis of knowledge, shared interpretations and cultural systems of meaning that function as the background for communicative action for the participants. Social integration ensures solidarity and stabilises the identity of a group when it is accomplished in the lifeworld. (Zeuner et al.1998:64f). If there is not sufficient solidarity among the members, then a situation of increasing anomy and disagreement may occur. Anomy denotes a lack of binding mutual norms. The system may in a simple way be explained as the economic and legal system that works in society and organisations based on purposive rationality. Money and power serve as mechanisms for coordination of actions on markets and in bureaucracies and not communicative action. System integration is when money and power coordinate actions. Managerial integration relates to system integration but is here suggested as denoting the rational purposive ways of managing organisations, including the management of corporate branding, that assumes that organisations can be controlled by power and a privileged management perspective, as for example Integrated Marketing Communications, as illustrated in the last chapter.

The above discussion on forms of rationality and action was initiated to explain the basis for managerial social integration. Communicative action explains the mechanisms that create social integration at the micro-level of interaction between actors and offers a way in which it is possible to explore whether social integration is obtained or not. The next chapter describes a framework that can be used for exploring the managerial and social integration of corporate branding in an organisation. Communicative action and its validity claims may also indicate managerial integration when certain facts and norms are suggested as superior.

### **3.8 Summary**

So far we have looked at how the roots of communicative rationality are inherent in the structures of everyday communication and how the power of reason is immanent in ordinary language. By distinguishing between various forms of human action, it has further been shown how other forms of action are parasitic on communicative action. This demonstrates that strategic action depends on communicative action, which in turn is based on an extended form of rationality that can complement purposeful actions, such as a corporate branding strategy. The coordination of social action can be accomplished through either social integration that builds on communicative rationality or system integration that builds on the purposive rationality. The next chapter explains a framework as a tool for exploring managerial social integration of corporate branding in an organisation.





## **4 A framework for exploring managerial and social integration**

This chapter will explain, based on the previous theoretical discussions, how the managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy can be explored in an organisation. It demonstrates how we can apply parts of Habermas's theory in social research to promote knowledge that complements a corporate branding strategy with rich empirical material. The promise of such research has sometimes been obscured by epistemological debates without actually bringing any progress in the form of practical social inquiries. However, there are some authors, such as Kernstock and Brexendorf (2009), Forester (2003), Burkhart (2007), Leeper (1996), and Alvesson and Willmott (2003), who have managed to conduct interesting conceptual and empirical research by employing theoretical insights from Habermas. The aim in this chapter is to explain how parts of Habermas's theory may provide a possible basis for an empirical analysis whose framework serves as an analytical lens for exploring the managerial and social integration of corporate branding in an organisation. The chapter is structured as follows:

- First, I provide a brief introduction to critical theory and research based on Habermas.
- Second, I reflect about the possibilities and potential of employing a framework based on the theory of communicative action for exploring corporate branding in an organisation.
- Third, I present a framework as a heuristic tool for exploring an empirical case on corporate branding based on a qualification of the four claims to validity by clarifying the possible questions and answers that may follow from them.
- Fourth, I reflect on how Habermas's theory can be used for studying organisations.

#### **4.1 Applying Habermas's theory for empirical studies**

This project, as indicated, draws inspiration from critical theory that refers to the Frankfurt School and particular the development of a communicative perspective as put forward by Habermas. Classical critical scholars were traditionally occupied with ideology criticism, focusing on the emancipatory interest and the influence of false consciousness. Developments, especially in Habermas stance, have since the late 1970s reduced the traditional ideology criticism and instead concentrated on building a systematic theory of communicative action. "This project retains many of the features of ideology critique, including the idea of sorting out constraining social ideas from those grounded in reason, but it envisages procedural ideas rather than substantive critique and thus becomes quite different from traditional ideology critique" (Alvesson and Deetz 2006:263). Whereas the substantive critique focused on the naturalisation of social order, universalisation of managerial interests, suppression of conflicting interests, domination of instrumental reasoning processes, and the production of consent, procedural ideas focus on the communicative processes that may produce social order and consent in various ways (Ibid. 2006:261). The procedural ideas are dynamic and may be used to understand processes of social phenomena like corporate branding. The development of a second and third wave of corporate branding that emphasise branding as process indicates the relevance of using a theory and analytical lens that are procedural like Habermas's theory on communicative action. Habermas challenges the dominance of rationality, "which tends to reduce human beings to parts of a well-oiled societal machine" (Alvesson and Willmott 2003:2). A focus on communicative rationality can contribute with a new way of understanding the implications of a corporate branding strategy by considering how it is rooted in the underlying forces of communication and actions across an organisation.

The theory of communicative action has been applied across various disciplines and topics with different implications (e.g. Leeper 1996; Karsten 2006; Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Toledo 1986; Kersten 2000; Burkhart 2007; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Forester 2003; O'Donnel, O'Regan and Coates 2000). The most common way to use the theory is to apply only parts of it and then shed new light on the specific topic of interests. Some examples of areas where Habermas's theory has been used conceptually and empirically are the creation of intellectual capital within knowledge management ( O'Donnel et al. 2000), diversity management (Kersten 2000), ethical aspects of public relations (Leeper 1996), the concept of understanding as a planning and evaluation tool in public relations (Burkhart 2007), implementation of management concepts (Karsten 2006), ethical notions in marketing techniques (Toledo 1986), communicative rationality in performance management systems (Broadbent and Laughlin 2009) and implications of Habermas's theory of communicative action for corporate brand management (Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009). Habermas's theory is often used to advance current thinking and thereby fill specifically identified knowledge gaps and help to qualify and advance developments within a specific topic of interest. The various ways to adopt and apply his theory are nearly as broad as Habermas's theory in itself. Depending on how the theory is understood and approached, it can both enlighten research with knowledge of theoretical as well as empirical relevance.

Parts of the theory of communicative action have been used by scholars to focus on issues on the macro level such as how the system colonizes the lifeworld, for instance how marketing techniques dominate contemporary society as an ethical problem, and also how the lifeworld may remain in charge (Toledo 1986). Other parts of his theory have been used by scholars in most studies to focus on various issues at the organisational and individual level. Some scholars suggest applying

specific parts of his theory at the conceptual level to advance their field of interest. Kernstock and Brexendorf (2009) inquire into the implications of applying the theory of communicative action to stakeholder interactions in corporate brand management to get a deeper understanding of personal interaction and develop a framework for managing the brand. A related focus is Burkhart's (2007) approach which applies the concept of understanding for the purpose of a planning and evaluation of public relations communications in what he suggests as a model for consensus-oriented public relations. O'Donnel et al. demonstrate how communicative action is the nexus of intellectual capital creation and a dynamic driver for organisational growth (2000). Karsten (2006) also focuses on the communicative action and the validity claims to extend the understanding of how management concepts are applied. And Forester (2003) suggests analysing a meeting in a public administration and demonstrates how the validity claims in may bring new insight into the pragmatic forces of a meeting. The conceptual uses of Habermas's theory are many and indicate how his communicative insight is considered relevant and capable of advancing current thinking in various academic fields. The use of Habermas's theoretical insight often includes only parts of his insight and is also often creative in making approximations to the field and context of study, but this does not necessarily reduce its analytical potential (e.g. Forester 2003).

The use of Habermas's theory have developed from a criticism to more constructive ways of using his theory for intellectual inspiration that may shed new light on of the chosen academic field. The parts of his theory about the communicative action and understanding have received particular attention because they focus on both general and relevant aspects as well as issues that have practical implications and which can be identified across a range of different disciplines. The relevance of using Habermas in the academic fields of

management, organisation theory, marketing and communications is particularly clear because the distinctions between different forms of actions relate to the often implicitly understood assumptions in these fields. This is also the case in this project where I try to demonstrate how corporate branding relates to the distinction between strategic and communicative action as well as other of insights discussed in the theory of communicative action. The theory helps to focus on some often taken-for-granted assumptions about action and rationality in corporate branding processes and reveals some possibly new insights with implications for corporate branding.

## **4.2 A corporate branding strategy relates to validity in an organisation**

It follows from chapters two and three that realising a corporate branding strategy in an organisation can be understood as a process of both managerial and social integration. It was further emphasised that central characteristics and assumptions of corporate branding imply that it cannot be controlled by management from a superior position because it relates to the social processes that establish validity among the members of the organisation.

If a corporate branding department was made solely responsible for all activities concerning corporate branding across a large global organisation, it would either be overloaded with work or be a very large department. Instead, organisations usually distribute corporate branding activities so that every function, department and member across the organisation can contribute, at least in principle. This requires that corporate branding activities are understood and coordinated sufficiently across the organisation. However simple this might seem, it cannot be assumed that a corporate branding strategy will immediately be understood across an organisation so that people's activities will support it, as demonstrated in

chapter two. Different perspectives and rationalities related to different organisational departments and activities can influence how a corporate branding initiative integrates across an organisation. In fact, members of the organisation might ignore or be sceptical about corporate branding and regard it as unnecessary if they cannot see its direct relevance to either their daily activities or the organisation. So managers of corporate branding who imagine that all the members of the organisation will automatically become brand ambassadors may experience challenges regarding support from the members of the organisation (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006). Furthermore, since a corporate branding management does not usually have direct authority over other departments in organisations, it has to support a corporate branding effort with convincing arguments and a strong case about why and how other parts of an organisation should contribute.

Consequently, the impact and successes of a corporate branding strategy are directly related to how it is understood by the members of the organisation and is relevant to other activities within the organisation. This implies that that a corporate branding strategy and its related activities, concepts, etc. are influenced by how it is based on validity. The validity of the Type Zero strategy and concept was for example primarily based on an inquiry about how a little group of external customers believed in the brand whereas the members of the organisation could not support it in the same way. What is said and done in relation to a strategy in the social context of the organisation indicates how corporate branding is integrated and constituted in an organisation. Focusing on such issues may demonstrate how a corporate branding strategy stands the test. Although this point is not controversial, the actual organisational impact of a strategy can sometimes be a surprise, as indicated in the introductory chapter and by Keller's (2003) insight that strategies are about improving the odds for success. It follows that

corporate branding is not only limited to and constituted by activities performed for instance by management and a corporate branding department, but also by beliefs and activities across the whole organisation. I will therefore suggest focusing on the interactions, beliefs, and consequently the validity, of a corporate branding strategy among the members of the organisation to explore its possible performance and success. Allow me to explain how the validity claims can reveal the validity of a corporate branding strategy.

### **4.3 The validity claims as a framework**

The theory of communicative action has often been understood as predominantly meta-theoretical, with little to say about what might be explored in empirical cases. However, Habermas, in fact, derived the idea of communicative rationality from considerations of how communication functions in everyday practice and his insights are therefore not detached from empirical studies. In fact, our everyday interaction would not function if we suspended communicative rationality. Of course, very few people explicitly think about their everyday interactions in the light of a communicative rationality; rather they assume it implicitly. Communicative rationality brings together four claims to validity that are always present in interaction according to Habermas. The present study recognises communicative rationality as inevitable with regard to how corporate branding emerges across an organisation, because managing corporate branding cannot bracket itself off from communicative rationality based on an assumption about some special kind of rationality that makes it possible to avoid the four validity claims. Rather, because corporate branding emerges through communication and various activities, it is also subject to communicative rationality. This does not deny that corporate branding and marketing are a set of purposeful activities that aim to represent the organisation or sell a product. The point is that communicative rationality cannot be avoided, suspended or subsumed under any

purposeful activity. Consequently, I suggest that the four claims to validity are adequate for exploring and indicating managerial and social integration of corporate branding across an organisation.

**Figure 4.1 Corporate branding based on communicative rationality**

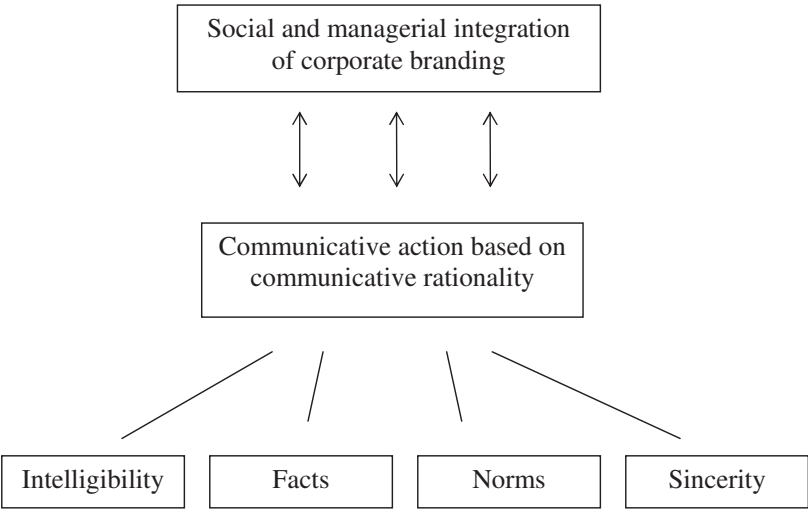


Figure 4.1 illustrates that a corporate branding strategy and corporate brand management relates to managerial and social integration across the organisation where integration is established through communicative rationality. This implies that corporate branding in practice is constituted either implicitly or explicitly through the four claims to validity. The double arrows illustrate that it is possible to view the communicative rationality and corporate branding as a two-way relation. On the one hand, it illustrates that corporate branding is susceptible to communicative rationality, that is, how a strategy or initiative is influenced by reactions among members of an organisation. On the other hand, it also illustrates



that a corporate branding initiative is influenced by how it is created and based on communicative rationality as a representation that brands the organisation.

In what follows the four validity claims are qualified. By paying explicit and careful attention to the validity claims in statements (called propositions and speech acts in Habermas's terminology) and actions, it is possible to recognise different beliefs about corporate branding. Such actions and statements can be both the official corporate branding material that represents a corporate branding effort and the reactions from members across an organisation. By focusing on the claims to validity, it becomes explicitly possible to consider the communicative basis that makes corporate branding work and also to assess the possibility of how it may be a success or failure in an organisation. I will use the four claims as an analytical framework to reveal the managerial and social integration of corporate branding in an organisation.

My assumption is that an organisation that undertakes a corporate branding effort cannot avoid the validity claims and accordingly that there is no causal relationship between a purposeful corporate branding activity and an organisation that automatically makes it successful. Corporate branding is not a self-explanatory phenomenon or an activity that can be supposed to be frictionlessly taken over by the members of an organisation, but is susceptible to validity to establish support and successfully integrate into an organisation. This is even more clearly so because corporate branding is a new phenomenon of which there is little or no background knowledge in an organisation. The claims to validity arise as a consequence of the need for intersubjective recognition of what corporate branding is about and how it can contribute to the organisation. Below the four claims to validity that can be implicitly or explicitly invoked are explained as to

what questions and answers they may give rise to with regard to a corporate branding effort.

- a) The claim of *intelligibility* arises when issues or activities are presented that an actor may challenge as incomprehensible. For example, new vocabulary employed by a corporate branding function using words such as 'brand promise', 'brand platform', and 'brand house' might not be immediately shared across the organisation. Another related issue can arise when people have different ideas about what corporate branding is; e.g. some may think of corporate branding as an extended marketing effort while others may not, in part because they understand it in two altogether different ways. The issue of intelligibility is of particular relevance for branding both concerning an understanding of what branding as an activity in an organisation, and also concerning the particular content of a corporate branding initiative. The Type Zero story indicated that management had two assignments: first to explain what corporate branding was about generally, and second to explain the meaning of the initiative and concept suggested. Typical questions regarding intelligibility are: What does it mean? How should it be understood? Answering this type of questioning will be conducted in what Habermas distinguishes as an *explicative discourse*, which is a dialogue concerned about understanding and explaining possible ambiguity in the primary discourse. A typical answer will be given as an interpretation and definition to provide mutual intelligibility for a statement. An interpretation and definition can be questioned as to whether it is understood or misunderstood.
- b) The claim to validity regarding *facts* concerns the *truth* of the state of affairs. It can be evoked when states of affairs are questioned as to whether they are true or false. One example is when a corporate branding campaign highlights some

factual characteristics of the organisation but ignores others. At Novo Nordisk, the choice was to brand the company based on a single focus on diabetes, which left the remaining 30% of the product portfolio that did not consist of diabetes products as partly unbranded by the corporate branding effort. People working in these areas could, of course, question the factual base of the corporate branding initiative. The validity claim with regard to facts can also be invoked when a corporate branding function presents the organisation in a new way that members of the organisation find difficult to recognise. Typical questions regarding facts are: Are things as presented? Why are they like that and not some other way? Answering these types of questions will be conducted in what Habermas distinguishes as a *theoretical discourse*, which is a dialogue concerned about claims to truth. A typical answer will be given as an explanation or assertion to provide shared knowledge about the content. An answer will be presented as facts that can be questioned as to whether they are true or false.

- c) The claim to validity regarding *norms* concerns the *rightness* of claims referring to an intersubjectively shared social world. It can be invoked when contextual norms that legitimise actions are challenged as either appropriate or inappropriate in relation to a present situation. If a corporate branding campaign expresses statements that are not in agreement with the common norms and values in an organisation, questions about rightness might be raised by its the members. For instance, some members of the organisation might see beginning to work professionally with corporate branding as an inappropriate and unnecessary activity, because it had not previously been a part of the organisational culture. The norms of an organisation are primarily rooted in its culture, hereunder such aspects as values, history, self-perception, management principles, ways of interacting between its members, etc. Typical questions

regarding norms are: Why did you do that? Why did you not act differently? Answering these kinds of questions will be done in a dialogue that tries to reach a mutual agreement about norms. A typical answer will be given as a justification which can be questioned as to whether it is right or wrong.

- d) The claim to validity regarding *sincerity* concerns inner states. It can be raised when expressions are not trusted as sincere and authentic. This validity claim can be illustrated in relation to expressing inner states of the self, such as emotions and dispositions that a listener may consider as sincere or insincere. The question of sincerity in an organisation with regard to a corporate branding effort can arise when members of the organisation refuse to accept a new brand expression of the company because it promotes a different profile from what people experience as a truthful picture of the company. This seems to be especially critical for activities like branding and marketing, which often try to persuade or sell something and emphasise certain qualities that some people might find questionable or to some extent exaggerated. Addressees of branding and marketing campaigns may be hard to convince of sincerity in the light of their awareness of the fact that organisations in competition use various means to try to catch the attention of their audiences. Sincerity among other things deals with the issue of living up to the campaign promises. Typical questions regarding sincerity are: Is it truthful? Is the organisation deceiving itself about itself? Is there agreement between words and actions? These questions cannot, according to Habermas, be answered in a discourse like the other three validity claims when the question arises in interaction between people. They can only be tested when the subsequent actions are in accordance with what is said in the first place. They can be evaluated as questions of consistency between promise and performance – that is between words and actions – as time passes. It may be noted that the question of consistency can also be raised in a

discussion regarding a corporate branding initiative in an organisation. Such a discussion of whether a brand represents a truthful profile of the company, in addition to consistency between words and subsequent action, can also be partly answered by considering intersubjective agreement regarding facts and norms in a branding initiative and those anchored in the organisational identity in a dialogue among the members of the organisation. This possibility of discussing sincerity is not a possibility between two people in dialogue regarding their mutual statement because they cannot prove their inner states in words to each other in the same way as inner states in an organisation that are shared among the members of the organisation, because it would just raise a new question regarding the sincerity of the proof. It is, however, to some extent possible in an organisation because the question sincerity is based on intersubjectivity between the members of the organisation. The answers to sincerity will be consistency between word and action and may be questioned as to whether they are sincere and consistent.

The point is that when any statement is made and an activity is undertaken, it simultaneously raises claims about whether it is intelligible, in accordance with facts so the propositional content of what is said is true, in accordance with legitimate norms in the social context, and in accordance with inner states of the organisation. The focus on the validity claims may therefore indicate managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy in an organisation. It can help us understand what might be questioned from various perspectives.

Table 4.2 below summarises how the claims to validity relate to domains, questions, answers and world relations. It can be used as a map to understand aspects of how communicative rationality is a basis for corporate branding efforts that might be challenged or supported by reason in an organisation.

**Table 4.2 Communicative rationality as a basis for corporate branding**

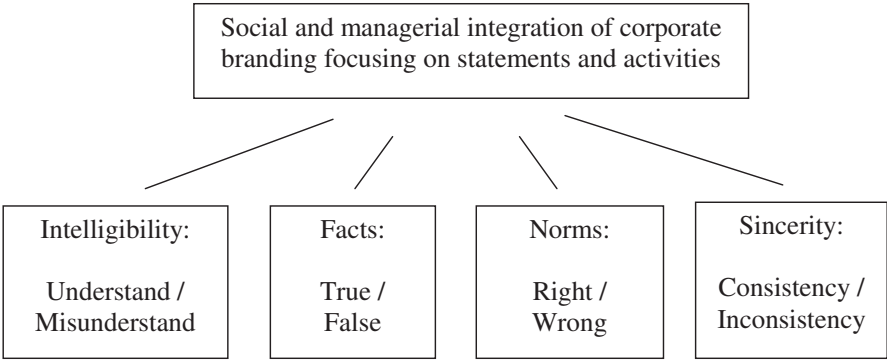
<b>The communicative rationality as a basis for corporate branding</b>				
<b>Validity claim</b>	<b>Intelligibility</b>	<b>Facts</b>	<b>Norms</b>	<b>Sincerity</b>
<b>Domain</b>	Language/ terminology	States of affairs	Contextual norms	Inner states
<b>World relation</b>	Social	Objective	Social	Subjective
<b>Typical questions</b>	What does it mean? How should it be understood?	Are things as presented?  Why are they like that and not some other way?	Why did you/they do that? Why did you/they not act differently?	Is it truthful?  Is the organisation deceiving itself about itself?
<b>Type of answers</b>	Interpretations	Assertions / explanations	Justifications	Consistency between word and action; between brand and organisational identity

Any statement, proposition or speech act contains all four claims to validity at once and is therefore predisposed to be challenged and supported by reason. Validity can be explicitly accentuated in communication when an actor questions a specific reason, or it can function implicitly without actors at all questioning the reasons provided. In the former instance, at least one of the four claims will be brought up as a theme in the communication, because an actor expresses doubt

about the reasons provided, whereas in the latter the communication continues with an implicit recognition of all four validity claims.

Using the validity claims as a framework makes it possible to recognise how different members across an organisation support or challenge a corporate branding effort. This implies that it is possible to focus on various activities and statements and explore the degree of possible consent or dissent among actors in the organisation. As to the implicit validity, it also indicates which statements and activities that are silently accepted without questioning. The validity claims make it possible to identify managerial and social integration of a corporate branding effort in an organisation through focusing on statements and activities. It may be noted that the validity claims may also reveal aspects of managerial integration based on strategic action because, as demonstrated in chapter 3, strategic action depends on communicative action. Figure 4.3 below illustrates how social and managerial action is based on the validity claims.

**Figure 4.3 Managerial and social integration of corporate branding in an organisation**



The analytical potential of the framework is underlined by the fact that a corporate branding strategy emerges into and across an organisation through various activities, all of which involve communication or actions that can be expressed through communication— for example when the branding department sets up special events, activities and statements expressing the corporate brand to the organisation.

It is relevant to consider the communicative rationality of branding because each statement has a referential, norm-invoking, expressive and attention-framing aspect related to it (Alvesson and Willmott 1992:53). Moreover, the framework makes it possible to explore what happens when statements are supported and not challenged and vice versa. Much everyday interaction evokes all four pragmatic validity claims simultaneously, which then constitute situations, relations, beliefs, and social status all at once. The framework makes it possible to understand and explore how rich and complex everyday interactions are and how they are connected to reasoning (e.g. Forester 2003). It makes it possible to explore how members of the organisation in communicative processes challenge and support a corporate branding effort when they evaluate, legitimate and recommend strategies.

#### **4.4 An intermediate reflection on organisations**

Since Habermas does not specifically focus on organisations but mostly on individuals and society, it is necessary to clarify how his insights are appropriate for the study of organisations. The question that needs to be answered is how communicative actions are reflected in organisations.

It should be noted that Habermas identifies strategic and communicative actions in both organisations and in society. According to Habermas, organisations are formally organised, legal self-regulative systems, operating with a rational



purposive goal. By referring to the legal system, he distinguishes them as formally constituted and regulated by law. On mutual understanding in organisations, he holds that it is only partially rescinded by other forms of purposive rational steering media that are operative, such as money and power (1987:308). This means that although other steering media are operative, communicative actions are still basic and not suspended or subsumed under the purposive rationality. This is made clear in the following quote: “Even within formally organized domains of action, interaction is still connected via the mechanism of mutual understanding. If all processes of genuinely reaching understanding were banished from the interior of organisations, formally regulated social relations could not be sustained, nor could organizational goals be realized” (1987:310). This implies that, no matter how well-planned a strategy is, its success will always relate to the mechanism of reaching mutual understanding. However, it would be incorrect to infer that there is a linear causal relationship between strategies and reaching understanding. “We may not assume, even in the case of the capitalist economic organization and the modern state organization, any linear dependency of organizational rationality on the rationality of members’ actions” (1987:306). This means that organisations cannot assume that their dominant rationality is automatically shared by its members.<sup>13</sup> This insight is interesting in view of the fact that although contemporary organisations often underline their dependency on people in the organisations, it seems they are unable to assume an automatic fixed causal relationship between the rationality of the organisation and its members. Again the purposive rationality inherent in strategy relates to how it is vindicated through communicative rationality. The analysis of the empirical case focuses on the validity of a corporate branding strategy among the members of an organisation. The level of analysis thereby both focus on organisational level and individual level. The strategy and the strategic initiatives represent the organisational level

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<sup>13</sup> This challenge is also well known in economic theory as the problem of principal and agent.

where the purpose and intentions for the whole organisation are expressed through various statements and activities decided by management. But the analysis also focuses at the individual level and how members react to the strategy.

The next chapter will explain the research approach and method including how the framework is employed for an empirical inquiry.

## **5 Research approach and method**

Realising a corporate branding strategy does not imply an ideal model of management or integration across an organisation. Nor is there some superior theoretical or practical approach that will ensure that a company obtains the promised advantages of a corporate branding. It depends to a large extent on the particular context and organisation. It is therefore a contingent and open empirical question how a corporate branding strategy gets managed and integrated across an organisation.

The theoretical inquiry made a distinction between managerial and social integration, and argued for a relation between these two aspects when a corporate branding strategy is realised. The theoretical inquiry also indicated that there are various disciplines and perspectives that affect how corporate branding is understood and therefore indicated that corporate branding could be seen as a socially constructed phenomenon. The discussion in the chapter 2 about corporate branding and integration was based on a critical, constructive and communicative perspective which, as mentioned, is based in a constructive way on insight from Habermas' communications theory and critical management studies. The chapter discussed integrative aspects of corporate branding and emphasised some central assumptions and conditions that influence a corporate branding strategy. Chapter 3 explained social integration in some detail based on Habermas' theory of communicative action followed, and chapter 4 suggested an analytical framework for exploring managerial and social integration of corporate branding in practice.

This chapter suggests an approach and method of studying the managerial and social integration of corporate branding empirically. The approach and method are based on the previous theoretical discussions and has also been designed with

reference to the specific empirical context and object of study. I suggest a method that is open to the different perspectives on corporate branding and makes it possible empirically to identify and discuss various examples of both managerial and social integration at Novo Nordisk based on the framework from the theory of communicative action.

The structure that organises the project and systematises the research seems to indicate a classical deductive approach to the research problem. However, this project applies theory as a reflective background and an analytical tool to explain theoretical questions and empirical observations, and it also uses empirical observations to develop conclusions beyond the applied theoretical insight. The scientific approach with regard to the relationship between theory and empirical material and their respective importance in the research is then reciprocal rather than consecutive. This implies that the project cannot be categorised as deductive or inductive research in any strict classical sense, but rather as a combination. On the one hand, the theory serves as analytical lens through which the case is understood. And on the other hand, the case also “speaks for itself” through my interpretations and throws light on the theory, context, analyses and conclusions.

The research process was a complex and interwoven process of theoretical insight and empirical experience combined, which means that before the theoretical review and account were finished, I had started collecting and producing empirical material. The interactions between the theoretical and empirical parts of my study made me search for both additional theoretical and empirical insight by constantly questioning my actual level of knowledge during the study. It is therefore not my intention that the empirical material should either prove or disapprove the theoretical approach, but it may sharpen the focus of certain aspects in the inquiry and illustrate specific points. I have already used various examples from the case

to illustrate the theoretical inquiry in the previous chapters, a fact which to some extent also reflects how the research was conducted as an interactive process between the theory and case. The theoretical approach is based on rather abstract categories that draw attention to important aspects in the corporate branding process, but also leave an opportunity for the empirical material to deepen and improve the analysis. The aim is to study and explore the case about corporate branding at Novo Nordisk based on an analytical framework from parts of the theory of communicative action supplemented by some interpretive principles and insight from the literature review about corporate branding and integration.

This chapter presents the scientific approach and the methodological details of the empirical inquiry. It is structured as follows:

- The first section explains the research approach and its implications for the knowledge produced. It explains the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the inquiry and furthermore elaborates on the personal aspect of engaging in research.
- The second section explains how to explore an empirical case based on the communicative perspective, previous literature review, and analysis of integration.
- The third section explains how participatory observation, interpretations and interpretive repertoire, and reflections are a part of the method.
- The fourth section describes characteristics the case study.
- The fifth section clarifies the empirical sources of the case study.

## **5.1 Scientific approach**

This project is situated within the social sciences and based on qualitative research concerned with the interpretation of meaning. The philosophical debate concerning epistemological and ontological assumptions and the possible

consequences in the social sciences is on-going, ranging from positivist to strong constructivist conceptions of knowledge. The debates circle around questions about how we can understand phenomena in our world and what kind of valid scientific knowledge we can produce. The character of knowledge and its validity are often discussed in relation to the reliability of the research processes and results. Researchers constantly reflect on these aspects of knowledge in their attempts to provide trustworthy research results. Even within the physical sciences, researchers are often confronted with uncertainty and the question of the nature and truth of their knowledge.

Plato provided a basic foundation for knowledge as *justified true beliefs*, which translated into modern language defines knowledge in the following way: *in order to know that a given proposition is true, one must not only believe the relevant true proposition, but one must also have justification for doing so* (e.g. Chisholm 1982). In other words, knowledge for Plato depended on the ability to justify that a belief is true. However simple this may seem, the epistemological debate concerning the nature of knowledge and what makes a belief true still challenges philosophers and researchers. The American philosopher Edmund Gettier challenged Plato's conception of knowledge in 1963, which had lasted for more than 2000 years. He demonstrated that one could have knowledge by accident although the three conditions of justified true beliefs were satisfied. These much debated concepts of knowledge are still central today, regardless of what philosophical position researchers occupy from radical constructivism to positivism. The concepts are not necessarily discussed in terms of justified true beliefs in epistemological debates, but implicitly much of the debates even in other terms may be seen as a discussion concerning how we may justify a belief as true. Even in positions that are strongly sceptical, constructivist or de-constructivist, the question of knowledge is central. Deconstruction, for example, can thus be seen

*not* as a denial of *truth*, but as a denial of our ability to know *truth*. A claim that for example denies truth is, in fact, loaded with the paradox of how we should believe, justify and understand the claim itself.

To justify that a belief as true in the social sciences not only opens up a particular discussion of the specific context and criteria that underpin making certain knowledge claims and conclusions, but also requires a more general clarification about the epistemological and ontological assumptions in the research process. For example, any conclusion about a relation between social and managerial integration in realising a corporate branding strategy is susceptible to the justification provided when theoretical and empirical arguments and the discussion of possible counter arguments are central warrants that may support and make the knowledge belief probable in a relevant academic context. In this project the principles from the theory of communicative action and my discussion of the contemporary corporate branding literature serves as the central warrants, combined with the interpretations in the empirical inquiry to come. However, the kinds of warrants that underpin my argument are not to be understood as a solid Archimedean vantage point<sup>14</sup> from where it is possible objectively to fully explain everything about the processes of corporate branding.

All conceptions of knowledge may be debated in a philosophical discourse and just adding one concept more opens up an array of further possible debates. I will, however, try to elaborate in some detail the premises from which this project is conceived without entering into deep philosophical debates, because that is not the aim here. The aim is rather to make clear the epistemological and ontological

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<sup>14</sup> Archimedes wrote nothing about vantage points and objective views of things, but this phrase seems to have become popular among large numbers of academics. Archimedes was talking about points of leverage (i.e. engineering).

assumptions that my theoretical inquiry is based upon and relate these to the empirical focus of the study. Furthermore I will briefly discuss my way of engaging in research.

This project is influenced by the linguistic turn; this term was originally coined in an anthology by Richard Rorty in 1967. It recognises that our access to the world is mediated through the medium of language which influences how we understand the world. The linguistic turn covers a broad development where especially the relationship between philosophy and language is central. One of the most influential analytical philosophers today is Jürgen Habermas, who puts language and communication in the centre of our knowledge relation to the world, as explained in his theory of communicative action. Later, Rabinow and Sullivan (1979) coined the phrase “the interpretive turn” to describe the development in the humanities and social sciences away from positivism toward interpretivism, a development that started with the linguistic turn. Interpretivism emphasises that there is no neutral language or access to the world beyond our interpretation. Hence, man is seen a self-interpreting animal because there is no structure of meaning beyond our interpretation of it. A consequence of interpretivism in science is a greater call for reflection about our assumptions and results in research, according to contemporary critical scholars (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, Alvesson 2011).

These turns to a large extent overlap and emphasise an epistemological shift in science that places language and interpretation as central in our understanding and creation of knowledge of the world. Habermas, who places language and communication at the centre, suggests an epistemological approach in which intersubjectivity and consensus among social actors are important for both scientific and everyday knowledge. This is in contrast to positivism on the one



hand, which, simply put, suggests that the world can be formally understood through sense experience as seen in naturalist and realist positions, and on the other hand to a radical constructivism, which suggests that all knowledge is based on mental and social constructs.

My research approach is influenced by these developments. My position is broadly rooted in critical management studies (Alvesson and Deetz 2000; Alvesson and Willmott 1992, 2003) and particularly critical theory as we find it in Habermas' position (Habermas 1984, 1987, 2001), which challenges established knowledge and instrumental rationality. This is related to but in contrast to the post-modern intellectual stream that also has a critical purpose. Critical theory typically tries to open up the established social reality and question taken-for-granted knowledge. It is critical and sceptical about positions and knowledge that claim to be the only truth, like for example some perspectives on corporate branding.

Critical theory is an epistemological paradigm that may be categorized as constructivist as it incorporates understanding among actors in a dynamic process as constitutive for knowledge. There is no universal point that enables a particularly privileged perspective on "reality". Concepts like corporate branding, social and managerial integration are constructs which may provide meaningful descriptions and explanations of certain matters in our world, but they do not exclude other meaningful perspectives. This also follows from my discussion of these central concepts in chapters two and three, which illustrated how several perspectives try to define and conceptualise what corporate branding is. This implies that I regard social and organisational reality as constructed in a meaningful way through language.

I recognise the on-going academic debate about how corporate branding should be understood, indicated for example by the various waves and perspectives on corporate branding. While a corporate brand and corporate brand management often generate value for companies which can be exchanged for money, and brands are also often materialised and reified through various artefacts such as mouse mats, wristbands and pens, I nevertheless regard corporate branding as a socially constructed symbolic phenomenon. The theory of communicative action, the sociological concept of social integration, and the term managerial integration, are also constructed concepts whose meaning depends on the perspective that employ them, which in this case are parts of critical theory.

While I regard physical objects as existing in the physical world regardless of whether they are being studied or not, a social phenomenon comes into existence through the constructions of concepts, theories, interpretations and interactions between subjects. Social science can therefore be characterised as subjects studying subjects. The complexities in this relationship led Anthony Giddens (1987) to suggest the notion of the *double hermeneutic*, which rather concisely describes the complexity of the social sciences. He explains that “the concepts of the social sciences are not produced about an independently constituted subject-matter, which continues regardless of what these concepts are. The ‘findings’ of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe” (Giddens 1987:20). Double hermeneutics refers to the fact that research in the social sciences often consists of interpretations of other people’s interpretations. Social phenomena like corporate branding are constituted and under the influence of concepts, theories, perspectives and even the research undertaken. So in doing an interview or making an observation of some specific phenomenon, it is impossible to distinguish definitively between the specific phenomenon studied and the various influences coming from developments in the field being studied.

This project is ontologically based on a constructivist approach that recognises the temporary and changing conditions for how we understand social phenomena like corporate branding in our world. This does not, however, imply that anything goes, as in an anarchistic theory of knowledge such as suggested by the philosopher Paul Feyerabend in his work called *Against Method*. On the contrary, it implies that intersubjective arguments about a meaningful understanding of phenomena may enter into epistemological discussion about how reality is constituted ontologically. The constructivist approach is therefore based on intersubjective validity about a meaningful world in accordance with critical theory and openness to the possibility that things could be different from other perspectives.

In terms of the classical concept of justified beliefs, this means that my interpretations of the empirical case are presented as beliefs justified through my theoretical and methodological approach, which may suggest a picture of what could possibly be, interpretively and reflectively, a part of a constructed truth open to other perspectives. This implies that truth is not seen in absolute terms, but as a justified interpretation based on my theoretical and methodological perspective grounded in a constructive ontology.

In terms of my epistemological approach indicated through the discussion above, where I explain the constructive nature of the concepts and theory employed in this study, I do so based on the hermeneutical tradition as located in the critical theory from Habermas (1984, 1987, and 2001) and in the parts of critical management studies (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009; Alvesson and Willmott 2003) that I have included. Hence knowledge is the product of reflective interpretation of meaningful statements in context, as the social world is

approached and understood through the medium of language and interpretation. So the knowledge that follows from this ontological and epistemological approach is based on intersubjective validity, that is, rational arguments and beliefs justified through open reflective interpretation.

### **Engaging in research from a personal and professional perspective**

The choice of an epistemological and ontological approach is based on the theory and position that is central to this project. But this argument does not fully explain why I personally want to engage in research in this way and not another way. I could have chosen another theoretical approach and another ontological and epistemological stance, such a critical approach based on Foucault and his archaeology and genealogy and the arguments that are central to them. Often one's choice of position relates to prior research and personal experience.

The professors of communication studies, Steve May and Dennis Mumby (2005), suggest that besides recognising the position of researchers, it is also important to consider the way they *engage* in research. They argue that to engage in research is not a matter of being “a disinterested, objective bystander who adopts an all-seeing, “god’s eye view” toward truth. Instead, scholars have to come to recognize the extent to which the researcher is implicated in the construction of truth claims” (2005:8). They argue that a researcher brings more into research than is accounted for in elaborating about a position. They suggest, that researchers to some extent need to pay attention to the personal side of their experience that may also somehow influence the way they engage in research.

As editors of the book: *Engaging organizational communication - theory and science*, May and Mumby (2005) invited scholars from multiple perspectives to ponder on the relationship between their personal experience and biography and the research position they hold and support today. While it might not be a surprise

that many of the scholars had a rather close affinity between their personal life stories and their research position, it was a surprise to find that some scholars revealed and reflected on their experience going as far back as their childhood, which had somehow influenced their present research position. There was some indication that researchers do not just adopt a perspective, but rather engage in one both personally and professionally as a foundational way of viewing the world. While the personal stories are normally irrelevant compared to the academic reasons for holding a position, they provide an interesting suggestion about how the personal element influences research in a way that can be difficult to account for. When I came across these suggestions about the personal dimensions of research and engagement, it opened another level of reflection about my own engagement. So far, I had only considered the influence of the researcher in more traditional ways, such as in participatory observation or in the interview situation, and closely connected to the practical side of research activity – not at this level.

In consideration of the influence from personal experience on theory, George Cheney, says that a common request to guest speakers from students following his teaching is: “How did you get to the point where you are today” (2005:65). He notes that such a question has two implications. First it considers the keys to professional success, and second it implies a deeper reflection on how important moments, people, and ideas shape intellectual development. To put his work into perspective and explain how he became a critical scholar, Deetz (2005:87f) reveals, among other things, details from his biography, including considerations about his childhood, family, studies at college and university. His intention is to point to the fact, that he, and other scholars, was influenced by his personal story and context.

The ways we enter into and engage in research are influenced by many factors of which some are explicit and some are implicit. We can account for and reflect on some of the assumptions that influence our perspectives, but there are always blind spots that escape our attention. These blind spots are just as interesting as the personal details in indicating connections and implications for the researcher's position, arguments and knowledge. Giving an account of personal biography may give the reader an idea of relevant background for the claims raised in a specific perspective. However, I think it is necessary to assess the relevance of the information included carefully with regard to the research purpose in order to keep a reasonable balance between too many personal details and the focus on research. The striking and unusual point Deetz makes is to emphasise such facts as his family background and his sister's tragic death as elements that had an impact on his development and position of scholar.

I believe that we cannot be aware of all the assumptions, the cultural impacts of our historical genealogy, people and situations that influenced our intellectual development. But what we can do is at least to try to reflect on how we think various aspects have influenced the research we engage in. And in a process of reflection, there will of course be selection of what we find relevant to consider in relation to our particular subject and to our readers or listeners when we argue for our suggestions and perspectives on matters that we find interesting.

Based on these consideration allow me briefly to emphasise a few personal and professional details that may have influenced the approach and knowledge production in this project. I have a master's degree in business administration and philosophy from Copenhagen Business School. This study inspired me to question established business knowledge as it is conventionally presented in theories of management, organisations and marketing, and moreover to suggest ways of

improving established theories from a position based on critical theory. The inspiration behind this present project was a study of strategic leadership communication in the 50 biggest companies in Denmark completed in 2005. It focused on the central official statements in these companies. The conclusion was that many, even resourceful and powerful companies to some extent overlook or ignore common communicative qualities that support their vision, mission and values (Bordum and Hansen 2005). This study developed a new concept termed Strategic Leadership Communication which argued for a close relation between basic communicative qualities and strategic leadership. The study of corporate branding and social and managerial integration is in line with my previous inquiries, but takes a different approach and is based more explicitly on a constructive approach to critical theory for exploring corporate branding processes in an organisation. During my career, I have been inspired much by my combined background in business administration and philosophy in various professional roles as a business researcher, consultant, and strategic advisor in the areas of communication, management and organisational development in both the private and public sector. It is from this personal and professional background that this project is approached and it has undoubtedly influenced my position, choice of theory, and how I interpret and conclude about the empirical case.

## **5.2 Theoretical insight as the basis for a method**

Social phenomena like corporate branding are complex to study, but there is a considerable methodological literature on the social sciences that provides numerous possibilities for the researcher (e.g. Yin 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994; Andersen 1994; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009; Alvesson 2011). As mentioned, interpretation and reflection are central to the knowledge production in this project in accordance with my ontological and epistemological approach. In

the following, I will explain how the previous theoretical insight from chapters two, three and four is the basis for a method.

In the social sciences, there are a number of issues to be considered when the object of study are social phenomena influenced by various factors such as people, context, etc. and focusing on specific events that cannot be repeated and where the researcher is, to some unclear extent, involved in the context which is being researched, as Giddens points out (see also Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). This project is generally susceptible to all these factors. It is therefore conducted by means of a research method that produces knowledge while trying to take these factors into account. While it is impossible to give an account of every detail in a research process, the methodological steps followed may explain and justify the research process and the character of the knowledge produced (Andersen 1994:277). This case study is, of course, not the only possible interpretation of the corporate branding phenomenon at Novo Nordisk, but the analyses and conclusions presented in the project are considered the most plausible interpretations of the case given the method, perspective and information available in the particular period of study.

Corporate branding has its primary heritage from marketing (King 1991). Whereas a classical marketing perspective oriented towards the market provided the initial basis for the development of corporate branding, recently other disciplines have also contributed to the field. Today, the development of the phenomenon of corporate branding is driven by several disciplines and marketing has become one discipline among others. This project explores corporate branding from a particular communicative perspective. Employing this perspective may contribute with insight about the internal processes of integrating corporate branding in an organisation. The purpose of introducing this perspective is not to bend corporate



branding towards a communicative perspective and thereby devalue other disciplines in the field, but to suggest a perspective that recognises other perspectives and, at the same time, adds complementary knowledge to the field of corporate branding. My aspiration is that other disciplines and perspectives could be inspired by the communicative perspective employed.

Schultz (2005) emphasises that a focus on processes could be a way to advance this multidisciplinary field; this project does focus on processes, which means that corporate branding is considered as an on-going developing activity in an organisation. A common feature of the established corporate branding literature with noteworthy inspiration from marketing is a major focus on the market and the consumer in the branding process (e.g. Keller 2003). I acknowledge the importance of focusing on the market and the consumer, but just as important is a focus on the internal processes that make corporate branding understood and integrated among the members of an organisation. If the members of the organisation do not understand and support its corporate branding activities, they will undermine and render these activities ineffective and, in the worst case, actually damage the business. This research perspective therefore focuses on the processes that make corporate branding a meaningful activity among the members of an organisation, based on an assumption about their critical importance to the success of corporate branding as indicated in chapters two and three. It may be argued that internal organisational aspects of corporate branding have somehow been dealt with in analogous perspectives (e.g. de Chernatony 2002; Bergstrom et al. 2002; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006), but not from a communications perspective based on Habermas with a focus on social and managerial integration. Various approaches have been suggested in contemporary branding literature that demonstrates the importance of internal aspects, but their perspectives and focuses are different.

So how may it be rewarding to employ the communicative perspective in relation to the research problem outlined in an empirical case study? I believe that a part of the theory of communicative action has the potential to explain and deal with central practical and theoretical aspects of corporate branding in a way that is not only relevant for this project but also to some extent for understanding the dynamics in corporate branding processes in general. As indicated in chapter four on the framework, the theory has been employed with the purpose of producing new insight, knowledge and reflections across various disciplines and areas (e.g. Leeper 1996; Bordum and Hansen 2005; Karsten 2006; Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Toledo 1986; Kersten 2000; Burkhart 2007; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Forester 2003; O'Donnel et al. 2000). The use of parts of Habermas' theory here will suggest a way to understand how the strategic aims of a corporate branding strategy are connected to, and reflected in, communication and activities among members of an organisation. The intention is that the explanations and insights provided by this perspective and my interpretation will offer both adequate and clarifying knowledge about central aspects of corporate branding.

Let me briefly recall the conclusions from the preceding chapters which provide the basis for the empirical case study. Corporate branding efforts imply the question of integration which was explained as social and managerial integration. Social integration is based on communicative rationality, which is a basic form of rationality that also is assumed in managerial integration. The central concept inherent in managerial and social integration and communicative rationality is understanding based on the four claims to validity.

The importance of involving the members of the organisation in a corporate branding effort is recognized among contemporary scholars on branding. There are various reflections about how to involve them, with some scholars recognising

the need to manage how members of the organisation understand a branding effort and others seeing it as a question of how they understand the corporate branding effort. Managerial and social integration explains this difference. My argument is that the understanding of a corporate branding effort among the members of an organisation is prior to and a prerequisite for how a corporate branding strategy becomes realised, which is supported by the suggestion of how communicative action is prior to strategic action. If the members of an organisation do not support the brand, they may challenge a corporate branding effort. The causal relation in my argument is based on bringing in new theoretical insight from the theory of communicative action to the field of corporate branding.

The empirical inquiry and method proceed from the line of argument in the previous chapters and are based on the framework of an analytical tool that includes the validity claims as the interpretive repertoire for exploring the case about corporate branding at Novo Nordisk. The validity claims and the questions they raise are particularly relevant to use for exploring practice because they are assumed, implicitly or explicitly, to be identifiable in all action and communication related to a corporate branding effort. Hence, the theoretical insights, together with these reflections, are the basic input for the method. I will continue by explaining how participatory observation, interpretation and reflections are a part of the method.

### **5.3 About participatory observation, interpretation and reflection**

When does interpretation begin in a research project? At the beginning of my research process, I was convinced that interpretation could be located in a specific analytical phase after collecting empirical material. However, as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) demonstrate, interpretation is an on-going activity that cannot be located in a specific phase. Even before I began visiting Novo Nordisk, and before

I even planned to undertake a research project in the organisation, I had background knowledge and certain ideas about the company. I knew part of its history, knew that it was among Denmark biggest companies with a reputation as socially responsible and some charismatic and admired leaders. This knowledge was part of my initial interpretation and background knowledge about the company pieced together by different sources such as newspapers, TV and descriptions in different academic texts. From the first day, when I started walking the corridors of the company, I added new observations to my background knowledge of the company step by step, gradually increasing and also revising my initial insight. In the process of learning facts and obtaining new knowledge about the company, I did not immediately reflect on how from a certain perspective I was somehow in the middle of interpreting what kind of company Novo Nordisk was.

In the research process reflection is about the complex relationship between knowledge production and the knowledge producer and may be relevant at several levels. It is about how the researcher is aware of the specific conditions and assumptions influencing the knowledge produced and the arguments suggested. It is about making the ontological, epistemological and other conditions of the research project explicit and on an on-going basis taking them into consideration in relation to results and interpretations. It is about how it can be made probable that the method applied and interpretations suggested will produce reliable knowledge about the object of study. Reflection is an on-going process that turns a self-critical eye on the arguments and interpretations and considers other possible understandings of theory, method and the empirical case. I agree with Alvesson and Sköldberg, who generally suggest that reflection is about paying attention to “the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical

material is constructed, interpreted and written” (2000:5). Careful reflection about assumptions, conditions, theory and empirical interpretations involved in the research may provide a basis for establishing a strong argument about the validity of the knowledge produced in a research project.

In some of the literature on method (e.g. Miles and Huberman 1994) interpretation is seen as limited to a specific phase, not including the problem of interpretation illustrated above. The kind of information about a company mentioned above is often referred to as description without further need of explaining the perspective or the assumptions that make such a description credible. And as long as researchers do not suggest descriptions that challenge what is seen as common knowledge among other researchers, such explanation seems unnecessary. However, it is not always obvious what common knowledge is when unexpected experiences occur. In the case of exploring corporate branding at Novo Nordisk, there are differences between my interpretations and the way other researchers have interpreted the branding activities, as indicated in the Introduction (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008, Karmark 2005; Sandstrøm 2003; Christensen and Morsing 2010).

As I gradually learned more about Novo Nordisk, I also started being a bit critical. Everything seemed perfect and if, for example, a critical issue emerged in the media, the company had it all sorted out beforehand. A manual on the shelf could tell the manager on duty about what to do as the most obvious issues had already been anticipated through scenario planning. The part of the organisation, where I was located, had a professional approach to managing the various challenges that the company faced (this is, of course, also my interpretation, but I doubt that this claim would be disputed by either the company or external stakeholders). One of my fellow PhD colleagues, Finn Janning, who conducted a research project in

another of the Novo Group's companies called NNIT (Novo Nordisk IT), expressed the professional approach of Novo Nordisk in the following way during a lunch conversation: "It is hard to find an entry for research or to make a recommendation for the company as a implication of your findings. If you do, it equals improving the performance by 1/100 of a second". My own observations, as well as Janning's, made me a bit critical of how everything seemed to be perfect with room for very little improvement. It was therefore an unexpected surprise to me as well as the organisation, when the Type Zero experience occurred. While it was a problematic experience for the people responsible for the Type Zero effort, and one that needed to be dealt with as fast as possible, it was an eye opening problematic experience right in front of me that would be interesting to explore for a longer period. Both Janning's interpretations and my own reflect how we were participant observers trying to find a balance between being close to the company studied and at the same time keeping a distance.

### **Participatory observation**

A central part of my research was conducted through participatory observation and interviews. Participatory observation is a method where the researcher has the dual role of being both a participant that develops a qualified understanding of the field studied while at the same time maintains a distance as someone who describes and understands what is going on through certain frameworks and interpretations.

The method of participatory observation has its roots in ethnographic research. "Ethnography does not represent a coherent and clearly prescribed methodology; rather, it indicates a general research orientation, which can assume a variety of forms" (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009:85). Ethnographic studies may be characterised as studies that require a relatively long period of time "in the field" to explore, observe and understand the everyday life and practice of a group of

people in order to provide a detailed in-depth description of naturally occurring events (e.g. Yin 2003:11; Miles and Huberman 1994). Inductive ethnography is primarily concerned about the data provided as central to the result, and considers interpretation and theory as secondary relative to the data. In contrast, other variants, such as interpretive, critical, and post-modern ethnography, respectively emphasise and focus on interpretive frameworks, critical reflection, and questions of representation and narration, and therefore take advantage of a more theoretical approach to ethnography. The difference between the variants, and in particular the role of theory and interpretive perspectives, touches upon a debate within philosophy of science concerning the cognitive capabilities of perception and our relation to the world. As already mentioned, the theoretical approach primarily guides how I explore the case, but the empirical material is also allowed to speak for itself to a certain extent, although there is no unmediated access to the world beyond our language and interpretations according to my position. So “speak for itself” means that, when appropriate, empirical examples are used to illustrate arguments and theory beyond the theoretical framework, but of course interpreted and constructed through my lens. The story of how corporate branding developed at Novo Nordisk during my study presented in chapter six also has an aspect of “speaking for itself”, because the empirical material, events, people and other aspects included are constructed into a story in chronological order in line with how things happened.

I will not enter deeper into the debate about theoretical bearing and ethnography, but continue with a description of and reflections about my participatory observations related to the case study. “It is difficult to study something one is heavily involved in” (Alvesson 2003:167). The dilemma of being close and at the same time keeping a distance to the field of study is difficult and was a subject for on-going considerations during my study. I often reflected on how I could interpret

various observations of which I was a part by considering the transformative nature of my fieldwork where I searched for answers to questions about people and events, and at the same time found myself included in the stories of others. The research literature has some general considerations on this dilemma, but does not suggest how to solve it (e.g. Yin 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994). The common advice is to try and reflect about how the researcher is a part of the actual context which is under study (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). I will try to describe how close I went, but also how I kept a distance and how I managed the influence from the organisation on my research project.

### **Business researcher at Novo Nordisk**

I studied and was in contact with Novo Nordisk for about three years, had three different managers, and was located in two different departments – so I got around. During the period when I explored the corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk, I was also spending half of my time at the Doctoral School at Copenhagen Business School – which was a part of arrangement in the contract I wrote when I became an industrial PhD. I shifted location between the two places every week, to make sure that I could balance between being closely involved at Novo Nordisk and could have the time and distance to reflect on my empirical material.

The time spent at Novo Nordisk was primarily at headquarters in Bagsværd in Denmark. The headquarters is very big, in fact like a small town with almost 4000 people employed. At headquarters, about 850 people work in production, 1000 in research and development, and about 2150 work in administration. I was located in the part of Novo Nordisk that takes care of administration, more specifically first as a member of the corporate communications department and later, once it was established, as a member of the corporate branding department. During my



stay, I had the same facilities as other members of the organisation. I had an official Novo Nordisk e-mail account, an office PC, and continual access to corporate information, meetings and social activities. These circumstances gave easy access to the organisation and helped me a lot to navigate around and find interesting people and pieces of information. Staying at headquarters was fascinating because it gave me a unique opportunity to follow a lot of the activities and central projects going on, including the corporate branding projects. And although I was located at headquarters in the administration, there was easy access to people in production and research and in other functional areas on other sites both in Denmark and across the world. A consequence of staying at headquarters was also that people from all over the world frequently came to visit, which gave me a straightforward opportunity to talk to them. Moreover executive management was also based in Bagsværd where they took care of their daily activities. This also opened up an opportunity to get easy access to executive management because they were around and often socialized in various situations, for instance over lunch in the canteen.

Staying at headquarters gives special access to Novo Nordisk and is different from staying at any other site, such as in the US. Headquarters, of course, decides the overall direction of the company based on their view of what is best for the company. The decision to make corporate branding a part of the business was also initiated and developed from headquarters, which made it the right place for participatory observation.

### **Participatory observation in the corporate communications department**

To begin with, I became a member of the corporate communications department, where I followed the daily activities. At that time, all corporate branding activities were located in that department. People in the department were used to having a

researcher around because a former PhD student, Helle Petersen, had undertaken a research project in the years before I arrived. After she completed her PhD project, Helle Petersen was at that time employed in the department as a manager of internal relations and employer branding. This circumstance paved the way for an understanding of what it was to have an industrial PhD around, taking part in the daily activities without really working for the company in the same way as the other employees. I regularly talked about my project at department meetings and found people really interested in my work. The vice president and head of the office had been working in the company for about 25 years and incorporated and practised the Novo Nordisk Way of Management, which in brief means living up to some principles that reflect a Scandinavian, democratic, involving and open way of management. My impression is that the members and the head of the department never considered me as a stranger, but rather as just another employee with a special assignment. In a manner of speaking, I had “gone native”. The CC department was located right at the centre of the company and was therefore a good and useful platform for understanding what was going on in the company. They had a finger on the pulse as they related to many projects and organisational activities because they were responsible for internal and external communication. Many of the activities were reoccurring activities following the year, such as organising the annual IM at the beginning of the year. There was a good atmosphere in this department, with openness and room for reflection and learning about the activities undertaken. They did not try to influence my project directly, but kept opening doors and frequently discussed various observations of relevance for my project with me. I was, in fact, overwhelmed and grateful for the hospitality, but also aware of how all the helpfulness might influence my observations and interpretation of the company.

### **Participatory observation in the corporate branding department**

Later, when the corporate branding department was established, I was moved to this department with some of the members from the corporate communications department. Besides these, there were people from across the headquarters in the new department. I was never asked, but just told to be a member of the new department because my project focused on corporate branding. This department was located on the same floor as the corporate communications department, sharing the same rooms, so the physical difference was little. The corporate branding department did not have any reoccurring activities, but was starting a whole new area of business. There were no daily routines to begin with, because everything was in a developing phase. The head of the new department was a new employee, who was gradually learning the Novo Nordisk Way of Management, which meant she primarily practised a management style inspired from her experience as a consultant in the US, although she was Danish. This management style was more instrumental and not as open and democratically oriented as in the management in the corporate communications department.

In this department, the atmosphere was also different, and a kind of competitive performance climate where successes and results were constantly given attention to legitimise the existence of the department. It was new and had to prove its worth. Its members were quite determined and focused on finding means to their specific end of launching corporate branding across the organisation. Space for reflection, learning and evaluation was not institutionalised or open for discussion among the members of the department, but rather something that went on in closed circles. As a researcher in this department, I realised that they really did not have the same kind of understanding about what a researcher was and what I was doing. I was several times asked to undertake small assignments like a consultant

and to contribute more directly to the objectives of the department, and in this way came really close to the branding activities. Furthermore, they did not really make the time and effort to have interest in my project. However, I felt welcome and still had fairly easy access to people, important decisions, and interesting empirical material. In contrast to my experiences as a participant observer in the corporate communications department, I found myself in a setting where people were struggling to overcome the immediate challenges and in fact expected some kind of contribution from me. I was very aware of this in my observations and tried to keep a distance by constantly staying loyal to the purpose of my project. I also thought about how the new and more hardworking climate gave me another set of impressions that influenced my observations.

### **So much participation in the company**

During the three years I was there, I made great efforts to go more and more native. Here are some examples that illustrate how native I became: I participated in lunches and breakfast; I was invited to all kinds of activities and meetings; I met customers; I went to production sites with members of the company to learn about insulin production; I took an internal course at the company academy; I regularly went to their fitness centre; I went running with the CEO; I gave a presentation with the chairman of the board; I went to their parties; I went to Rome at IM 2006; I participated in various kinds of social activities in the departments aimed at building the team spirit; I even received a golden angel when I was a member of the corporate communications department in recognition of my engagement in making the department run. I was not just going around silently in the corners of the company or being a fly on the wall. An indication of how native I became was when I was interviewed on regional TV as a spokesperson for the company together with a senior executive manager from top management about the importance of having an active life.

My efforts to become a natural member of the organisation worked and I had the opportunity of being both close and remote to things going on depending on my interest. And I had access to many people in the organisation. This was of course a privilege and an advantage in many ways. However, becoming so closely engaged with the company and its people also has certain consequences for the research undertaken. It gives a possibility for close study and sometimes access to information that is confidential, but it also raised certain expectations with regard to the results of my research.

### **A way to solve a dilemma in participant observation**

Researchers often spend time solving the problem of getting close to their empirical field, for instance getting access to organisations and the particular people, documents and events of relevance for their research interest. I passed through that barrier to such an extent that I had to figure out how I could manage being so close to Novo Nordisk and at the same time keep a distance so that I did not take on the perspective of the company. Allow me to reconstruct an incident that illustrates this dilemma and how it to some extent was a problem, but also how I solved it.

Once the vice president of corporate branding asked me to change and rewrite a text because she did not agree with my version of the Type Zero story. I discussed my perspective with her and realised that in this specific situation was limited room for her to accept my version of the story. She had already defined Type Zero as a success and it was therefore inappropriate to have me telling an alternative story. I was asked about where I had my information from, because I did not personally attend the IM and she had not heard of any pieces of information that could support my version of the story. My hard work of becoming an accepted

participating member of the organisation helped me here, because I had nearly unrestricted access to information and people. I told her that I had spoken to people who had attended the meeting, that I had got hold of an internal survey from a participant at the meeting, and finally that I had got hold of an unedited video from the meeting. The video and the survey in particular were quite informative and told a different story from that of management. And I used these different sources about what happened plus a lot of campaign material to write my version of the Type Zero story.

The vice president could hardly disapprove of how I had carefully explored the meeting and collected material from several different sources, and she suddenly realised that my version also had credibility. However, this did not alter the fact that she would prefer that my version did not exist at all. She told me to keep the story to myself because she found it problematical to have different versions in the company. After this incident, the vice president realised that she could not control my interpretations and I realised that I would sometimes be in opposition to the way she saw things. I saw the experience as an example of managerial power and an attempt to control my research. But I also saw the experience as an example of what is probably often the case when you are closely involved with an organisation, its managers and employees. The incident was a good example that made me even more careful about keeping a distance to how members of the organisation might try to influence my interpretations and conclusions. This is also an example of how ideas of organisational loyalty may require “that one is not exposing ‘backstage’ conditions [that] may lead to, or can be an excuse for, self-censure and subordination to conventions on proper behaviour which are taken for granted” (Alvesson 2003:167).

This incident could have affected my future access to information, but it did not, because I was a well-integrated member of the organisation and had in fact been close to the company for a longer period than her. In fact, I did not see the conflicting version as problematical at all, because the company is based on values that emphasise openness and dialogue. This incidence further illustrates that I was constantly aware of how my different interactions with people in the organisation could be a matter of how they tried to influence my conclusions. The consequence of maintaining my version of Type Zero was that the vice president did not have the same regard for me and my research afterwards. In the office I was moved close to a person who was fired shortly after. I could see this as an indication of being next in line, but I had my contract with the company. The story illustrates some of the pressures and political and ethical situations researchers can get caught in. My reaction was to stay loyal to my interpretations and at the same time take the risk of being in opposition to one vice president and some managers in the corporate branding department. From a researcher perspective, I chose to stay loyal, consistent and reliable to the purpose and practice of the research even when management tried to influence it.

### **Asking questions in the organisation as a member of the departments at headquarters**

My relationship with the company and the possible questions about how it influenced the research process, my argument and my conclusions was also a matter for reflection during my conversations and interviews.

Being a member of, and coming from, the corporate branding department could evoke certain preconceptions about my role in the organisation. While my official title was an industrial PhD student and a business researcher, this did not necessarily call up a picture of what my role and purpose really was in the

organisation for the members I was in contact with. And as a central matter, neither did it clarify where my loyalty was located. Some members of the organisation could for example see me as a consultant from management trying to implement the strategic purpose in the corporate branding activities. And others could see me as a representative from management taking the pulse on the organisation and afterwards reporting back to management; and others again, who only had limited knowledge about my role, could in the worst case see me as a management spy. No matter how I was seen, the way people regarded me, had an influence on their willingness to talk with me and the access and the kind of empirical material that I ended with.

I could not, of course, know which view people had of me when they were in contact with me. But their perception of me, my role, objective, loyalty, and I would even say my personality, influenced the situation when they expressed opinions and perspectives on matters that I was interested in. Depending on the trust and confidence they had in me and their belief in the possibility of being either anonymous or getting an opportunity for a say in what I wrote naturally had an effect. I was in contact with people who were very direct, open and even eager to express their perspective on corporate branding, but also with people who had reservations and therefore took their precautions. The open and direct people often shared a lot of opinions and perspectives with me and also contacted me spontaneously without any precautions. The people with reservations often had some questions about my research that they wanted me to explain before they were willing to share their perspective, and after that they typically wanted to know how I would use and cite them in the research project. In between those two categories were some people who also rather openly shared their view with me, but who, during or after our talk, said that some of their comments were “off the record”.



How did I deal with people's different approaches to me? As I became more used to the different kinds of reactions and circumstances in play when people were in contact with me, I tried to anticipate some of their reactions and adjusted my behaviour to the people and actual situations. For instance, I often made greater effort to create a situation of confidence and explain the purpose of my inquiry to people who expressed reservations beforehand. As to people who spontaneously contacted me and expressed their views, which were both personal and sometimes controversial, I listened and probed for further elaboration, but also carefully reflected on their intentions and purpose.

To handle the different situations that I constantly experienced caused by participatory observation and interaction with people, I found it useful to add two additional interpretive principles to the interpretive repertoire in the framework. These were not based on the theory of communicative action, but they may also influence my interpretation and are related to the dilemma of being close to the case company.

### **Additional interpretive repertoire**

The notion interpretive repertoire comes from Alvesson and Deetz (2000:183), who suggest that researchers employ various principles in their interpretation of empirical cases to make sure they do not become trapped by the complexities of the empirical material. The framework of the validity claims are the primary interpretive repertoire for guiding the empirical inquiry. This may indicate various examples of managerial and social integration of corporate branding based on how various statements and activities are validated. In addition to that, and related to the previous discussion, I added two extra principles to the interpretive repertoire to provide the inquiry with further reflection.

The first principle is *negation*, which may challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions in the statements that are analysed (Alvesson and Deetz 2000:171f). Negation may, for instance, question facts, norms, the sincerity, and the intelligibility of a statement and consider an alternative statement that would reverse what is said. Negation means thinking in a dialectical way, and to some extent challenging the existing order, to provide a meaningful contrast. A statement that suggests that a corporate branding activity is a failure because of certain facts could, by the use of negation, also be considered as an indication of what I then take to be a success. The tension and ability to counterpoint views by negation questions the obvious in what is said and serves as dynamic tool for my interpretation. My use of negation works with the validity claims which are related to the following distinctions: facts that are either true or false, norms that are either right or wrong, sincerity that is either consistent or inconsistent, and intelligibility that is either comprehensible or incomprehensible. The idea of producing counter images is to provide meaning contrast to what is immediately stated. While each validity claim relates to a distinction, to some extent it also makes sense to reflect on the contrasting side of a statement. This means that I was not “only preoccupied with [the] actuality, but also consider [the] potentiality” (Ibid. 2000:172) of what was said and done in the study of corporate branding. In the practical conduct of my research projects, this principle influenced my research as along the way I searched for empirical material that not only reflected what was obviously going on but also material that might describe contrasting views.

The other principle is *distance*. Distance is trying not to get caught in the taken-for-granted assumptions in the empirical case. The terminology of corporate branding, for example, is often taken for granted, but very few people can in fact explain what the different branding terms mean. Both being close to the case, as I was for about three years, and at the same time keeping a distance, is difficult.

However, I constantly reflected on the terms used, my interviews and observations and never regarded them as telling the absolute truth about corporate branding. I often asked questions, including some which from the view of the organisation might be considered unwise questions, about the obvious and not obvious, to get some indication of what was meant and what the assumptions about different relevant matters were based on. Furthermore, employing Habermas as an analytical lens, instead of the conventional marketing perspective, also helped me to see the case from a distance because the theory on communicative action offers an alternative and to some extent detached perspective.

While the framework is theoretically informed by the theory of communicative action, the two additional principles are methodological tools. The framework and the principles make up the overall interpretive repertoire that guided the empirical inquiry and the interpretations that follow from participant observation, interviews and the analyses of the various empirical materials.

## **5.4 Characteristics of the case study**

This section describes the empirical scale and scope of case study and its details. According to Yin, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003:13). Studying corporate branding across an organisation in its real-life context is an example of a contemporary phenomenon with unclear boundaries to its context (see also Miles and Huberman 1994:25). It is difficult to distinguish corporate branding processes among the members of an organisation from other organisational processes because corporate branding is often entangled in the everyday activities of an organisation. It may also be argued that there is no boundary between context and corporate branding as a conceptual construct,

because members are influenced by various conceptual understandings of the phenomenon studied (e.g. Giddens 1987 and the notion of *double hermeneutics*). These unclear boundaries between the theoretical concept and the context are also indicated by Schultz et al. (2005), who emphasise that corporate branding evolved as a phenomenon influenced by parallel developments from different disciplines in both theory and practice.

Yin further suggests that case study research is “an essential form of social science inquiry” (...) when investigators either desire or are forced by circumstances (a) to define research topics broadly and not narrowly, (b) to cover contextual or complex multivariate conditions and not just isolated variables, and (c) to rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence” (2003:xi). According to Yin’s observation, this case study can be categorised as an essential form of social science inquiry in several ways. First, the research topic is defined broadly. It explores the topics of *managerial and social integration* and not just technical integration or implementation. Whereas implementation usually refers to a specific phase in project management, managerial and social integration is not limited to a specific phase in this project. Instead it is related to the on-going processes and activities of developing and maintaining a corporate branding initiative. Second, the project employs a theoretical framework that includes rather broad and abstract variables used for interpretation in the analysis of the case. These are employed to cover the complex context of an organisation undertaking a corporate branding strategy. Third, it includes multiple sources of empirical material in construction of the case and not only a single source.

### **An exemplary case with some extraordinary characteristics**

The case about corporate branding at Novo Nordisk is constructed as an exemplary case with some extraordinary characteristics. The case is exemplary, because its typical traits can also be identified in other companies undertaking a

corporate branding strategy, also outside the pharmaceutical industry. The case, in fact, demonstrates an example of how corporate branding follows a purposeful managerial approach as described in several marketing oriented textbooks about corporate branding. The case also includes several extraordinary characteristics. One extraordinary characteristic is the special restrictions on branding and advertising in the pharmaceutical industry, where it is prohibited to approach the consumer directly. This characteristic is not directly included as a central aspect reflected in the interpretations and conclusion in the case. It might, however, be interesting if the purpose was to analyse auto communication (e.g. Christensen and Morsing 2005), that is, the influence of an external corporate branding campaign on the members of the organisation.

Another extraordinary characteristic, according to Blackett and Robins (2001), is that companies in the pharmaceutical industry have flourished with little help from the advantages of corporate branding although they have invested considerably in corporate branding. A look at the annual list of the 100 most valuable global brands published by various sources during the last five years, for instance Business Weeks and Interbrands, supports this observation, because only three pharmaceutical companies are included: Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, and Novartis. This general characteristic about pharmaceutical companies and corporate branding will not be central in the interpretations of the case, but the point may indicate that corporate branding in pharmaceutical companies may be a difficult endeavour, if the criterion that measures success is appearing on one of those lists.

But the most important extraordinary characteristic is how the case emphasises some not frequently described aspects of a corporate branding process. Challenges and agreement and disagreement among members of the organisation are revealed

to discuss the internal processes of establishing validity about the corporate brand. This last extraordinary characteristic will influence the analyses and conclusions because it goes a step beyond just assuming that organisational members automatically support a corporate branding initiative.

### **Structure and the object of the case study**

The case study is divided into two parts: first an overall case story about corporate branding at Novo Nordisk, and, second, a closer analysis of three strategic corporate branding initiatives. This study can, therefore, according to Yin (2003:40, be characterised as a single-case study with embedded units of analysis). The embedded units of analysis consist of the three central strategic corporate branding initiatives that contribute with important insight to the case study. The intention of including both an overall case and three embedded units is to provide both a picture of the whole branding process in general and some of its central parts in detail. The object of the case study is broadly defined as *the managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy and related initiatives among the members across the organisation of Novo Nordisk within a limited period*.

### **First part of the case study**

The purpose of the first part of the case study, the overall case story, is to let it serve as contextual background and introduce relevant characteristics of the company. It describes activities, processes and background for how corporate branding emerged across the organisation and provides the context to which the second part of the case study is related.

The overall case story is primarily constructed in accordance with the chronological sequence of activities that took place at Novo Nordisk. Of course, no story is a purely objective representation of actual events. Any story is biased

by the author's selection of what is relevant and irrelevant for his purpose (Yin 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994; Kvale 1996; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). The chronological case story also includes the three embedded cases. These cases are distinguished as embedded cases because they appeared as particularly obvious for further interpretation during my study of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk. The embedded cases emerged as different, distinct and interesting examples in the whole process of making corporate branding a part of the business for Novo Nordisk. A part of the case story, revealing one of embedded cases, was presented in the introduction to illustrate the focus of the project.

### **Second part of case study: the three strategic corporate branding initiatives**

The second part of the case study provides a detailed analysis of the three central strategic corporate branding initiatives. These initiatives are three related but different examples of managerial and social integration of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk. The initiatives were particularly rich empirical sources and appropriate for a closer analysis because they include three accompanying events and several related activities.

At Novo Nordisk each strategic corporate branding initiative was launched in the organisation at an extraordinary event. The events appeared as important goals in the corporate branding processes because careful consideration and planning was carried out prior to the launches in order to make corporate branding a strategic part of the business. The analysis therefore particularly focuses on the three strategic initiatives and their accompanying events. The corporate branding initiatives are denoted according to their accompanying campaign concepts. Table 5.1 shows the names of the initiatives and the time and place of their respective launches:

**Table 5.1 The three strategic corporate branding initiatives**

Strategic initiative / Concept	Launched at ...
Changing the Course of Diabetes	An internal employee meeting, February 26, 2004, in Princeton, USA
Type Zero	The International Management Meeting, January 30, 2005 in Copenhagen, Denmark
Changing Diabetes	The EASD, <sup>15</sup> September 14, 2005, in Athens, Greece

My emphasis on the launches does not imply that the events are seen as the most or only central events related to the corporate branding initiative. In practice, launches are sometimes seen as central milestones for corporate branding managers, after which the corporate brand is supposed to be implemented in an organisation. However, several authors recognise that an event can be important and have considerable impact, but also stress that the benefits of corporate branding cannot be accomplished through a single event, launch or concept (e.g. Ind 2004; Harris and de Chernatony 2001). They emphasise that corporate branding is an on-going process in which it takes time and effort to achieve understanding and support among the members of an organisation.

To some extent, this case study focuses on the events and launches because they were central at Novo Nordisk. A lot of arguments and branding materials were produced for the three events. They were not only employed at the events, but in fact were widely distributed and repeatedly used at many other cross-organisational branding activities. The materials are therefore included and understood as empirical examples representing the official branding strategy and

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<sup>15</sup> EASD is the European Association for the Study of Diabetes which held a conference in Athens in 2005.



as a guideline to how the corporate branding was ideally meant to be seen in the organisation. The analysis of this material related to the events therefore also gives an indication of how corporate branding was supposed to be understood and implemented across the organisation after the events.

### **Period of empirical research**

It can be difficult to define the beginning and end of a case study (cf. Yin 2003:23). My studies at Novo Nordisk began in October 2003 and ended in July 2006. I collected and produced empirical material during this long period, but the material and the overall case story relates to an even longer period. Historical events and old documents were read and included to provide a more comprehensive picture of the corporate branding activities. A list of the empirical material produced and included is provided in Appendix 13.4.

From the time when the material for the case study was collected and produced and down to today (Winter 2012) about five years has passed. It might therefore be relevant to ask whether the time passed in any way influences the study – for example, by providing outdated and irrelevant empirical analyses. The analyses are not at all outdated, because they interpret empirical materials that are also of relevance for understanding of branding today. The time passed of course had an influence on my interpretations. The most significant is that I reflected about the analytical conclusions and alternatives several times in consideration of possible interpretations until I completed the project.

It is, by the way, not unusual that empirical material is interpreted and reinterpreted again after some time has passed (e.g. Forester 2003, Alvesson 2011). Novo Nordisk could, nevertheless, have had an interest my conclusions closer to the events taking place for possible reflection and learning about the

events. But I doubt that the brand managers would have used my conclusions for learning or inspiration close to the events taking place, partly because they were more focused on finding quick solutions to their immediate problems and partly because some of them disagreed with my version of the Type Zero story. It may in fact be reasonable that some time has passed and things have settled, because looking back at the corporate branding challenges provides a better basis for explicit reflection and learning in the organisation and among those responsible for the corporate branding initiatives, because they are not caught in the middle of finding effective solutions.

Sometimes it is difficult to reflect in constructive way when you are in the middle of solving difficult problems because there are so many political interests and responsibilities at stake in a corporate branding strategy. This was especially the case in parts of these corporate brandings activities, where several managers invested a lot of prestige and confidence in a project that failed. Their main consideration in the middle of the challenges, which was very reasonable in the situation, was to find an immediate solution and make it work without concern for analytical reflection, a fact which naturally influenced their willingness to consider my interpretations. The time that has passed since the actual events took place also makes it less controversial to discuss, describe and disclose material of strategic character because it is now historical in relation to the activities taking place today.

### **Scope of case study**

It is possible to walk into an organisation and arbitrarily start collecting empirical material and asking everybody questions about corporate branding. To do this could be based on an ideal assumption often repeated in the branding literature about how every member of an organisation should have an idea of the brand (e.g.

Ind 2004; Davis and Dunn 2002). However, to assume that every member of an organisation is or should be a brand ambassador for the organisation may be an ideal and unrealistic perspective (e.g. Karmak 2005). From a corporate branding perspective, it seems to be an inevitably attractive assumption, but members of an organisation may in fact take care of their jobs without necessarily speculating about being brand ambassadors for their organisation. The idea of being a brand ambassador may, as indicated, be seen as an example of managerial integration that depends on agreement among the organisational members. When it comes to the launching of a new or revitalised corporate branding strategy, every member or piece of material representing an organisation cannot be expected to be equally informative with regard to the focus of the research project, because it may take time and effort to integrate the strategy thoroughly across the whole organisation. And even after considerable time has passed, there is no guarantee that every member understands and becomes a good advocate of the brand, not that there are interesting informants across the whole organisation.

My inquiry was limited to focusing on the parts of the organisation that became involved in the corporate branding initiatives. This provides a better possibility of producing and collecting as rich empirical material as possible. And it respects the contextual circumstances and the progress of developing and realising corporate branding strategy in accordance with the plans at Novo Nordisk. Furthermore, it does not impose any ideal perspective on how or how fast a corporate branding strategy should be integrated in the whole organisation. The scope of the case study is cross-organisational because it explores managerial and social integration across organisational functions, hierarchy, product areas and affiliates. The purpose of the structure is to ensure that sufficient empirical material was collected and produced to explore statements and activities related to the progress of corporate branding across the organisation both vertically and horizontally.

The question of collecting and producing sufficient material was approached qualitatively. This means that my inquiries were not planned in advance to be representative in absolute numbers for a statistical purpose. Instead they continued into the various parts of the organisation until some redundancy appeared in the material. Redundancy was typically identified when the meaning of statements was more or less the same and no new insight could be added to the inquiry. This criterion is, of course, not absolute in any strict sense because it relates to my on-going ability and evaluation of whether or not new insights or perspectives could be added. During my inquiry about corporate branding, to some extent I used the so-called snowball method to get further input as I often asked people to recommend other interesting members of the organisation to talk to who could either elaborate on or contest a certain statement. The snowball method was also used to collect written empirical material.

The structure of inquiry covers different levels of management, central functions, various involved affiliates located in different markets, and the main product areas. Empirical material from various sources as shown in the structure in Table 5.2 is included in the case study.

**Table 5.2 Cross-organisational structure of case study**

Structure of cross-organisational case study			
Organisational functions	Affiliates	Executive Managers	Product areas
Corporate Branding	US	CEO	Diabetes
Corporate Communications	UK	CSR (Executive senior vice-president)	NovoSeven
International Marketing	China	Chairman of the board	
P&O <sup>16</sup> (People & Organisation)	Germany		

Table 5.2 illustrates the structure and scope of the case study. It illustrates the functions, affiliates, executive managers and product managers who primarily planned and to some degree were involved in the corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk. The two columns to the left with functions and affiliates reflect a part of how the initiatives were implemented across the organisation according to the plans and the developing corporate branding process. Of course, it also implicitly, by missing entries in the table, reflects the parts of the organisation that were not planned to be included to begin with or which were expected to become supporters of the brand later through other efforts or automatically. These two columns are, therefore, an example of how the corporate branding managers prioritized and planned the cross organisational branding activities over a certain period. According to the declared purpose at Novo Nordisk of turning all members

<sup>16</sup> P&O is Novo Nordisk’s Human resources function

into brand ambassadors (Corporate branding strategy 2005), it also expresses the first step in this process.

Empirical material from the organisational functions is included because the functions were, although to varying degrees, considerably involved in the corporate branding activities. These functions are headquarter functions with the potential power to make a significant organisational impact in their different areas of responsibility.

*People and Organisation* is the internal organisational function which focuses on employees and human resource issues, which makes the unit relevant for my inquiry because the beliefs among the members of Novo Nordisk affect the branding. The function obviously had an opportunity to promote and support the brand internally and externally through various HR activities such as introductory courses for new employees, competency development, job advertisements, etc. On the average, 150 people worked for the HR function.

The functions of *Corporate Communications* and *Corporate Branding* are also included because they were the functions that were most closely involved in making corporate branding a part of the business. Corporate communications was responsible for internal and external communication and was the unit closest to the corporate branding function both in term of responsibility and location at Novo Nordisk. As a partner function for corporate branding, it is appropriate for this inquiry because in various ways it was involved in the branding activities. As mentioned Corporate Communications was the function that initially had the responsibility for corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk before an independent Corporate Branding function was established. *Corporate Branding* later became the core function in charge of preparing and driving the corporate

branding strategy and producing brand material for the organisation. Its central role makes it relevant for the case study without further explanation, but it may be added that some of the people included in the new corporate branding function came from corporate communications. Approximately 20 people were working in the corporate communications department and also about 20 people in the corporate branding department, including managers, employees, freelancers and office trainees.

The function of *International Marketing* is included because it was supposed to connect corporate branding with product branding. It supports affiliates with marketing communication and had a strong share in implementing the brand in the organisation globally through product branding. About 600 people were working in international marketing, which makes it the biggest function among those included.

Empirical materials from the affiliates *China*, *Germany*, the *US* and the *UK* are also included because these affiliates were the first involved in the branding process and represent its international scope. The US managed to launch its own corporate branding initiative, which to some extent was in contrast to the Type Zero initiative from headquarters. All four affiliates were supposed to be what was called the first wave countries besides Denmark to implement the corporate branding strategies and concepts. Later second wave countries were included and the branding department even discussed third wave countries.

The category *executive managers* is included because they were, of course, involved in the processes in various ways because some of them approved and decided the branding initiatives as well as promoted them. Furthermore, the involvement of top managers may significantly influence a corporate branding

strategy as is often emphasised in the literature on branding. In this case they had some interesting opinions about the branding initiatives besides the expected support.

Two central *product areas* are also included because the branding initiatives concern both the area of diabetes and NovoSeven for treatment of bleeding disorders. The category product areas covers empirical material produced on the basis of interviewing people close to producing, promoting and selling the products. At Novo Nordisk, most people work in these areas. At the time of my study there were about 22 000 employees (22 460 in 2005) at Novo Nordisk, of whom approximately 20 000 people were working in jobs directly related to these products. The remaining 2000 people were working in administrative functions like corporate branding, corporate communications, international marketing, P&O, etc.

The various empirical sources provide input for the analyses and a picture of how corporate branding became integrated at Novo Nordisk. The sources include a selection of the material representing the branding initiatives on the one hand and reactions from people who were informed about or involved in the initiatives on the other hand. The analyses do not tell how much material in absolute numbers was produced or how many members of the organisation supported or challenged the branding initiatives. Rather than counting material, the study focuses on significant examples from across the organisation. The scope outlined only indicates the structure of the cross-organisational case study and where the empirical material included originated from in the organisation.

### **Statements and activities as the primary empirical source**

The case study includes various statements and activities which constitute the key sources of empirical material. Habermas bases his communicative theory on the



seminal work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who developed the theory of speech acts, which emphasises how we do things with words. Their point is that to speak a language is at the same time a way of human acting. Asking questions, giving orders, making promises, providing explanations are examples of speech acts where we do things with words. Habermas analyses speech acts to explain the conditions for the human communication process and identifies the validity claims as basic assumptions for reaching understanding where understanding is the “inherent telos of human speech” (1987:287). Speech acts enter into to this analysis as statements. A statement may include one or several speech acts. A statement is defined as a meaningful expression, such as an argument, a claim, a question, etc. about a central matter of relevance for this inquiry, for example, an opinion or a description of one of the branding initiatives.

Activities and statements are often entangled in corporate branding initiatives and can therefore hardly be separated. An event is, for instance, consists in both activities and words in a combination when speeches are accompanied with confetti falling down on the audience. A statement is rather uncomplicated to identify and analyse according to the validity claims. If, for instance, a member of the organisation criticises the facts presented in a corporate branding initiative, then it is straightforwardly possible to consider it as a certain kind of a reaction to the corporate branding. What is complicated, of course, is how a given statement should be interpreted.

Corporate branding activities are also important, but do not come in words in the same way, because actions do not speak for themselves. The question therefore is: How are corporate branding actions to be included in the case study? If an activity takes place and is perceivable, it can easily be translated into a meaningful statement and therefore analysed. Activities that enter into this analysis are

translated into meaningful statements to enter into the case study. For example, if a member of an organisation refuses or quietly ignores encouragement to wear a piece of branding merchandise; this can be interpreted as an expression of disagreement with the corporate branding effort. Another example could be a sports event for the employees initiated to attract attention to a new corporate branding strategy and demonstrate its alignment with the health policy of the organisation. Such an activity can be described in words and subsequently analysed. The empirical material includes statements and activities permeated with a rationale and meaning related to the corporate branding strategy and initiatives at Novo Nordisk. Such activities and statements are interpreted and analysed according to the interpretive repertoire. The empirical material predominantly consists of explicit statements, because the meaningful content of statements can be directly used in the analyses without translation from activity to language.

### **Statements and activities categorised as *representations* and *reactions***

The empirical material, made up of actions and statements, was collected and produced in accordance with the scope and structure above. It consists both of official material promoting and *representing* the corporate branding strategy, and of *reactions* to the strategy. The two different kinds of material are categorised as *representations* and *reactions* as mentioned.

This means, on the one side, that official material is included which was conceived with the purpose of branding the organisation. The material *represents* the official corporate branding strategy. Besides promoting a certain picture of Novo Nordisk, to a certain extent it also provided the guiding principles and course of action for how members of the organisation should support and promote the corporate brand. This material was the result of careful and approved decisions among the managers responsible for corporate branding. On the other side, the empirical

material also includes reactions that are statements and activities from people across the organisation. This material categorised as *reactions* is not necessarily a result of approved decisions, but often consists of immediate reactions, either supporting or challenging the corporate branding initiatives.

The representation of a corporate branding initiative in official material and the reaction to an initiative across an organisation are both susceptible to validity. An organisation, for instance, that brands itself as environmentally responsible and at the same time has a sewage discharge down the river, risks undermining the validity of the brand. Nor can a corporate branding initiative representing the whole organisation function unless people across an organisation support it to some degree. Consequently, and irrespective of whether the focus is on representation or reactions, any corporate branding initiative in agreement with the organisation is more likely to be successful, both in terms of official branding material representing the organisation, and in terms of how people cross-organisationally react to an initiative.

A corporate branding initiative representing the organisation can create social integration that relates to managerial intentions if people agree and to a great extent identify with it and, therefore, reproduce and reinforce the central meaning of the initiative through their statements and activities. In contrast, a corporate branding initiative representing the organisation with which people disagree and generally do not identify and which they therefore reject the central meaning of through their statements and activities, will not create social integration. Such reactions will in various ways not support but challenge a corporate branding initiative and the managerial integration. The case study is dialectical and reflects the distinction between representations and reactions which provides the inquiry

with the possibility of interpreting aspects of managerial and social integration in the organisation.

### **Supportive or challenging representations and reactions**

Various activities and statements categorised as representations and reactions are explored through the interpretive repertoire as either supportive or challenging in character with regard to the corporate branding initiatives. The consequences of launching a new or revitalised corporate branding strategy are greater than building on an existing one. Conceiving activities that build on an existing strategy has greater tactical and operational significance, because the strategy usually remains unchanged and is thereby presumably already to some degree understood and accepted by members of the organisation. But the validity claims may be evoked concerning the brand if a company changes its activities in such a way that the brand and company activities become uncoordinated.

In contrast, a new corporate branding strategy accompanied by a campaign and concepts and launched through various activities such as speeches and impressive material, is more likely to be susceptible to validation in terms of how it reflects the company and how much the members of the organisation agree with it. Arguments and statements included in such activities and presented for the first time have a strategic importance because they represent the organisation and express how the organisation and its members should support the corporate branding initiative. When such activities communicate the corporate brand of an organisation, they also indicate what the consensus about the brand is expected to be. A corporate brand initiative represents the organisation to itself and its stakeholders and serves as a guideline as to how the organisation and its members should express themselves and act in the world. Because of this, it implicitly or

explicitly also raises the question of validity, that is, about how the brand is intended to be recognised in a supportive way by members of the organisation.

A corporate branding strategy is susceptible to *supportive* statements and activities across an organisation. Such statements and activities can be identified in both representations and reactions when they reproduce and recognise the intentions of a corporate strategy in a supportive way. Official activities and statements conceived with a strategic intent and speaking on behalf of the organisation are often supportive in character and the result of careful consideration and planning by responsible managers. Unofficial and informal reactions such as activities and statements from people across the organisation are another possible source of support for a corporate branding strategy. In fact, such informal reactions that support a corporate branding strategy also influence mutual understanding and coordination across an organisation. Members that support and enthusiastically speak about the brand can be seen as examples of brand ambassadors who integrate the corporate brand and connect both managerial and social integration.

However, it cannot automatically be assumed that a corporate branding strategy will be understood and obtain recognition across an organisation through official activities and material. There is always a risk of promoting a picture that lacks support across an organisation. A corporate branding strategy is therefore also susceptible to *challenging* statements and activities. An extraordinary example would be when official corporate branding material representing an organisation is in opposition to the intentions of a strategy, for example when managers and their consultants are too creative and suggest promoting a corporate brand that is not aligned with the identity of the organisation. If the official material, which is supposed to promote a strategy and represent an organisation, *challenges* the

strategy itself, it can result in a situation of inconsistency and a paradox. The story of Type Zero may be interpreted as such an example.

A more normal situation is where challenging and sometimes clarifying questions are raised by members of an organisation during the period where they are getting acquainted with a branding strategy. Regardless of how well the official material is conceived, challenging statements that criticise or question a strategy often occur to some extent. Some activities may also indirectly challenge a strategy, for example not using an artefact produced for internal branding, such as a cap, wristband or a mouse pad, may be indicative of such a challenge. Even ignoring a corporate branding strategy may be seen as indicating a lack of commitment and non-supportive activity that may be challenging as well.

Accordingly, representations of and reactions to a corporate branding strategy and initiatives identified and interpreted through various activities and statements across the organisation can be either supportive or challenging in character. Table 5.3 summarises the categorisation of the empirical material in the case study.

**Table 5.3 Reactions and representations categorised as either supportive or challenging**

Empirical material			
Statements and Activities			
Representations		Reactions	
Supportive	Challenging	Supportive	Challenging

The table includes no entry for statements and activities that are difficult to categorise such as examples that are both supportive and challenging in character. Some interviewees may change their mind during an interview or may be indifferent concerning an initiative. Such neutral statements are not included

because the analysis primarily focuses on unambiguous statements. As the empirical analysis primarily focuses on significant statements and not on individuals, it is possible to separate different statements from the same interviewee as supportive on the one side and challenging on the other side.

### **Indication of managerial and social integration in the organisation**

The purpose of analysing supportive and challenging activities and statements is not as indicated to cover in detail and in quantifiable numbers how many reactions and representations speak for or against corporate branding. It is rather to qualitatively analyse various significant statements and activities in relation to realising a corporate branding strategy and to provide a qualitative accumulated indication of managerial and social integration in the organisation. It is an *accumulated indication* of integration relative to the statements analysed and the material included, but it is not representative in any absolute statistical sense based on a quantitative method. It is also indicative because reactions and representations are snapshots situated in context, and interpreted with reference to a specific interpretive repertoire. Furthermore, it is indicative in so far as it does not definitely determine whether a strategy and its initiatives will continue to experience challenges or support in the same way that will influence its realisation and possible success. On the basis of these considerations, the analyses may indicate three possible outcomes:

1. If primarily supportive activities and statements are identified in the representations in the official material and in the reactions of the members of the organisation, then it is indicative that both managerial and the social integration are already present or will emerge in the organisation. Although this situation may seem ideal for advocates of corporate branding, it is probably rare in its absolute form. Organisational inertia and people questioning new initiatives are in all probability more normal.

2. If statements and activities that support and challenge a corporate branding strategy are identified, then this is indicative of some disagreement within the organisation with regard to the strategy. The existence of both supportive and challenging statements and activities is probably the normal situation when a new branding strategy is introduced, because everybody cannot be expected to support it right away. For instance, a progressive interplay between supporters and challengers may result in the qualification of a corporate branding initiative and make it successful. Such an interaction may, of course, also result in the opposite. The analysis of the case study will offer an assessment of the intensity and character of the challenging versus supportive statements and activities and thereby provide an indication of how the strategy was integrated in the organisation.
3. Finally, if primarily challenging statements and activities are identified among representations and reactions, then this indicates a lack of understanding in the organisation. This situation probably occurs very rarely and never in any absolute sense, since there will always be some supporters who are responsible for promoting a strategy. If a situation occurs where primarily challenging statements are identified, it is probably when a strategic initiative has been suspended and initial support has been lost.

The identification of whether an activity or a statement may be categorised as supportive or challenging is based on interpretation in accordance with the interpretive repertoire. Regardless of whether the empirical material is categorised as representations or reactions, it is considered according to the validity claims and the issues of managerial and social integration. This implies that the empirical material is considered as statements that need to be validated in order to have an



impact on the organisation. A member, for example, who criticises a branding strategy without solid arguments and agreement in the organisation, will not make a difference. A corporate branding strategy that lacks recognition among the members of the organisation will make no impact either. Any statement or activity, whether reaction or representation, is considered susceptible to validation. In brief, this means that statements and actions can be questioned as to their intelligibility (can we understand the statement?), facts (is the statement true?), norms (is the statement right?), and sincerity (is the statement trustworthy?). The question of the validity of statements and actions always implies that any member of an organisation can say “yes” or “no” by bringing up the validity claims. For instance, if the corporate branding strategy is acknowledged in the organisation by its members, it is supported by an implicit or explicit “yes” from these members. In contrast, if it is challenged by its members by an implicit or explicit “no”, one or several of the validity claims have been brought up.

While it is possible to question the validity of any statement and activity regardless of whether it is implicit or explicit, the analysis primarily considers explicitly expressed statements and activities. Focusing primarily on explicit claims to validity indicates the claims that were emphasised in the organisation as important for the integration of the corporate branding strategy and initiatives, but also implicitly demonstrates the validity claims considered as unimportant or taken for granted. The structure and levels in the analysis are illustrated in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4 Integration of a corporate branding strategy and initiative**

Managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy			
Mutual understanding across the organisation			
Supportive reactions and representations			
Intelligibility	Facts	Norms	Sincerity

The table illustrates that managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy and the related mutual understanding and coordination in an organisation are based on the four claims to validity. On the other hand, if a corporate branding strategy is not understood and not in accordance with fact and norms, and consequently expresses an insincere picture of the company, the corporate branding strategy is likely to fail or face organisational resistance and inertia of various kinds. This is illustrated in Table 5.5 below.

**Table 5.5 Disintegration of a corporate branding strategy and initiative**

A lack of managerial and social integration of a corporate branding strategy			
Criticism and misunderstanding across the organisation			
Challenging reactions and representations			
Intelligibility	Facts	Norms	Sincerity

The case study systematically analyses and interprets various statements and activities in accordance with the method outlined and draw conclusions as explained and summarised in Tables 5.4 and 5.5.

**5.5 The case study process and its empirical sources**

The case study was a process of three phases: 1) collecting and producing the empirical material, 2) selecting and systematising it, in order to 3) analyse it and, on that basis, finally, draw conclusions.

The case study process was not linear with three sequential phases, but rather to some extent a cyclical and iterative process in various ways and for various reasons. First, because I followed Novo Nordisk for more than three years and collected, produced, selected, systematised and analysed the material on an on-going basis. Second, some conclusions led to further requirements for empirical material, which led to a dynamic case study process. And in some interviews, I repeated parts of the interview if possible to get additional and sometimes extra clarifying information with regard to specific purposes. The three corporate branding initiatives, situated in the context of different times, also made me reconsider the kind of empirical material included, which caused further production of material and additional processes of systematising and analysis. And the some of the conclusions even made me reconsider some of the conceptual discussions leading to an additional theoretical inquiry, which then again had an influence on the case study process. In brief, the case study process was a dynamic process including the three phases as a method of systematising my work with the empirical material. Allow me briefly to explain the different phases in the inquiry.

### **Phase one: Collecting and producing empirical material**

During my field work, I collected relevant and available empirical material that either represented the on-going corporate branding activities in the organisation or were a reaction to them. The term collecting may be misleading if it is understood as being like instrumental mushroom picking (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000:281). Collecting means the activity of finding material and assessing its relevance for the inquiry based on the developing knowledge about the progress of the case study. Collecting is also about finding ways to new material, for instance the snowball method, as well as opening new possibilities to get unusual and interesting and sometimes controversial material. Collecting is also about how the

activity of collecting is conducted and what the criteria are for finding the relevant material. At the beginning of my study, I rather openly collected all available material through a method that could be described as systematic book-keeping registration of all material that somehow could illustrate the corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk. But as time passed, the amount of material grew, and I gradually achieved a good first-hand impression of the branding process, I changed the criteria for collecting material. The empirical and theoretical progress of the project and my interest in a deeper focus about the three branding initiatives changed the criteria for collecting material. The criteria for collecting material for the three initiatives was limited to tracing material that primarily demonstrated the particular question of how the initiatives became validated.

I had the privilege of almost unlimited access to various kinds of empirical material across the organisation of Novo Nordisk. People showed interest in my project and were rather open-hearted when they expressed their opinions. The case study is based on a broad variety of empirical material because realising a corporate branding strategy in an organisation typically produces a lot of activities and statements expressed through various sources (a complete list is provided in Appendix 13.4). This gives a good opportunity to rely on several sources of empirical material and even makes some triangulation possible with regard to the specific focus areas of interest in the empirical material. Using multiple sources also reduces the risk of bias caused by only including a few dominant empirical examples. The empirical sources consist of two overall categories: empirical material produced by Novo Nordisk and related stakeholders and material produced by me through interviews, conversations and participatory observations.

### **Empirical material produced by Novo Nordisk**

Most of the empirical material included consists of material produced by Novo Nordisk, such as presentations, brochures, speeches, various campaign material, videos, articles, memos, mails, etc. This kind of empirical material is preferable for interpretation because it can be included in its original form and wording without bias and influence from the researcher, though it is, of course, my collection and selection and assessment of relevance that determines what is included or excluded. Including this kind of empirical material provides the analysis with substantial material as close as possible to the organisational “reality” unaffected by transcription or other reproducing tools. This does not, however, imply that the organisational “reality” is thereby mirrored in any positivistic sense. Reality is understood as reality relative to a certain perspective. Any piece of original material is, of course, influenced by its producers and their interpretations of the organisation. A brochure explaining the brand strategy is, for example, an interpretation made by the producers responsible for the brochure, and, likewise, an e-mail sent to me personally as a reaction to the branding strategy is, obviously, the sender’s interpretation.

A central part of the material from Novo Nordisk is the official corporate branding material. It is often well-written and succinctly expresses support for the corporate branding strategy. This material was distributed across the organisation to implement the corporate branding strategy and was, therefore, of a certain level of quality. Such material expresses careful decisions and official statements about the corporate branding strategy and the initiatives, and is therefore a representation of the organisation, ideally on behalf of the whole organisation. This means that such material is strategically important and may have a prescriptive influence on the organisational members. The official material is considered as a source representing the official organisational strategy and the three initiatives. All the

material produced by Novo Nordisk included is easy to use in the analyses in an intact and unaffected form that expresses the official organisational perspective on corporate branding.

## **Empirical material included in the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative**

### **The Five Speeches**

Five speeches are included as material in relation to the *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative. Some of the examples selected to analyse significant statements from the speeches may look like everyday language and not as if taken from a document. However, they were. The everyday language used in the speeches was written down in the manuscripts word by word. Attendees at the launch of the branding initiative later confirmed to me that the manuscripts are in close accordance with what was actually said. These written speeches express decisions about the official corporate branding strategy. Speech five which was particularly dedicated to explain how the employees could get involved is included in Appendix 13.7. A brochure distributed in the US affiliate also confirms this, because its wording and arguments closely correspond to the exact wording in the speeches. The speeches are included because they express a comprehensive picture of the US corporate branding strategy and its accompanying statements and arguments. This material is an interesting and reliable source because it was collected from a primary source and expresses an official perspective on corporate branding in the US organisation. But the speeches are also an interesting piece of empirical material because I received the speeches from top management in the US in an internal Word document with track and changes turned on. This gave me a unique opportunity to see below the surface and study comments and changes with regard to some of the considerations that had been discussed before reaching the final speeches. It somehow demonstrated some of the preparations for the branding effort in the US.

## **Empirical material produced through interviews, conservations and participant observations**

In addition to these empirical sources, the research also includes material produced and interpreted by me, such as interviews, comments, observations, and telling the case story. This kind of empirical material is under the influence of my capabilities and assumptions. This material is to some extent a result of my presence in the organisation and the planned and unplanned contact I had with various people and activities.

However, to compensate for the influence of the researcher – although I am aware that this cannot be done completely – the empirical material was discussed with people at Novo Nordisk. This implies that respondents of the interviews and people involved in the branding process consulted the material to correct obvious misunderstandings. These discussions were not validation, but the process of getting feedback from the people involved in the branding activities about the facts and the citations of meaningful statements in interviews and comments. Feedback could of course also be a source of bias where people could try to glorify or tell their story in some specifically preferred way. However, feedback was primarily concerned with fact and minor corrections, and if a respondent suddenly changed his or her statement, I asked why and used this as empirical material. The character of feedback resembles a journalist asking for confirmation of what was meant, but without the possibility of changing opinion.

This sort of empirical material, such as interviews, comments, activities taking place in the organisation and observations, has been transformed, transcribed and is presented as text. Kvale argues that “transcribing involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. Transcripts are not copies or representations of some original reality; they are interpretative constructions that are useful for given purposes” (1996:165).

This implies that there is no such thing as correct transcription, but rather useful and valuable transcription for a specific research purpose. This case study did not require verbatim transcription, in which every detail such as pauses, repetitions and tone of voice are registered, because the purpose of the analysis is to explore examples of meaningful statements and activities that primarily and explicitly refer to claims of validity. This implies that significant and relevant pieces of empirical material relating to the purpose of the inquiry have been transcribed for analytical purposes in a form that reproduces the meaning of an oral argument or statement as close as possible to the original wording. The transcription was carried out in a way that facilitates comprehension by presenting it in a textual form without obstructing the original meaning of statements and activities.

### **Semi-structured interviews and conversations**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analytical purposes. The interviews in the organisation were conducted in a semi-structured way in accordance with the purpose, structure and scope of the inquiry. The interviews were semi-structured to provide direction and to facilitate additional information from the interviewees. The overall research question was translated into interview questions that reflect the purpose of inquiring about social and managerial integration based on the four claims to validity. Appendix 13.5 provides a guide to the interviews with explanation of how the questions may provide empirical insight that contributes with insight on the overall research questions.

Apart from the interviews, another valuable source of information was everyday spontaneous conversations and comments from people across the organisation. When relevant, these were written down immediately after their occurrence and afterwards, if possible, presented to the person concerned for confirmation of the quotes and paraphrased text and permission to use them in my project.



### **A significant video about the Type Zero initiative**

The annual international management meeting, IM 2005, was only intended for the 300 top managers of the company. I therefore had to rely on asking managers about what went on at the meeting to gain any insight about the launch of the Type Zero initiative. However, I was very fortunate to get hold of a video from the IM 2005 from an internal source which showed what happened at the presentation of the new branding initiative to the managers. The video was recorded by Novo Nordisk primarily for internal use. I viewed and listened to the video and transcribed relevant parts for analytical purposes. This video material provided a comprehensive picture of the IM 2005 in particular. The video was only edited for internal use. However, the editing is considered as insignificant for this inquiry, because the purpose of editing the video material from the meeting was not to present a certain positive picture of the meeting, but only to document, in a visible way, what actually happened for people not present. The editing was primarily fading between clips and some introductory music. The video, in fact, documents the discussion with supportive and challenging statements which would have been removed from the video if the purpose had been to present a certain positively biased picture of the meeting.

### **Phase two: Selection and systematisation of the empirical material**

The second step in the empirical research was selection and systematisation. The rather easy access to empirical material made selection and systematisation of relevant material for the analysis a critical issue. In the second phase, which was repeated several times, I went through the material thoroughly to get both a general idea about how the process of corporate branding evolved and also an insight into its detailed processes.

It was during this phase that I identified the three significant strategic initiatives which were appropriate for a closer study. The main criterion for selecting material for the case study was identification of activities and statements that substantiate in a clear and comprehensive way how a corporate branding strategy at Novo Nordisk evolved, with indications of significant examples of social and managerial integration. The empirical material was first systematised according to the three corporate branding initiatives. Secondly, it was divided into the categories of representations and reactions and, finally, it was systematised in accordance with the framework.

### **Phase three: analysing and concluding about the case**

The third step was to analyse and draw conclusions. The first part of the case study presents, as mentioned, the overall case story about how corporate branding emerged at Novo Nordisk, while the second part of the analysis inquires more deeply into the three embedded strategic initiatives. Selected statements and activities related to the corporate branding strategy and initiatives were analysed in accordance with the interpretive repertoire.

From the epistemological approach, it is the intention to study events, activities and statements that exemplify corporate branding in the organisation of Novo Nordisk through an interpretive repertoire. Two levels of analysis are reflected in the empirical inquiry: the organisational level and the individual level. The focus on corporate branding at the organisational level considers the branding activities and statements that represent corporate brand management's intended picture of the organisation, expressed through official statements and activities. The focus at the individual level is on how members of the organisation reacted to the corporate branding initiative through their expressions, actions and beliefs. Statements and activities at these two levels are analysed and discussed. The levels are considered as closely related because official statements and activities at the organisational

level may influence how members of the organisation react to a corporate branding initiative. And vice versa, reactions at the individual level may also influence how a corporate branding strategy becomes realised, as illustrated in the story of Type Zero.

The analysis between these levels is carried out in a dialectical way. The possible tensions between different organisational and individual statements are a part of how the analysis is carried out. The purpose is to emphasise various examples of how the branding processes at the organisational level agree or disagree with the beliefs at the individual level. The dialectical analyses contrast the dominant planned way of institutionalising corporate branding with the individual beliefs about corporate branding. Regardless of whether a statement or activity is a representation or a reaction to a corporate branding initiative at the individual or organisational level, the key unit of analysis is the statement, which also includes activities translated into text. This implies that the individual and organisational levels are connected through analysing the validity of statements.

Naturally, formal activities sustained by considerable resources and launched at events with supportive statements and activities made by powerful managers and diverse corporate material distributed through available and controllable media channels in an organisation may straightforwardly influence the realisation of a strategy. But although sufficient resources are available to make a powerful impact, the resources alone cannot guarantee a successful outcome. Other factors also influence the realisation of a strategy, for example the actual campaign material, how people recognise the strategy, its timing, etc. In other words, the impact of a corporate branding strategy can be considerable without necessarily being successful.

By contrast, activities and statements from individuals which are informal in character may also be significant in relation to a cross-organisational integration, and not merely idiosyncratic private statements without consequences for an organisation. Reactions from people across the organisation are included in the analysis as significant because supportive or challenging statements coming from an individual may gain social strength and in the end influence a corporate branding strategy. A member of an organisation who questions the content or form of a corporate branding strategy may start a butterfly effect<sup>17</sup> which gains social validity and eventually affects its realisation. This was exactly what happened when the first person started criticising the Type Zero initiative. The Type Zero story in fact demonstrates that both informal statements from employees and formal statements from management have an impact on a branding initiative. So, informal statements and activities from members of the organisation can have an impact on a corporate branding strategy and are therefore considered as influential in character.

An assumption following from the theory of communicative action is that the force of a statement relates to its validity regardless of what level it comes from. This may be true in an ideal world where all people are equal, but a statement from the CEO, for instance, may have a more noticeable impact than the same statement coming from an employee working at the floor level. People from the branding department may have greater impact as the organisational experts on branding at the organisational level. The interpretations of the empirical case consider these aspects of status and impact, and reflect about their significance in the interpretation in the different analyses.

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<sup>17</sup> The butterfly effect is a phrase that encapsulates that a small variation in the initial condition of a dynamic system may produce large variations in the long-term behaviour of the system.

### 5.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research approach, the method of the qualitative case study, its criteria for including empirical material, and how the analysis was conducted and is presented. The analysis demonstrates how a corporate branding strategy is supported and challenged by various statements and activities across the organisation. The analysis is accompanied by a discussion of the consequences of the various statements in relation to the question of managerial and social integration. Finally a comparative conclusion will be presented that relates and compares differences and similarities in the findings from all three initiatives. The case study is presented in the following way: An overall case story describes the context into which the three cases are embedded. A part of this overall case story introduces each strategic initiative to bring in the particular situation relevant to each of the embedded cases before the detailed analysis is carried out. Table 5.7 summarises how the empirical research is organised and its elements.

**Table 5.6 Overview of empirical research and its elements**

<b>Empirical research</b>	Case story	Embedded cases: The three strategic initiatives
<b>Empirical sources</b>	Empirical material produced by Novo Nordisk Empirical material produced through interviews, comments and participatory observation	
<b>Systematisation of empirical material</b>	Representation	Reactions
	Supportive or challenging activities and statements	
<b>Analyses of empirical material</b>	Indication of managerial and social integration of the corporate branding initiatives based on interpretations through the interpretive repertoire.	

The next chapter will present the case story of the developing corporate branding activities at Novo Nordisk.

## **6 A case story of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk**

This is the overall case story about corporate branding in a pharmaceuticals company. It is about how Novo Nordisk undertook a changed corporate branding strategy. The purpose of the case story is to present the background and provide some insight for the closer analysis of the three branding initiatives. It describes some of the challenges facing an organisation-wide corporate branding effort generally seen through the communicative perspective.

The case story is primarily structured chronologically to give the reader an impression of the way things developed. It is a story of an evolving process of increasing institutionalisation of corporate branding in the organisation. The research required listening to and giving voice to people who had been involved in the processes and tracing past attempts. Success in this field would depend on coming up with a way to develop, manage, organise and position the Novo Nordisk brand. Plans were created, discussed and delayed several times. The strategic importance of branding grew and resources were allocated to the effort. All along, various people were in charge of coming up with a plan that could handle the challenges of the company as identified by top management and the people responsible for corporate branding. It took about three years to reach agreement and move forward on a project that could be integrated into the organisation.

The case story draws on key moments from these processes of making corporate branding a part of the organisation and business of Novo Nordisk. The company had always a brand, but what was new was the degree of managerial attention paid to the strategic importance of corporate branding. The development demonstrates

how corporate branding became a central concern for management as well as how its sphere of activities expanded. The story highlights examples and critical events that led to an increased focus on corporate branding, revealing important characteristics of the organisation at the same time. Three events are emphasised as important for understanding the development of corporate branding.

One of these events was the Type Zero experience that tried to make corporate branding a part of the business for Novo Nordisk. Looking back, however, several critical events and experiences led to an increased focus on corporate branding both before and after Type Zero. When the Type Zero initiative was announced, it was emphasised that the development of the corporate branding strategy had been a model example of collaboration, but it was not very clear what preparations and considerations had been made before IM 2005 with regard to the members of the organisation. Only a few managers had actually been involved and had heard about the new corporate branding ambitions. The development of the brand initiative was in the melting pot for about three years with many meetings, preparations and discussions taking place. During various discussions, the strategic importance of corporate branding had gradually increased. Twice, an initiative was planned to be launched at earlier IMs but was delayed due to ongoing discussions and various complexities. It is to these events, which significantly influenced the development of corporate branding, that I will now turn.

## **6.1 Corporate branding on the agenda**

In 2002, all activities concerning corporate branding at Novo Nordisk were initiated, organised and managed by the corporate communications department. Corporate branding was a sub-area in the corporate communications department and the importance and management of corporate branding had a limited scope. It



was difficult to distinguish between communications and branding activities, and many of the employees in the department were involved in both. It was in this managerial and organisational context that a revision of the CVI (corporate visual identity) guidelines<sup>18</sup> and the importance of corporate branding emerged in the period from June 2002 to March 2003. At that time, Novo Nordisk's corporate branding activities mostly amounted to managing the design. The design approach is described by various scholars (e.g. Olins 2003; Schultz 2005), who identify organisational engagement in design guidelines as one among other initial characteristics of the early branding activities and also a first step towards a more strategic understanding of corporate branding.

The corporate brand manager at that time also indicated that corporate branding could play a more beneficial role for Novo Nordisk beyond mere consideration of design. Her initial step was to highlight that the use of the design guidelines was inconsistent and only randomly implemented across the organisation as one of the first arguments for the potential of corporate branding. The inconsistent use indicates that was difficult to achieve a coherent expression in corporate materials, but it also indicates the possible challenges ahead for a more comprehensive corporate branding project. Figure 6.1 below illustrates a slide that the corporate branding manager used to argue for the necessity of an increased focus on corporate branding. Its purpose was to exemplify the confusing picture of the company across various materials at headquarters. Emphasising that it was at headquarters implicitly indicated that it would possibly be even more inconsistent outside headquarters.

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<sup>18</sup> The CVI included the internal guidelines for the corporate appearance in various kinds of material, such as presentations, posters, corporate advertisements, etc. According to the *CVI Manual*, the purpose of the CVI was to secure standardisation, consistency, uniqueness and professionalism in all printed material. However simple this might appear, it was not an easy job.

**Figure 6.1 Inconsistent uses of design guideline**



Slide No. 30 • CVI Report • 16 August 2002

During a presentation in February 2003, a manager expressively noted that “old bulls were alive and well in headquarters”.<sup>19</sup> This was a criticism that referred to how different logo-types were used. The bull is the logo of Novo Nordisk.

The manager thereby indicated that the existing corporate branding initiative called *Being There* was not a cross-organisationally implemented effort and not even in headquarters. She further stressed that it was not taken seriously and that even the marketing department did not make use of the corporate brand material at all. Instead, the marketing department promoted the company products individually and marketed them heavily, which was seen as the company missing

<sup>19</sup> CVI report 2002

the potential benefits of corporate branding and product branding. Gradually a realisation emerged among a few managers about certain advantages in undertaking a corporate branding project in the company. Step by step, they analysed activities in organisation from a perspective that searched after possible opportunities that could put corporate branding on the organisational agenda.

A central finding that was used as an argument was their emphasis on what they saw as a conflict between the Novo Nordisk Way of Management, showing a “winning culture, taking a lead, competitive edge, good business that is decently striving for a profit” (CVI Report 2002:35), and the CVI signalling a caring company modelled on Florence Nightingale, as it was sometimes said. As more and more characteristics of the organisation were included in the analysis and considerations about corporate branding, there slowly emerged an understanding of corporate branding as an activity reaching beyond just managing the design guidelines.

Some of the findings, such as the contrast between Florence Nightingale and winning culture, can be seen as a question of sincerity, where the company expresses a profile different from its management principles. It was not framed in this way, but there emerged some kind of recognition of the need for alignment between the branding activities and the organisational culture, a point that is theoretically elaborated by Hatch and Schultz (2001).

Novo Nordisk initiated a project called the Brand Strategy Project (BSP) in 2002 to identify the advantages of working professionally with corporate branding. The BSP argued that “consistent and constant corporate branding can exploit economies of scale in advertising and marketing as it can lead to 15-20% decrease in marketing costs” (BSP 2002:3). The BSP strongly used hard facts to

recommend that the organisation should work professionally with corporate branding because “the Novo Nordisk brand can play a role more beneficial to business” (BSP 2002:4).

It concluded that Novo Nordisk already has “an exceptionally strong corporate culture today in Denmark” (BSP 2002:11), but “by not having a strong corporate brand, we may be allowing our corporate brand to be passively and indirectly managed through the opinions of regulatory agencies, the press, and financial analysts” (BSP 2002:3). The conclusion significantly indicated that a corporate brand was no longer limited to the question of the CVI because benefits of economy and particular marketing were now important. This not only parallels the scholars that consider the design approach as a forerunner to more advanced approaches to corporate branding, but also the theoretical arguments about the cross-organisational relevance of corporate branding (Schultz 2005). The conclusions seemed to imply that Novo Nordisk needed to take control of their corporate brand if they were to achieve the advantages. It may conversely be noted that there were no sceptical arguments or counter arguments as to whether the promising advantages of corporate branding could be achieved.

## **6.2 Brand platform in development**

In the autumn of 2003, the executive management decided to establish a brand group (BG). Establishing the BG marked a turning point, making corporate branding more institutionalised in the company. It now involved managers from across the organisation, including International Marketing, and Stakeholder Relations. The purpose was to develop a brand platform that could differentiate the company from its competitors and strengthen its business.

A noticeable trait that gradually began to emerge in documents, presentations and conversations was a whole new terminology about branding. Words like brand platform, brand promise and brand ambassador were being used in the organisation to explain and denote various aspects of the corporate branding phenomenon. This had two interesting consequences. On the one hand, it made corporate branding more concrete and familiar to the people managing and involved in the project because they now had various names for what were considered as essential elements in the branding activities. On the other hand, it also made the people who were not directly involved in the branding project more alienated with regard to how to understand the terminology and meaning of the brand project. This naturally raised some issues of intelligibility among the people not involved in, and even those involved in, the branding activities about understanding the meaning of the new words.

The BG worked on several problems that had to be solved to develop a brand platform. They identified Novo Nordisk's way of doing business as a key challenge because it consisted of two strong elements that were not closely integrated due to differing mind sets and ways of understanding the business. One side of the business included R&D, production, operations, and marketing, while the other and "softer" side of the business was concerned with corporate social responsibility, communications and environmental policy.

The BG was looking for an opportunity to balance and connect these two parts of the business in the development of a brand platform. Although the BG included members from both sides of the business, it was still initiated, driven and organisationally anchored in corporate communications. The anchoring in corporate communications was to some extent a challenge because the hard side of business and in particular marketing had difficulties in understanding the

relevance of working on corporate branding. Furthermore, the involvement of the BG in matters that were normally the responsibility of marketing was a challenge because there was not any practice of working across the organisation. This quote from a marketing manager exemplifies this challenge:

“We [the marketing department] should drive the corporate branding project because we are the best at branding. They have a lot to learn. It is really a paradox that people from communications are pretending to know what it is all about. Their budgets are much smaller than ours and they seem to care more about social responsibility than about what will drive a powerful branding effort” (Vice-president, International Marketing).

Another accompanying challenge was how the brand platform could reflect the company’s portfolio of products. Seventy per cent of Novo Nordisk’s business was devoted to the treatment of diabetes; the rest involved other biopharmaceuticals, including the treatment of bleeding disorders. In this second group, a product called NovoSeven, originally taken on as a promising franchise, threatened a dilemma because it was a very strong product brand with no obvious relation to Novo Nordisk’s long history as an important player in the diabetes business.

The BG suggested linking social responsibility more directly with the business supported by an analysis of the situation in the market, where it was found that there was a “window of opportunity for Novo Nordisk to capitalise on the bad will directed at a number of our major competitors” (Novo Nordisk Branding Initiative 2004). The BG found a possible window of opportunity by focusing on the bad image of an industry earning money from sick people without really caring for the patient. Two alternative brand platforms were suggested that expressed the

identity of the company with different emphases. The first emphasised Novo Nordisk's commitment to CSR and good leadership, while the second focused on diabetes.

In November 2003, it was decided to proceed with the second alternative, because it was considered as closely linked to the business objective of defeating diabetes. However, it was also noted that there would be an important job of communicating how it would affect the non-diabetes product areas internally and externally. In January 2004 the final brand platform was presented as:

*Novo Nordisk is leading the fight against diabetes. Defeating diabetes is our passion and our business.* (Novo Nordisk Branding Initiative 2004).

The platform became an officially decided statement and point of reference concerning the branding activities to come. The following argument motivated the brand platform:

“We have committed ourselves to finding better ways of prevention and treatment of diabetes and its complications. Together with people with diabetes and those who care for them, we strive to find individual solutions. Our unique combination of product portfolio, insulin delivery systems, people and education programmes makes this possible. To us, leadership comes with responsibility – a responsibility to put diabetes on the world agenda. It is our goal to increase understanding of diabetes, awareness of the risk factors and to help make treatment more accessible” (Novo Nordisk branding initiative 2004).

The platform and motivation combines both the hard and the soft sides of business. While it emphasises the product portfolio, it also links corporate social

responsibility more directly to business than seen before at Novo Nordisk. Furthermore, it indicated that the corporate branding activities were meant to be global. What still needed to be solved according to the brand managers, however, was how the products outside the diabetes area could be included in a brand platform focusing on diabetes. At that time, there was no answer to this challenge. It troubled the brand manager and she made the following comment during one of my conversations with her:

“They [the people working with N7] will always be excluded from the diabetes focus. We should give them red chairs to signal that they are different but still a recognised and valuable part of our business. (Corporate Branding, Manager 1).

The red chairs illustrated a problem about how to acknowledge the members of the organisation working with NovoSeven. The development and ambitions of corporate branding had grown and the corporate project now included all parts of the business, the soft and the hard side as well as the various products condensed into a brand platform signalling a monolithic identity. The development raised some on-going integrative challenges that were far more complicated than could be handled through managerial control of, for example, a design manual. The brand manager tried to find out how to engage the whole organisation and all its members. At that time, she estimated that only about 200 people had knowledge of the corporate branding project, whereas the ambition was to get all 22 000 employees to become brand ambassadors for the company. The BG planned to launch the new platform at the IM 2004, but just before that an additional integrative challenge appeared.



### 6.3 A significant day in the US affiliate

Just before the planned launch, “a very significant day in the history of Novo Nordisk” was being marked on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2004 in the US, as it was framed in a speech by a manager in the US affiliate. Champagne, confetti and caps accompanied the enthusiastic launch of the affiliate’s corporate branding campaign called *Changing the Course of Diabetes for Good*. The managers of the US affiliate, which is Novo Nordisk’s biggest affiliate, had long believed in the advantages of a powerful corporate brand that could meet the challenges of today’s competitive environment as they put it. They had been waiting for headquarters too long, so they undertook to develop their own independent corporate branding initiative.

It is unusual that two initiatives on corporate branding are undertaken in the organisation simultaneously, because a corporate branding effort normally concerns the whole company at once. This indicated a lack of coordination and internal agreement on how to develop the corporate branding activities across Novo Nordisk. Furthermore, it demonstrated that there was a recognised need for undertaking corporate branding activities in the US affiliate and perhaps among other affiliates, which in fact was a missing reason in the argumentation coming from the BG in headquarters. The BG could only watch from the side-lines as another example of what corporate branding was, the motivation for undertaking it, and how it could be managed was rolled out from the perspective of the US affiliate.

The reason for undertaking a corporate branding initiative in the US was, according to an often repeated argument among the US managers, that “Novo Nordisk had virtually no image in the US” and furthermore that the company’s strong leadership in the area of diabetes was “one of the best-kept secrets in this

country”, as one of the speakers said at the launch. Already in the autumn of 2003, preparations to launch a corporate branding campaign were under way in the US. In an internal memo from October 2003, the US corporate branding project team outlined their ideas about how their brand statement, “Changing the Course of Diabetes for Good”, could go together with headquarters’ slogan “Leading the fight against diabetes”. The US corporate branding campaign was based on the triple bottom line, the company values and focused on diabetes. It was thus in line with the overall company policy in Novo Nordisk on key points. The US affiliate managed to outrun the headquarters project and find answers to a number of difficulties that were still troubling the BG’s upcoming brand initiative.

The market in USA is the biggest for Novo Nordisk where the affiliate primarily specialises in sales, marketing and public affairs. The 400 employees in the US at that time were mainly sales representatives that focused on how to promote and sell products. The branding perspective was therefore anchored in a marketing-oriented approach to corporate branding where the strategic purpose was clear from the beginning. The US affiliate was eager to get a corporate branding effort running primarily to support product branding and sales. So, the affiliate faced and focused on some different challenges from those faced by headquarters in the development of a corporate branding initiative. It is in this context, that the corporate branding initiative was launched.

A strong line of argument was put forward at the launch by the top management of the US affiliate. The argument matched the context and the audience and deserves to be quoted at some length because it demonstrates their perspective on a strong image:

“When people know your name, they’re more comfortable with you. There’s a personal connection there—an element of trust—that makes them more willing to talk to you. More willing to listen to you. And work with you.... Partner with you. If our name – our brand – is familiar and associated with being a diabetes leader, doctors and diabetes educators are more open to meeting with us. Patients and payers are more comfortable buying from us. Talented people want to come work with us. Shareholders want to invest in us. And other groups want to team up with us to help accomplish our goal. In fact, we can’t change the course of diabetes without them all – without partners who trust us, and our leadership. That’s why it takes more than just being a leader. We have to be recognised as one, too” (Speech 1, US).

To be recognised as a leader, the US affiliate believed that turning up the volume on diabetes leadership would increase receptiveness to their product brands. Leadership was understood more broadly than just competing in providing superior products to the market. It also involved a commitment to put diabetes on the national agenda in the US. Corporate branding was here seen as a door opener in the belief that trust could be built upon the credibility of the diabetes effort.

#### **6.4 Corporate branding in the headquarters (continued) ...**

At headquarters, the corporate branding initiative was still suffering from delays and remained in the preparation phase. The BG watched the launch of the US initiative from the side-lines. They had followed the unstoppable US initiative during the autumn of 2003 and tried to influence it so it would not differ too much from the headquarters’ initiative. Compared to the US initiative, the headquarters’ initiative was still saddled with reluctance and second thoughts. Implementation was planned at IM 2004.

Although they had big plans and everything seemed to be in place, these plans were not realised at the IM 2004. New problems kept turning up. According to the brand manager, one reason was that the project did not have sufficient resources. However, the question of resources was probably only one reason. It seemed that there lacked an agreement about how the corporate branding project should develop across the organisation. Executive management wanted something more and had some additional concerns and needed clarification on external implementation and how the corporate branding initiative would affect product branding within Novo Nordisk (Memo 24.04 2004). From April to August 2004 more than ten versions of the same strategy document circulated in closed circles in the organisation and no final agreement was reached, although a lot of workshops and meetings were held.

The senior executive manager who was in charge of the CSR area felt that something needed to be done and hired an external consultant to manage the process and get it back on track. A project office and a new Brand Strategy Group (BSG) were established. The consultant explained that there were too many people trying to influence the corporate branding process. People from different parts of the organisation all had different agendas that did not pull in the same direction according to her observations. Some of the barriers were caused by different mind sets, because the organisation was split into functional silos, as it was described and there was no tradition for cross-organisational coordination and collaboration (Manager 1, corporate branding).

Things moved fast in the new Brand Strategy Group and they managed to formulate a strategy within three months at the end of October 2004. One organising principle was to see things in the structure of a brand house and focus on the value corporate branding could bring to the business. By listening to the

various stakeholders in the organisation, primarily managers, and using part of their input, the group managed to reach a level of agreement and strategic direction that had been so difficult to establish earlier.

### **6.5 The new corporate branding function**

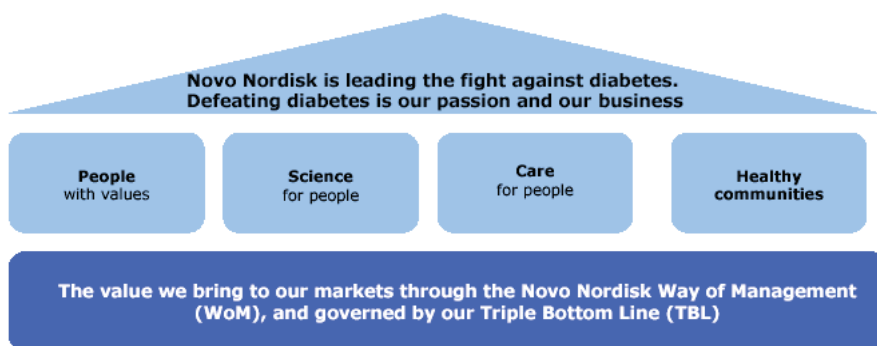
A corporate branding department was established on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004 as a new functional area in Corporate Stakeholder Relations. This organisational change demonstrated that the strategic importance of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk had grown. It was now an institutionalised function with its own staff, resources and specific responsibilities. The external consultant became vice-president of the new corporate branding function.

The first and most important task was to create an understanding of the relevance of corporate branding and leveraging its strategy, tactics and concept to the organisation globally at the IM 2005.

### **6.6 Corporate branding strategy: brand promise and brand house**

A central part of the corporate branding strategy was the brand terminology which tries to make the brand as tangible and relevant to the organisation as possible. The brand promise communicated a central distinct statement meant to position Novo Nordisk and express the differentiating characteristics of the company. This promise was incorporated into a framework that looked like a house. The brand house provides a simple overview and structure of the corporate branding activities with the promise at the top.

**Figure 6.2 The Novo Nordisk Brand House**



Source: Presentation by vice-president (01 2005)

The brand house, also called the brand platform, illustrates that the promise is based on four different building blocks or brand assets, which organise the various activities of Novo Nordisk. Many of the brand assets were old activities now organised under the umbrella of the corporate branding initiative. The four blocks and examples of the contents are:

- *People with values*: Novo Nordisk's unique history, Take action!<sup>20</sup>
- *Science for people*: The fact that Novo Nordisk is the biggest investor in diabetes R&D in the pharmaceutical industry, Steno, OCDEM, Hagedorn.<sup>21</sup>
- *Care for people*: Novo Nordisk has the broadest insulin portfolio, the best devices and conducted the first social survey of people with diabetes.

<sup>20</sup> Take action is an initiative where employees can engage in voluntary work related to Novo Nordisk therapy areas.

<sup>21</sup> Steno is a hospital specialising in treatment, education and research in diabetes; OCDEM is the Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism, which represents a partnership between Novo Nordisk, the UK's health service, and the University of Oxford; Hagedorn is an independent research institute in diabetes.

- *Healthy communities*: Novo Nordisk provides access to diabetes care in the developing world, stakeholder engagement process, and Oxford Vision 2020 meetings and World Diabetes Foundation (WDF).<sup>22</sup>

The brand promise and the brand house were the organising principles for the corporate branding effort at Novo Nordisk headquarters. They provided an overview of corporate branding activities to the organisation. In the perspective of this project, the brand platform and its organising principles helped the managers to clarify how corporate branding should be understood.

### **6.7 Integration of the corporate branding strategy**

The new corporate branding strategy primarily highlighted external aspects of integration as the key to success, for example by stating: “By closely integrating our communications outreach around mission-critical activities at the corporate and at the market level, and by integrating the brand platform into corporate and market-based activities of importance, we have a better chance of communicating effectively about the actual value we bring to our market and in this manner differentiating our brand and our product brands in a meaningful way” (Manager 1, corporate branding). By contrast, the strategy did not focus to the same degree on the importance of creating awareness about integrating corporate branding in the organisation but it resembles the perspective from Integrated Marketing Communications that seeks to integrate all communication activities (e.g. Kitchen and Pelsmacker 2004; Schultz and Kitchen 2000).

The strategy underlines its reliance on integrated team work with International Marketing and several markets, including the UK, the US, China and Germany, as well as Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, Australia, Japan, Italy and France. IM

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<sup>22</sup> Vision 2020 is collaboration between Novo Nordisk and the University of Oxford dedicated to preventing the growth of chronic diseases; WDF is an independent foundation dedicated to supporting the treatment of diabetes.

2005 was the starting point for launching the initiative to the organisation. It may be noted that the strategy took no special account of the US initiative, even though it had already been launched, which indicated some degree of lack of understanding and coordination.

### **6.8 The first objective of the corporate branding function**

The corporate branding function worked hard in their first months to get everything ready for launching the strategy and concept at IM 2005. After various tests and approvals in the organisation, they decided on the Type Zero initiative as an adequate expression of the brand platform and promise. Expectations were great, but the concept was strongly rejected by the organisation as demonstrated in the introduction.

### **6.9 Considerations after IM 2005**

When IM 2005 was over, the brand team was disappointed that the initiative was not flying. The lack of understanding and acknowledgement of Type Zero made it clear that something needed to be done. The team decided to make some additional tests, and at the same time try to come up with some alternative ideas. The process of corporate branding was delayed another three to four months.

The vice-president of corporate branding framed the problem with Type Zero as a question of semantics and explained that, although the Hilton Hotel was massively wrapped in branding material, the initiative had not worked because it was too difficult to understand for the members of the organisation. Most noticeably, even the CEO did not really understand and feel happy with it at the IM2005. Type Zero had been chosen because it was different and had a hook, as was often repeated in the corporate branding department. Apparently nobody had raised questions about the internal support and how the members of the organisation might react. Finally, the initiative was paradoxically given up for external reasons,



because it did not appeal to the patients, and not because of internal reasons, such as its rejection in the organisation.

## **6.10 The Changing Diabetes initiative**

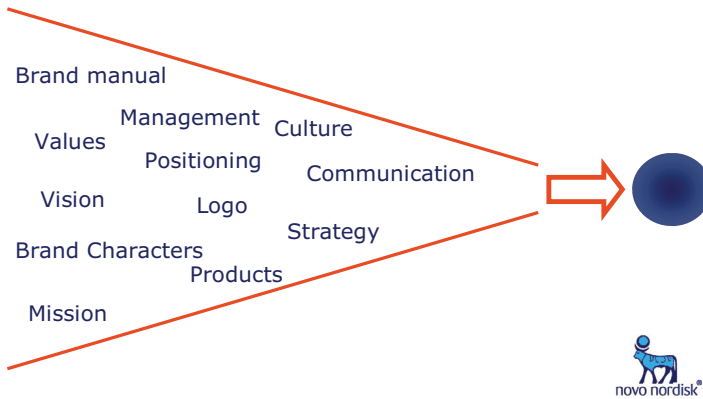
The brand team spent the next three months trying to come up with another strategic initiative that could be integrated in the organisation, but they failed. The idea for another brand concept came from the top management as they considered the successful effort in the US and the initiative called *Changing the Course of Diabetes for Good*. Inspired by the US initiative, one member of the top management suddenly suggested that *Changing Diabetes* might be the right concept for the whole organisation.

So after four months of intensive work the brand team got their concept. One obvious advantage was its resemblance to the successful initiative in the US, which made it uncomplicated to coordinate and cooperate with Novo Nordisk's largest affiliate. Once the hurdle of coming up with an acceptable and useable concept was overcome, things started moving fast and new branding material was produced. A new strategy was also conceived titled, "Driving global diabetes leadership for Novo Nordisk, aspiration based planning for corporate branding 2006-2011". The title and the future direction of the branding processes included in the strategy signalled that it was open to contributions from members of the organisation and not carved in stone. This is in contrast to the Type Zero strategy, which in a prescriptive way tried to control the adoption of the branding effort by the members of the organisation through tactics.

A typical corporate branding presentation now tried explain what corporate branding was, why it mattered, and its relevance to the organisation.

**Figure 6.3 Slide from a corporate branding presentation**

## Branding gives the company direction



Slide no 7 • Corporate Branding presentation, BoD meeting 10 August 2005 • Prepared by CERb, LKI

Source: Corporate branding presentation (08 2005)

The slide illustrates the typical elements that the corporate branding managers considered as important to include in the corporate branding effort. The brand managers explained how all these elements were unified under the corporate branding umbrella and were a part of the branding ambitions. To some extent the arguments provided are based on the premise that there was a lack of direction between these elements before. The slide exemplifies how the ambitions and understanding had developed into a much more comprehensive conception of corporate branding. Although it seemed like a strong argument for corporate branding to include all these central elements, it also implied the risk of being seen as a patronising and superior project that defined itself as more important than the rest of the organisation. This slide is a good example of the perspective held by the corporate branding managers, but not necessarily a slide that was recognised from

other perspectives outside the branding department. The brand managers even had big ambitions of getting top management to change the vision to be more in accordance with the branding intentions, but this did not happen. Corporate branding now included many aspects of the company, but the perspective of seeing everything through the lens of branding was limited to the branding department. For other departments branding was an activity that was to support Novo Nordisk's image, not a superior activity in which the whole organisation could be subsumed. "The vision provides us with direction and a picture of our future, like our values are our reasons for doing business in our way. We do not have a brand vision or a set of brand values, like Virgin, we have the Novo Nordisk Way of Management to which all our activities are related also our branding activities" (Corporate branding presentation 08 2005). Examples of similar perspectives on the role of branding were also identified in the interviews among managers from other parts of the organisation. They seemed to agree about branding being an important activity for the organisation, but not an activity that could in any way be seen as superior to other activities. The fact that branding was viewed differently from different perspectives is an example of one of the challenges that the branding managers faced as they tried to get corporate branding on the internal agenda.

An argument that was introduced as the slide was presented in the organisation was that all the employees should become brand ambassadors. It is therefore a paradox that the employees are missing from the illustration. The employees were considered as important in many discussions and presentations but management did not have a developed idea of how to engage them in the effort and even forgot to include them in their slideshow. The consent of the employees were still mostly an implicit assumption, something that was expected to come automatically, and

to the extent that it was considered it was up to the employees to figure out how they could “live the brand” through the various artefacts and symbols of the brand.

The corporate branding function explained corporate branding in the following way: “Branding works inside-and-out and is the management of the perceived value we as a company bring to our market collectively through everything we say and do; how we do it and our vision for the future. Thus, branding is about finding into the core of our organisation and unleashing the collective potential of our product portfolio, our values, culture and vision in a concerted way through our people, actions, communications and stakeholder relations” (Manager 2, corporate branding). The explanation shows how corporate branding now included many activities across the organisation. It also indirectly indicates that a successful corporate branding initiative depends on mutual understanding and coordination across the organisation to work inside and out as described.

The new concept *Changing Diabetes* was first launched internally at the second quarterly meeting in August 2005. The senior executive vice-president, the vice-president of corporate branding, and the head of International Marketing, took care of the presentation of the new initiative. Coming from both marketing and CSR, they signalled that this was a cross-organisational endeavour, which became even clearer as examples of combined corporate brand and product brand advertisements were distributed. Their presentation, entitled *Let’s revitalise our corporate brand*, was an encouragement and invitation to the organisation to support the corporate branding effort. In addition to the external argumentation, the aim was to involve the organisation behind the effort. It was emphasised that to realise the corporate brand effort it was important to: “Maximise the potential of our collective brand assets! Get the organisation behind this! Walk the talk! Communicate! Collaborate! Share best practice! Be proactive!” (Changing Diabetes presentation 08 2005, Slide 17). They tried to get the organisation to

support the corporate branding and now directly asked for help, without taking it for granted.

During the rest of the year, the concept of *Changing Diabetes* became more and more visible and integrated in the organisation. At a meeting in Rome on 31<sup>st</sup> January, managers from affiliates shared their various corporate branding efforts and experiences of using the *Changing Diabetes* initiative. The experiences were mostly about how members across the organisation had branded the organisation through external activities. The German affiliate had raised awareness about the company in a corporate branding campaign about healthy food in public schools. The Chinese affiliate had exposed the company on national TV reaching about 50 million people. The Australian affiliate had involved the company in the political system, trying to influence various important decision makers about Changing Diabetes. The US affiliate had been working to change the health care system with an initiative called the National Diabetes Change Program. The meeting showed that a coordinated corporate branding initiative was silently becoming more integrated in the company globally. But it also showed very different approaches to corporate branding and Changing Diabetes.

### **6.11 IM 2006**

The brand team planned a visible corporate branding effort at IM 2006. Various vehicles, such as photos, posters, stickers and even a set of running gear, were part of communicating the new initiative. One difference from the previous year was that there was no surprise in store for the managers. The initiative had already been released in the organisation, although this time rather quietly compared with Type Zero. At IM 2006, the initiative was not presented in a way that encouraged discussion. Instead, it was part of the conventional company decorations at the Hilton Hotel in Rome. At the meeting, attention was given to the fact that a

*Changing Diabetes* communications package had been released on the intranet with tools, brochures, backgrounders, video and a managers' quick guide to *Changing Diabetes*, all without defining the employee roles too closely in the external brand roll-out.

From the Hilton in Copenhagen 2005 to the Hilton in Rome 2006, it seemed that corporate branding had gradually begun to emerge as an integrated part of the company and its way of doing business. Perhaps the past difficulties and experiences had caused some organisational reflection and thereby paved the way for a more qualified corporate branding endeavour in agreement with the organisation. It, in fact, seemed that the members of the organisation gradually accepted the new strategic initiative of *Changing Diabetes*. It was not so different from the organisational identity as initially planned with Type Zero. The volume was now starting to be turned up for Novo Nordisk.

# 7 Analysis of the three strategic corporate branding initiatives

This chapter presents detailed analysis of the three strategic corporate branding initiatives: *Changing the Course of Diabetes*, *Type Zero*, and *Changing Diabetes*.

The analyses are conducted in accordance with the interpretive repertoire, the previous discussions of the corporate branding phenomenon, and the explanations provided in the method. The analyses explore and interpret central parts of the processes, arguments and reactions and discuss their integrative implications. A collection of *representations* and *reactions* from across the organisation are analysed. These statements and activities originate from a broad base of a variety of empirical material collected, produced, and systematised in accordance with the method detailed in chapter 5. An overview of the empirical material used is provided in Appendix 13.4. Table 7.1 illustrates the cross-organisational structure and scope of the analyses.

**Table 7.1 Structure of cross-organisational case study**

Structure of cross-organisational case study			
Functions/Departments	Affiliates	Executive Managers	Product areas
Corporate Branding	US	CEO	NovoSeven
Corporate Communications	UK	CSR (Executive senior vice-president)	Diabetes
International Marketing	China	Chairman of the board	
P&O (People & Organisation)	Germany		

Two initiatives, Type Zero and Changing Diabetes, were initiated and launched from headquarters, while *Changing the Course of Diabetes* was initiated and launched from the US. This implies the official material representing the strategic initiatives came from headquarters twice and from the US once. This also implies that reactions from headquarters are included in the analysis of the US initiative. The initiatives that originated from headquarters chose to involve the members of the organisation step-by-step in what were denoted as first, second and third wave branding activities.<sup>23</sup> The US initiative had one big launch or wave and not several consecutive waves like the headquarters initiative. Headquarters and the US affiliate are different with regard to several characteristics, such as the affiliate is a sales organisation with sales representatives while headquarters is classical headquarters, with people taking care of different administrative assignments as well as the overall strategic decisions across the whole organisation. I will consider the differences further in relation to the representations and reactions when they influence my interpretations.

All three initiatives are analysed in accordance with the structure, i.e. across departments, affiliates, executive management, and product areas. The structure does not cover the whole organisation in detail, but a qualified sample of respondents who, to a various degrees, became involved in the branding activities at the time of my inquiry. Respondents who were not aware of or involved in the on-going branding activities are not included because they would not have contributed any valuable information to this inquiry. The focus is on how members of the organisation aware of and involved in the branding activities supported or challenged the various initiatives.

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<sup>23</sup> These waves were not the same as the waves in Hatch and Schultz (2008), but just express the sequential process of gradually involving the organisation.



Let me briefly recall the basic categorisation from the method: On the one hand, the analyses include official material conceived with the purpose of branding the organisation. This material represents the official corporate branding material and is therefore strategic in character. This material is categorised as *representative* material. On the other hand, the analyses also include reactions, statements and activities from members across the organisation. This material is categorised as *reactions* to the corporate branding initiatives.

All the empirical material included was analysed by means of the interpretive repertoire. This resulted in a considerable number of analysed examples many of which indicate virtually the same meaning, while some are different. The intention is not to present all the analysed examples in detail with the risk of repeating many points. Instead, the presentation is limited to providing a few extensive and typical examples of the analysis, after which a summary of the cross-organisational analyses of each strategic initiative is made.

The analysis of each initiative was structured as follows:

1. A clarification of the context of analysis
2. A qualification of the empirical examples included for a closer analysis
3. An extensive analysis of the examples in accordance with the interpretive repertoire
4. A summary of the general findings in the cross-organisational analyses

In what follows, the three strategic initiatives are analysed in chronological order; first, the *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative, second, the *Type Zero* initiative, third, the *Changing Diabetes* initiative. The next chapter provides a

summary in which the results from all three initiatives are compared and discussed.

## 7.1 The Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative

In the following empirical examples of representation and reactions with regard to the *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative are analysed.

### Context of the analysis

While the *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative was a strategic project conceived by the US affiliate, it was not implemented across the whole organisation of Novo Nordisk, although the corporate branding ambition of the US management was actually cross-organisational. According to a US manager the initiative was appropriate for being the new corporate brand for the whole organisation (Manager 2, US). Although the initiative was only rolled out in the US due to the circumstances clarified, it nevertheless managed to generate significant attention among members across the organisation, also at headquarters. The US affiliate is a sales organisation with people that are oriented towards sales and marketing.

As mentioned in the case story, the US affiliate of Novo Nordisk launched a corporate branding initiative in the US in 2004, approximately one year before headquarters was ready to launch its corporate branding initiative. On the day of the launch, top management of the US affiliate held five particularly remarkable speeches in front of the employees in the US. On that day, the walls of the affiliate were decorated with various kinds of branding material, such as pictures with text displaying the new corporate branding campaign line.

The overall structure of all five speeches together considered three central and related issues. One was to relate to and confirm the identity of Novo Nordisk in accordance with the brand promise and brand campaign line. The second was to argue for the necessity and opportunity of corporate branding, and the third was to

emphasise its relevance for business, the organisation and the employees. The identity, the opportunity, and the relevance for the business were aspects permeating both the structure and the content of all five speeches. Each speech also covered separate issues more specifically about corporate branding:

1. The first speech focused on the identity of the organisation,
2. The second speech focused on the opportunity of corporate branding,
3. The third speech focused on how it would influence different areas of the organisation,
4. The fourth speech focused on the needs of the sales representatives, and
5. The fifth speech focused on how the employees could contribute.

The structure sketches out an argumentation based on common knowledge about the organisation and the situation at hand. Corporate branding was then gradually added to this familiar situation as an opportunity and relevant strategy for managing competition and achieving organisational goals. The structure indicates that some previous consideration had been given to how to involve members of the organisation and make corporate branding relevant to their daily work.

### **Qualification of examples for a closer analysis**

Various empirical materials related to the US initiative were collected, such as speeches, interviews, presentations, meeting memos, branding material and articles. Although the initiative never became integrated across the whole organisation, people across the organisation were aware of the initiative and also interested in expressing their opinions about it. Sufficient representative material and reactions among respondents were therefore available for the cross-organisational analyses.

I have chosen four speeches as representative examples of the official corporate branding initiative. They are analysed thoroughly because taken together they provide an interesting and significant example of the managerial and social integration of corporate branding among the members of the organisation. These speeches were the results of strategic decisions and demonstrate arguments about the necessity of corporate branding for the US affiliate in particular, and for Novo Nordisk in general. A professional American branding consultancy had assisted the top management in the US in making a persuasive case for branding.

A number of other reasons also qualify the speeches for a closer analysis as representing the official corporate branding strategy. First, their importance is underlined by the fact that the main messages and argumentation are also to be found in a brochure distributed to the employees and other stakeholder in the period after the launch. Second, the line of reasoning in the speeches was repeated again and again in other corporate branding activities across the organisation after the launch. Third, some of the arguments from the speeches were later incorporated in the upcoming *Changing Diabetes* initiative at headquarters. The picture inserted below displays the brochure accompanied by arguments and wording from the speeches.

**Figure 7.1** The Changing the Course of Diabetes brochure



Source: Changing the Course of Diabetes brochure 2005

While a closer analysis of speeches 1, 2, 3 and 5 is undertaken, speech 4 is not analysed because it essentially repeats the meaning of the other speeches. The speakers are anonymous because the analysis focuses on what was stated rather than who said what. The four speeches are analysed consecutively with the first speech being most thoroughly analysed because it is an exemplary speech that includes several characteristics also found and repeated in the other speeches.

Among the reactions to the initiative, some statements from managers at headquarters are included as significant examples. Their reactions to the initiative were fairly consistent and seemed to agree in their interpretation of the initiative. A few reactions from the managers at the corporate branding department at headquarters are also presented because they express some interesting reactions to the US initiative.

## **7.2 Analysis of the four speeches**

### **Speech one: Intelligibility**

Two aspects of intelligibility were considered in the first speech. One was to make corporate branding and its benefits understood. The other was to make the chosen brand promise and campaign line understood in relation to the identity of the organisation. This was noticeable when the first speaker meets the audience and tries to establish a familiar situation:

“You’ve seen and heard a bit about it already ... the posters in the hall ... the e-mails ... and now this striking stage set behind me. But you may still be wondering exactly why you’re here. Of course, for some of you, it might be the free lunch. And that’s OK; we’ll get to the food shortly. But first we have some exciting things to talk about” (Speech 1).

By talking sympathetically about it and referring to previously mails, posters on the walls, the stage setting, the food, and the possible wonder among the employees, the first speaker tries to establish a common definition of the situation that everybody could relate to and understand in a rather straightforward way.

“This is a very significant day in the history of Novo Nordisk – it’s the launch of our new corporate branding program here in the U.S. And if that sounds like an abstract marketing concept that has little to do with your daily life, don’t worry: it’s not. It’s a whole new attitude. It’s a new approach to talking about who we are. An approach that’s going to affect you – and me – personally” (Speech 1).

As the speaker introduces the corporate branding program, he clarifies that corporate branding is not an “abstract marketing concept that has little to do with your daily life”. This approach indicates that it was considered as important to establish a common understanding among the employees about what corporate branding is. It further indicates some assumptions held by the US managers regarding how the employees understood corporate branding, such as they possibly did not really understand what corporate branding is, might hold different understandings, or perhaps even understand it in a negative way, such as an a superfluous activity not related to their daily activities at all. Speaking about corporate branding as something other than an “abstract marketing concept” suggests that abstract marketing arguments were considered as insufficient to explain corporate branding to the members of the organisation. Their daily activities are sales supported by product marketing and they therefore probably needed an explanation of corporate branding from a product branding point of view. While the scholars who argue for subsuming corporate branding as a special case of a marketing effort support such an understanding of corporate branding

(e.g. Balmer and Greyser 2006; Balmer 2001; Bernstein 2003), it does not reflect the contemporary development in the field of corporate branding that recognises the relevance of other disciplines, as illustrated in Chapter two (e.g. Schultz et al. 2005; Ind and Bjerke 2007). However, the need to understand branding through a product marketing perspective may make good sense in the US considering the US employees are sales and marketing oriented.

Addressing the aspect of intelligibility to begin with may remove some misinterpretations, because corporate branding is one of those management phenomena that many have heard about but only a few can explain (e.g. Ind 1997:2). This approach may make it possible that common ground, to a certain degree, is established among the employees on how to understand corporate branding. Or, if some of the employees do not agree with the clarifications, it can at least inform them about how management understands the phenomenon. Instead of launching the corporate branding programme as an abstract marketing concept, it was presented rather straightforwardly as “a whole new attitude ... a new approach to talking about who we are”. In other words corporate branding was presented as a way of talking about the identity of the organisation, although not framed in that way.

By underlining that it’s “going to affect you – and me – personally”, the speaker furthermore indicated that the whole affiliate, from top managers to every employee, was going to be involved. This naturally necessitates that issues of intelligibility are clarified because logically it is difficult to commit yourself to something that you do not really understand (e.g. Davis and Dunn 2002:223). If members of the organisation do not understand the corporate brand and therefore act in disagreement with it, this may also cause challenges with regard to sincerity (Ibid.:2).



Another more implicit aspect of intelligibility pervaded all four speeches but was particularly apparent in the first speech. It was to demonstrate how the corporate brand programme's brand promise of *Leading the Fight Against Diabetes* and its campaign line *Changing the Course of Diabetes* were valid and intelligible expressions of the identity of the company. The speeches constantly emphasised that these central statements were firmly based in organisational identity in order to justify the branding initiative. All five speakers repeatedly incorporated and used both the promise and the campaign line in various ways in their speeches. They were used differently but consistently, either in whole or in part, or in derivative ways, which may have gradually increased the possibility of making them intelligible and known to the audience. The connection between the promise and campaign line also signalled that the US branding initiative was in agreement with headquarters' upcoming initiative because it was based on the same promise. And precisely a basis of mutual understanding concerning how to brand the identity of a company between headquarters and the US seemed necessary to avoid having different strategic initiatives in conflict or competition with each other. The employees might not have noticed this, but it was also a way for the US management to signal to headquarters that the US corporate branding initiative might have branding potential for the whole organisation.

The continuous use of the same words from the central statements in all five may establish a confidence regarding the terminology, their implications, and an understanding of their meaning. The audience becomes so familiar with the promise and campaign line that they may be inclined to reproduce them in their own interpretation and presentation of the company to a third party. This is often seen as an important factor in disseminating the brand. However, it should be noted that the continuous use of these central statements will not automatically

generate and ensure an intersubjective agreement or understanding about them among the members of the organisation, although it may be a first necessary step. After explaining corporate branding as a new approach to talking about the organisation, the rest of the first speech was devoted to substantiating two basic lines of argumentation: one about what the identity of the organisation is, and the other about how to express it. The speaker constantly referred to well-known facts and normative beliefs familiar to the audience, to continue creating an intelligible presentation of the corporate branding strategy. In this way, the speech provided an opportunity for understanding the branding initiative as based on common knowledge.

### **Speech one: facts and norms**

The first speech emphasised facts related to the brand promise and the campaign line, and thereby also to the whole corporate branding initiative. The speech, in fact, framed the issue as providing evidence, such as making explicit claims to validity. In providing evidence, attention was drawn to a combination of well-known internal strengths, and corresponding external opportunities for branding the company in the US. For example:

“This week alone, almost 4,000 people will die because of complications from diabetes. (...) Today, diabetes affects 18 million people in this country. 18 million. In about two decades, that number’s expected to double. This diabetes epidemic is getting worse, not better. Of course, you already know that. Most of us here live, eat and breathe diabetes. So why am I telling you again? Because there’s never been a better time – or a better opportunity – in this country for someone to make a difference. To be a leader. A catalyst. For someone to “change the course of diabetes for good”, as you see on the wall behind me. That someone is Novo Nordisk. And that someone is you – and me” (Speech 1).

This quotation is an example of how referring to shared knowledge and external facts (about the evolving epidemic) provides a reason for undertaking a corporate branding strategy to the members. From a corporate branding point of view, the epidemic becomes a reason and an opportunity for the company to be a leader and a catalyst. It therefore also serves as a fact supporting the corporate branding strategy. And it may also provide meaning to the corporate branding campaign line of “Changing the Course of Diabetes for Good”.

It may also be noted that in addition to facts the quotation is based on dramaturgical action, as seen in the validity claim sincerity. Death is linked through a causal argument to the individual employee and his role in the company. This is a rather unusual approach, but it might be persuasive. Pharmaceutical companies do not usually talk a lot about death and diseases. It is much more common to talk about cures and care for the patients, because they do not want to be seen as a business that makes money from sick people close to death. There is an ethical element here. It is also noticeable that the speaker uses the words, “to be a leader” which is an expression from the brand promise. The brand promise may appear more meaningful and substantial when it is related to familiar facts. The campaign line is also linked with the facts and made relevant to the employees because it is mentioned that, in fact, they are going to make a difference through the corporate branding initiative.

As the speech continues, it further associates facts about competitors with the brand promise and provides the following factual conclusion about Novo Nordisk’s closest competitors, Eli Lilly and Aventis: “In fact, diabetes isn’t a core business for either of our main competitors” (Speech 1). The speech thereby positions the company in relation to its closest competitors, which is an important aspect of a corporate branding. Through this fact, it becomes obvious that Novo

Nordisk should be the key leader on the diabetes market as a unique opportunity for the company. Attention was also drawn to organisational characteristics and activities that support the brand promise and campaign line, particularly the claim about *leading the fight* as a distinctive trait of Novo Nordisk. Several facts were brought to the fore to substantiate and validate that *Novo Nordisk is leading the fight against diabetes*, such as facts about Novo Nordisk's history, product portfolio, its innovative and superior qualities, its increase in the sales force by 25%, its political involvement with legislators in Washington and what is called the National Diabetes Program, which aims at improving diabetes care in the country. All the facts that were emphasised and probably recognised broadly were meant to establish a valid factual basis for understanding the new branding initiative.

In addition to referring to facts, the first speech also significantly emphasised normative claims. An interesting comment was made in the manuscript for the first speech about the use of facts. The comment considered the question of how much detailed factual information the speaker should provide and recommended not overburdening the audience with facts because it would probably disturb the flow of thought about corporate branding. While this shows that the management and the consultancy had carefully considered how many facts would be appropriate, it also explicitly relates to how two central validity claims may support the branding effort. The comment was made because there seemed to be more facts available than needed. It further indicates that a balanced approach between facts and norms was considered important. An example of the balance between facts and norms is indicated in the following quotation:

“Our company is unlike any other company in the world. We have a culture ... an ethos ... that demands that we pay attention to the care and treatment of the people

we produce medicine for. We can't just sit back and be satisfied with increasing sales. We demand more of ourselves. In fact, we're already leading the fight to defeat diabetes around the world (...) we're just not recognised as the leader. Yet. Well, that's about to change" (Speech 1).

This quotation exemplifies how production is combined with a reference to the culture and ethos of the organisation. The speaker thereby combines a factual and normative-oriented statement to support the corporate branding strategy. The literature on corporate branding often refers to culture as a unique quality and a competitive advantage for an organisation because it cannot be copied (e.g. Olins 2003). The normative beliefs as incorporated in culture and values among the members of an organisation are more frequently emphasised as the common basis for branding among the members than facts (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Hatch and Schultz 2003).

The managerial intention of trying to establish a mutual understanding and prepare common ground for the initiative is particularly clear in the first speech. And the speech also seems anticipate that the members of the organisation agree to some extent as it continues and emphasises that "we're already leading the fight". The use of *we* and *already* indicates that a common definition of the situation based on the facts provided and normative beliefs about the company and the employee are now assumed to be established. The evidence provided is used to define the situation and the need to undertake corporate branding in a managerial integrative way that also could have an influence on the possibility of establishing mutual understanding and social integration among the members of the organisation if the members do not challenge the evidence provided. The first speaker summarises by including the members in the following way: "That's why we're uniquely qualified to lead the fight" (Speech 1). In other words, the facts and normative

beliefs are used as evidence to validate how Novo Nordisk's distinct identity and situation is in line with the suggested corporate branding strategy. This logically leads this analysis to an inquiry about sincerity.

### **Speech one: sincerity**

Many of the quotations above use inclusive pronouns like “we”, “us” and “our”. In a paradoxical way, the speaker speaks both to the employees and on behalf of the company in which the employees are included. Expressing messages in this way includes the audience. Besides being an effective rhetorical device, it is also an example of managerial integration that suggests that mutual understanding has already been established with regard to the corporate branding strategy and the arguments presented. However, it is difficult to know how the employees will consider realities (cf. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006:778). This assumption therefore involves the aspect of sincerity. The corporate branding initiative will only be sincere and in accordance with the members of the organisation, if they identify and agree with the situation defined and thereby the use of inclusive pronouns. While the use of inclusive pronouns cannot be considered as equivalent to mutual understanding, it may instead have the opposite effect on a sceptical employee that does not like to be included without being asked.

The use of pronouns indicates the view that a corporate branding strategy, in fact, is relevant to and should include every member of the organisation. But any listener may either agree and accept this inclusion in the organisational “we” or disagree and thereby exclude himself from the organisational “we”, as suggested by Habermas (2001). A corporate branding initiative that expresses a different picture from what is the “reality” in the organisation will consequently be insincere. The following quotation addresses the aspect of sincerity.

”All of these actions collectively are proof that we are walking our talk. It should be clear to those who know us that diabetes is not just our business ... but also our passion. It goes with the territory. It’s part of taking the lead to change the course of diabetes in this country. And it’s our responsibility to our customers to make a difference” (Speech 1).

The statement is directly related to sincerity when it mentions that “all of these actions collectively are proof that we are walking our talk”. To walk the talk is another way to say that the words are based on actions in the organisation. Making sure that a branding effort is reflected in the behaviour of the employees is an issue that provides the brand with validity and it is furthermore an issue that scholars consider as important for the success of a branding effort (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Davis and Dunn 2002).

In general, speech one makes a great effort to relate the corporate branding initiative to an organisational context by referring to known facts, norms and activities which may influence the employees so that they could also acknowledge the corporate branding effort as sincere and authentic. The quality of the evidence or validation provided for the initiative also affects the probability of whether other and even more far-reaching new elements in the initiative could become accepted across the organisation. If the employees agree with the situation and arguments outlined in the speech, they may also be inclined to accept and possibly support the new proposed initiative as sincere.

### **Speech two – facts, norms and sincerity**

Speech two took over where the first left off and focused on the new elements such as how to achieve the benefits of corporate branding.

“When people know your name, they're more comfortable with you. There's a personal connection there – an element of trust – that makes them more willing to talk to you. More willing to listen to you. And work with you .... Partner with you. If our name – our brand – is familiar and associated with being a diabetes leader, doctors and diabetes educators are more open to meeting with us. Patients and payers are more comfortable buying from us. Talented people want to come work with us. Shareholders want to invest in us” (Speech 2).

Speech two employs a line of reasoning, often presented as facts in the branding literature, that links the company name and being a leader with trust based on an argument about how increased recognition leads to increased stakeholder engagement (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2008; Davis and Dunn 2002; Olins 2003). To address all those stakeholders as important also indicates that the company depends on their recognition and contribution to the business and brand of the company (e.g. Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2008). The speech continues to address the changes that the corporate branding initiative is intended to bring about and thereby the new aspects in the corporate branding strategy.

“The issue is, up until now, we've just been whispering about it. Now we're going to do some shouting. And we're all going to be saying the same thing: that we are a company that cares – more than anything else – about the person with diabetes. (...) The big change is really our taking a much more aggressive approach to telling the U.S. who we are. That just hasn't been part of our culture or personality before. But now we're shouting out our message of diabetes leadership – in new print ads, TV ads, radio ads, in meetings, in the halls of Washington D.C., and even from the neon towers of Times Square” (Speech 2).



Branding is here made intelligible through an explanation about shouting instead of whispering. Such an explanation is easy to understand and remember, and it keeps it simple for the employees. However, shouting may challenge the normative sides, the culture, of the organisation, because it has not been a part of the identity before. Changing identity from whispering to shouting therefore also needs to be accepted in the organisation as a sincere expression of who the company is. For some members of an organisation, there might be a big difference in changing into a shouting organisation. While the company has its roots in Danish culture, where it is unusual to shout about what you do and how you do it, it is much more common and accepted to do some shouting about your strengths in the US. This difference, rooted in the norms and the culture, could be a matter for further consideration when a corporate branding effort is integrated across members of the organisation in different countries.

Here is an example of how words, actions and visual elements are linked together to create consistency in the way the company communicates to the world: “We want that message to come across clearly to every person who comes in contact with Novo Nordisk. (...) We have to be consistent in the words we say ... in the visual elements we use ... even in the way we act. Only then will people see one consistent picture of who we are, what we stand for, and what makes us different” (Speech 2). The relation between words and action, of course, indicates how sincerity is an issue of attention, but more interesting is the implicit emphasis on how words and action also indicate management’s intention to create employees who walk and talk in line with the branding effort. Torp (2009) indicates that this question of normative consistency raises challenges of how deeply managerial integration can enter into the individual’s life. It may be noted, as indicated in chapter two, that consistency is frequently emphasised, both as a prescription for and an effect of corporate branding efforts (e.g. Einwiller and Will 2002).

The speech ended by addressing the value of having a distinct and recognisable brand and the relationship between product branding and corporate branding. “We need a way to set ourselves apart from our competitors ... a way to establish our company as the expert ... the leader in this disease. It's not enough to just differentiate our products; we need to differentiate our company as well. (...) That's where the value of the corporate branding program comes in. If we've reached those physicians with our corporate message, and they know us as the diabetes leader, and they know we're an effective partner in the fight against diabetes, they'll be more receptive to seeing our reps, working with us and supporting us. In fact, they'll begin to look to us for solutions. That will give them a reason to talk to us first. And a reason to consider our products” (Speech 2).

The quotation indicates in a factual way that branding with the personality of being a leader causes awareness and receptiveness among customers who will then support product branding. The reasoning that links corporate with product branding is often emphasised as a factual business argument (Kapferer 2003; Keller 2003; Aaker 2004). In the context of the employees in the US affiliate, who as mentioned are mostly sales representatives, this argument may be supported if they believe that the tasks of selling products will be assisted through corporate branding.

In fact speech two offers several fact-oriented arguments related to the everyday challenges of the members. It presents corporate branding, so to speak, as a superior strategic solution that may bring competitive advantages to the organisation, if the members of the organisation support the initiative. And they may well be inclined to do so considering the arguments. The positive arguments also implicitly paint a contrasting picture of what the identity will be for an

organisation that does not engage in corporate branding. It will be a whispering organisation, without consistent messages and actions, an organisation that is not recognised as a leader, an organisation that does not receive product recognition and receptivity to the sales reps. Speech two offers a strong fact-oriented argumentation combined with a normative quest for legitimacy to change the identity to a shouting organisation in favour of the branding initiative.

### **Speech three – facts, norms and sincerity**

The third speech addressed the question of how a single focus on diabetes might affect other product areas not related to diabetes. It could be a problem if employees working in other product areas could not understand how their activities relate to the corporate branding strategy. In fact, it could cause a problem with regard to sincerity, if parts of the company could not identify with the branding strategy at all. The third speech provided various arguments for how corporate branding and a single focus on diabetes could benefit the other areas. The next quotation is included because it significantly demonstrates this line of argumentation.

“Corporate branding is not about specific products or divisions ... although it supports each one of them. It’s about who we are as a company. About how we conduct business. And about what our company name stands for. That affects every one of us. (...) It’s a pretty simple formula, really: If they know your name, and associate positive things with it, they’re more willing to talk to you. It’s really an issue of trust. And the more they hear our name – before we even walk in the door – the more willing they are to talk with us. In a kind of a subtle way, we earn the right to be heard – before we say a word. (...) So for that reason, having a stronger corporate brand and higher name awareness will help all of us as we try to move into new areas or talk to new customers” (Speech 3).

By referring to how name awareness creates trust and credibility in the market place, the speech argues for the single focus of the corporate branding strategy. Fact-oriented arguments based on a corporate branding logic are used to explain and support the single focus on diabetes aimed at creating the possibility of consent among people working in the other product areas. The speech further frames corporate branding as a question of “how we conduct business” and “who we are”, thereby referring to identity issues and the normative sides of the company. The normative question of how business is conducted is thereby given primacy to emphasise that corporate branding brings value to the organisation and even to product areas not directly associated with the initiative. While this speech manages to emphasise cultural and normative sides of the company as arguments that illustrate how the branding initiative can help the company in all its business segments, it also presents a way of understanding the company that is susceptible to recognition. People working with sales in different product areas might not be used to thinking of the company in this way, because they are experts who normally focus on the details of a product and how to sell it.

The last quotation is included because it is a good example of the reasoning that combines facts and norms and how corporate branding was presented as a very necessary, integrated and supportive part of business. “You don’t just trust any company with life-and-death issues. That’s why a strong corporate brand is so important across the board at Novo Nordisk. Because it’s about more than products, more than logos, more than images – it’s about our values ... like our triple bottom line” (Speech 3).

### **Speech five– facts, norms and sincerity**

The fifth speech was dedicated to the more direct involvement of the employees. After the fourth speech, which is not analysed here, the employees had taken part

in some smaller sessions to discuss what they had heard. These sessions treated issues related to the strategy. Before the fifth speech, every employee had received a bag containing various materials related to the campaign to remind them of the day. According to the fifth speech it contained:

“a hat, complete with our new campaign line ... a Novo Nordisk compass key chain – to help chart our way as we change the course ... and a brochure called Taking Flight, to recap some of the things we’ve been talking about today ... and make sure you look inside that brochure – there’s an airplane to help us prepare for take-off!” (Speech 5).

Some researchers have noticed that corporate branding launches are often executed with grand speeches and gifts to the employees of some kind to remind them of the day (e.g. Ind 2004; Gjøls-Andersen and Karmark 2005). Researchers often add the criticism that it takes more than, for instance, a mouse pad and speeches to involve and commit the employees to a corporate branding effort (ibid.). To involve and commit employees, it is frequently claimed, a corporate branding strategy needs to make a significant difference for each employee in their daily work (Davis and Dunn 2002; Ind 2004). But this suggestion does not mean that artefacts of various kinds have no impact; it just points out that it takes more to involve the employees. Speech five made a great effort to make it clear that employee involvement was very important and the key to the success of the branding effort (cf. Harris and de Chernatony 2001). It was for example said:

”The corporate branding program can’t take off without you aboard” (Speech 5).

“You’re the ultimate brand champions because you live out what the brand means ... through the little things you do ... or the big things you do ... to help change

the way diabetes is treated in our schools ... in our churches ... and in our communities. You are the brand in action” (Speech 5).

Underlining that the employees are the “ultimate brand champions because you live out what the brand means” clearly indicates that the corporate branding strategy depends on mutual understanding among the employees. It further underlines that the meaning of the brand emerges through employee activities and not through what management defines as the preferred branding campaign (see also Ind 2001). The fifth speech thereby implicitly addresses the critical question of sincerity, which is how the employees actually reflect the suggested branding initiative. The speech suggested that the employees should take part in various voluntary activities to bring the brand alive and connect words with actions. Novo Nordisk has a programme called Take Action, in which employees can initiate activities to promote the company and its triple bottom line. Employees were encouraged to fill out a questionnaire with ideas about how they could contribute to the corporate branding initiative. The personal involvement of the employees, the normative foundation of the brand, and the necessary connection between words and action are particularly clear in the following quotations:

“Words like commitment and leadership and passion suggest action; they imply that there’s something personal about this fight against diabetes. And I know many of you well enough to know that that’s true. Passion isn’t a corporate thing; it’s something each one of us lives and breathes every day. It comes out in the things we say and do” (...). “That’s why you’re the most important part of this entire branding program. You bring our brand to life” (...). “You’ll be making a tangible, personal contribution to Changing the Course of Diabetes. And that’s what living our brand is all about” (Speech 5).

These quotations link the individual behaviour with the corporate branding program and suggest how members should live the brand and in the same way as Ind (2004) argues the employees are the most valuable asset of the company. The fifth speech clearly indicates that all the factual and normative argumentation about corporate branding provided in the other speeches relied on social integration among the members of the organisation. Without understanding among the members of the organisation, the corporate branding initiative would be not just insincere but also lack any factual and normative basis. After the spectacular launch, it was up to the employees whether or not they would engage themselves in the branding initiative. The next section illustrates some of the reactions to the initiative.

### **7.3 Reactions from across the organisation**

Reactions from 24 respondents across the organisation generally indicated support for the US initiative. It was common that respondents repeated the line of reasoning from the five speeches. The analyses in fact identified hardly any challenging reactions anywhere in the organisation except from a few in the branding department at headquarters. Some typical examples of enthusiastic supportive comment emphasising both facts and norms from employees were:

“Management has given us an inspiring new platform for the future that I can use every day when I meet the doctors. It makes good sense to talk about all the qualities from products to our values that makes us special as a company. And it is obvious; why not use them for branding who we are to the world. I am so proud of my company” (Employee 1, US). “I can’t wait to go out there and tell the world who we are, what we stand for as leaders in diabetes and how we can change the course through our proud history and our superior products” (Employee 2, US).

These reactions can be seen as examples of how management's launch of the branding initiative created support that indicates social integration among some members of the organisation. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how these employees repeat the argument from management. It indicates the effort to integrate the corporate branding initiative was to a great extent understood in terms of all four claims to validity. An interesting question, of course, is whether or not all members of the whole organisation of Novo Nordisk could support the initiative in the same way.

At headquarters, the corporate branding managers reacted more moderately. Some of their reactions raised minor questions regarding the culture and norms in the initiative, which they found a bit too American. The corporate branding managers at headquarters expressing such statements clarified them as appreciating the US initiative, but with some reservations about whether it would be suitable for and could be applied to the whole organisation. Such comments cautiously raised an issue about sincerity. They questioned whether the whole organisation could commit to the US initiative. Differences in organisational background, functions and cultures can raise challenges with regard to how a corporate branding effort can be realised according to some scholars (e.g. Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Christensen et al. 2008; Torp 2009). Some try to manage the differences while others recognise them as a condition that cannot be circumvented or controlled (e.g. Christensen et al. 2008). Headquarters did not raise a direct criticism of the initiative, only the indication of cultural differences, which possibly also referred to how a corporate branding initiative should be conceived and managed. The reactions from headquarters were all in all rather modest and neutral in character just after the US launch, with some minor concerns about culture, norms and therefore sincerity.



However, another more noticeable issue regarding sincerity was also identified. Although it was called a *corporate* branding campaign, it was a limited initiative, initiated and implemented in the US affiliate alone, as mentioned. This implies that it was not a corporate branding campaign in the sense of involving the whole organisation. However, the ambition, the activities and the argumentation for the initiative indicate that it could possibly have become a corporate branding initiative, involving not only the US affiliate, but the whole of Novo Nordisk.

Some discussions between the corporate branding working group at headquarters in Denmark and the people working on corporate branding in the US affiliate had considered the question of whether or not it was appropriate to call the US initiative “the *U.S. corporate branding* campaign”. While headquarters recommended that it was not called a *corporate* branding campaign, it was denoted and understood as a corporate branding campaign in the US affiliate anyway. Headquarters accepted the US campaign, but did not acknowledge it as *corporate* because it did not involve the whole organisation. An internal memo from the brand manager in headquarters posted one month before the launch of the US corporate branding initiative made the following comment and recommendation about the corporate sides of the corporate branding initiative:

*“Launching the Novo Nordisk U.S. Corporate Brand must be changed to Launching the Novo Nordisk Brand in the US or similar. Novo Nordisk has one global brand, not specific country brands”* (Memo 30.01 2004 italics original).

This quotation indicates difficulties with regard to coordination between headquarters and the US affiliate because there were apparently different understandings about the remit and legitimacy of the on-going corporate branding activities in the organisation. However, it also indicates, because it is formulated

in a commanding way, that headquarters was trying to keep control of the development of corporate branding in the organisation. Despite the recommendation from headquarters, the change was never made. The five speeches talked about the US corporate brand and a brochure distributed to the employees on the day of the launch was labelled: *Taking Flight – the launch of the U.S. Corporate Brand*. A major consideration in headquarters was that the campaign should not differ too much from the ideas developing about corporate branding in their upcoming initiative. Another important consideration was how to obtain coordination in relation to the American initiative that was ahead of the plans developing in headquarters. However, the major concern was whether calling the branding campaign in the US affiliate *corporate* might cause some difficulties and confusion when the headquarters initiative was launched. Apart from this, headquarters acknowledged all the elements in the US initiative. In fact, the cross-organisational analysis demonstrates that people across other affiliates, product areas, and functions were very impressed and thereby generally supportive of the US initiative and its accomplishments.

#### **7.4 Summary: Integration of the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative**

The analysis of statements and activities in the five speeches indicates that the initiative was based all four claims to validity in a way that became recognised broadly among the members of the organisation. While the branding initiative was new, it was nevertheless presented in a familiar way that did not challenge the organisational identity considerably. The big change was a shift from a whispering to a more shouting company. People across the organisation were impressed; they understood the initiative because it was immediately understandable and based on well-known facts and norms. Consequently, people also identified with the initiative in a sincere way and used the material in various ways as it was

intended. The findings seem to indicate that the initiative somehow managed to put the brand behind the employees (Hatch and Schultz 2008) and could possibly have obtained social integration even outside the US.

The table below summarises the findings in the cross-organisational analyses of the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative. A cell entry with a plus indicates that predominantly supportive statements were identified in the findings with regard to both reactions and representation. A minus in brackets indicates that some initially challenging reactions were identified in the corporate branding department at headquarters. An empty cell indicates that no reaction were analysed. The grey cell signifies that the initiative was initiated from the US.

**Table 7.2 Analyses of the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative**

Integration of the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative			
Functions/Departments	Affiliates	Executive Managers	Product (therapy) areas
Corporate Branding (-) +	US +	CEO +	NovoSeven +
Corporate Communications  +	UK  +	CSR (Executive senior vice-president)  +	Diabetes   +
International Marketing +		Chairman of the board	
P&O + (People & Organisation)		+	

A cell entry with a plus indicates that predominantly supportive statements were identified in the findings with regard to both reactions and representations. A minus in brackets indicates that some initially challenging reactions were identified in the corporate branding department at headquarters. The grey cell signifies that the initiative was initiated from the US.

Table 7.2 demonstrates that the US initiative was acknowledged in the organisation, except for some challenging statements with regard to the issue of sincerity in the corporate branding department at headquarters. Many of the arguments and statements provided in the speeches were also repeated across the organisation in the rest of the reactions analysed. Although the US initiative was not rolled out across the whole organisation, executive management and employees from across departments, affiliates and product areas supported the initiative. The US initiative was based on a marketing perspective which corresponded to the primary background of the members of the organisation in the US. A great effort was therefore put into explaining how corporate branding could support product branding, an argument also repeated frequently in the branding literature (e.g. Keller 2003; Aaker 2004), because it was relevant to the background and for daily challenges of the employees.

The long analysis of the four speeches is included here because they exemplify a comprehensive and supportive argumentation by referring to intersubjective claims to validity in an interesting way whereby a careful balance of facts and norms became a line of reasoning intended to create understanding but also engagement among the employees. It demonstrates that integrating corporate branding in an organisation requires many different and coherent arguments to answer and anticipate possible questions from across the organisation. It further illustrates a complex and focused way of trying to integrate corporate branding

into the organisation. It is complex because the argumentation relates to many different issues regarding the identity of company, its business, and the advantages of corporate branding. It is focused because it consistently merges all the activities and arguments under the common objective of the corporate branding strategy in a relevant way so the employees could identify with it. Consistency between words, actions and communication was emphasised as important several times by underlining the connection to the individual's context and behaviour. Even the speeches themselves demonstrated consistency between the validity claims and no contradictions or issues with regard to sincerity were raised. While consistency is seen as vital among scholars who focus on how branding and the behaviour of the members of the organisation must match (e.g. Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Bergstrom et al. 2002; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Cottam and de Chernatony 2008), there are also scholars who recognise the limits of consistency and coherence, particularly with regard to speaking with one voice (e.g. Christensen et al. 2009).

Consistency was also an issue when the most noticeable and supportive statements appeared more than a year later in the company's internal magazine called *People*, in an article commenting on the headquarters Changing Diabetes initiative. Here an executive vice-president recognised the US corporate branding initiative and emphasised it as an important endeavour to learn from to signal the coordination and consistency between the two initiatives.



## **7.5 The Type Zero initiative**

This section analyses empirical examples of representation and reactions with regard to the Type Zero initiative. In contrast to the US initiative, Type Zero was initiated from headquarters and therefore had an opportunity of being integrated across the whole organisation and not just in one affiliate.

### **Context of the Type Zero analyses**

The introduction and the case story illustrate the considerations and preparations prior to the launch of the Type Zero initiative. The branding department needed to resolve several matters, for instance, how to align with the fast-moving US branding initiative. The corporate branding department had gone through difficult decisions to select the right strategy, campaign and concept. Other concepts had been considered, including the notion of type such as “Type Free” and “Not That Type”. Type Zero was chosen as appropriate to revitalise the Novo Nordisk corporate brand because it differentiated the company in a new and creative way according to the branding managers. The introduction illustrated the launch of the strategy where the participants at IM 2005 were exposed to a hotel environment filled with messages about Type Zero. Everything was designed in detail in accordance with a plan in which the initiative was gradually revealed to the managers through various speeches, activities and happenings.

However, the story of Type Zero also indicated that the support of such an initiative cannot be taken for granted. From the reactions and debate it became clear that the initiative could not be socially integrated in the organisation. The following analysis offers a closer look at some central issues of validity that affected how the Type Zero initiative was received across the organisation. It reveals various kinds of statements and argumentation both supporting and challenging the Type Zero initiative.

## **Qualification of examples for a closer analysis**

The basis for analysing the official representation of the Type Zero initiative is a selection of statements from a central corporate branding brochure. This brochure is chosen as a piece of representative empirical material for a number of reasons.

First, the brochure was a result of careful decisions in the branding department about how to argue and express the initiative. It outlines and summarises the essential arguments for the initiative in a way where every word and sentence has been carefully weighed. It is therefore a piece of strategic empirical material representing the Type Zero initiative. Second, the brochure expresses various claims that the members of the organisation should be able to agree with. The aim was to present the Type Zero initiative in a way that could be straightforwardly understood by important stakeholders both inside and outside the organisation. The brochure was conceived so the members of the organisation could use it in their own branding activities. Third, the arguments from the brochure were used again and again by the advocates of the initiative, which also indicates their importance and significance as relevant examples for closer analysis. Besides the brochure, various reactions from managers who took part in the IM 2005 from across affiliates and departments are analysed as examples of how the corporate branding initiative was received in the organisation. These are included because the various reactions from the managers significantly influenced the possibility of the social integration of the Type Zero initiative. The analysis begins with the brochure and continues with reactions from various members of the organisation. Finally the findings are summarised in a short conclusion.

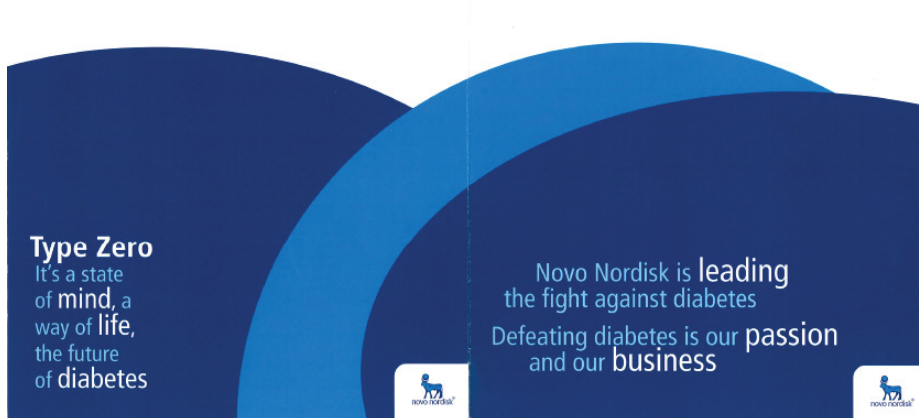
### **7.6 Analysis of the Type Zero brochure**

The front page of the branding brochure displays the brand promise: *Novo Nordisk is leading the fight against diabetes. Defeating diabetes is our passion and our*



*business*. The back page displays a central statement of the Type Zero initiative. The cover of the brochure is inserted below.

**Figure 7.2 Front and back cover of the Type Zero brochure**



Source: Type Zero brochure 2005

### **Intelligibility**

Type Zero was a new term for the organisation and its stakeholders. The middle pages of the brochure therefore address the aspect of intelligibility and try to clarify the meaning of Type Zero with statements about what Type Zero *is* and also what *it is not*.

The statements trying to clarify what the concept is not explain various facts about the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes. The aim is to eliminate any possible confusion between the Type Zero term and the official medical categorisations of diabetes. For example, it is made clear that Type Zero is not another new medical classification related to type 1 and type 2 diabetes. The clarification indicates that questions of intelligibility needed to be clarified because the new term Type Zero closely associates with the established medical classifications of type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

In fact, the reason for choosing the concept in the first place was the immediate possibility of associating with diabetes in an uncomplicated way through the use of the word *type*. But it was probably mostly people already acquainted with the medical classifications who would be able to make this association. In that respect, Type Zero as a brand notion might only have a limited impact among people not aware of the medical terminology. The brochure does not in any substantial way make clear how Type Zero is meant to be related to the medical classifications of type 1 and 2 diabetes. The association remains implicit.

From a corporate branding perspective, it is questionable whether a concept with associations for a limited number of stakeholders is appropriate for making impact and attracting attention to the organisation. It is also questionable whether a brand concept that needs accompanying clarification with regard to intelligibility is suitable as a corporate brand. It is noteworthy and unusual that the branding brochure devotes a whole page to clarifying what Type Zero is *not*, based on various facts. Corporate branding among other things is about clarity, consistency and making a difference according to the branding literature and consultants (e.g. Olins 2003; Keller 2003; Aaker 2004; Balmer 2001; Hulberg 2006; Sandstrøm 2003), but the most noticeable thing about Type Zero is that it needs clarification on basic issues of intelligibility, for example explicitly explaining what it is not in relation to the medical classifications to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.

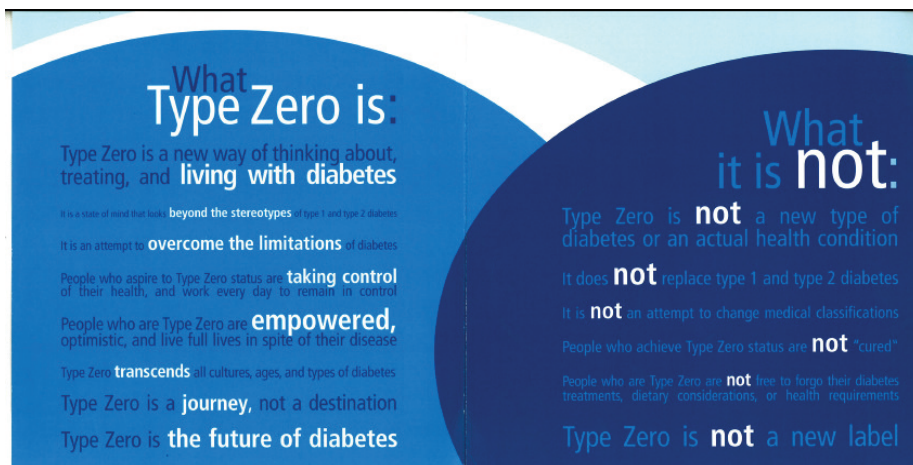
Type Zero may indeed be very different from other branding initiatives, but it is not very clear what it means or what its purpose is. In fact, it may evoke associations that could confuse both internal and external stakeholders, especially patients, doctors and employees familiar with diabetes and Novo Nordisk. It is rather easy to understand the facts describing what the concept is not, but it is

questionable whether negation will increase the concept's intelligibility. The brochure does not in any positive fact-oriented way explain what Type Zero means. It is, in fact, of note that while type 1 and type 2 are well-defined classifications based on facts, Type Zero is neither based on normative statements nor facts. See Figure 7.3.

### Contrasting facts with norms

The distinction between what Type Zero is and is not contrasts facts with normative statements as shown in Figure 7.3. Each side of this distinction thus refers to different aspects in trying to clarify Type Zero. Any possible clarification is therefore partly unclear because the distinction implicitly leaves some questions unanswered.

**Figure 7.3 Inside the Type Zero brochure**



Source: Type Zero brochure 2005

A distinction that reserves what Type Zero *is not* to facts and what it *is* to normative beliefs, fails to explain the contrasting sides of the distinction, i.e. facts

about what Type Zero is and normative beliefs about what it is not. If one follows the logic of the brochure, some of the claims may implicitly suggest, if one uses negation on the normative statements instead of the facts, that people who do not aspire to Type Zero status cannot be characterised by the numerous positive qualities included in the description about a Type Zero person; in other words, that they are out of control, disempowered, pessimistic, and not living a full life. The contrasting facts and norms in the brochure do not therefore directly complement each other. On the contrary, they make statements that seem contradictory in character, for example:

“Type Zero is not (...) an actual health condition” vs. “people who aspire to Type Zero status are taking control of their health”;

“Type Zero is a new way of (...) treating and living with diabetes” vs. “people who are Type Zero are not free to forgo their diabetes treatment.”

Whereas the statements about what Type Zero *is not* are rather precise and fact-oriented, the statements about what Type Zero *is* are more normative, abstract and unclear in character. Through the constant use of the word *is* the brochure seeks to assert what Type Zero means, but although presenting several facts, the brochure basically fails to explain what Type Zero is.

Type Zero is presented through various broad statements combining facts and norms, some of which are almost poetic in character. Type Zero is for example explained as “a state of mind”, “a journey”, “the future of diabetes”, and “an attempt to overcome limitations of diabetes”. Furthermore, the brochure suggests that Type Zero “is a new way of thinking about, treating, and living with diabetes”. Type Zero is also presented as something that a person can aspire to and

eventually be: “people who are Type Zero are empowered, optimistic, and live full lives in spite of their disease”. It is even claimed that “Type Zero transcends all cultures, ages, and types of diabetes”.

Taken together, these statements claim to be about nearly everything related to diabetes. All these primarily normative statements are made without any clear explicit argumentation or reference to the organisational context. In terms of establishing a clear and shared understanding of the Type Zero initiative it is unlikely that it could be accomplished through such abstract statements that are very open to various interpretations.

The normative statements describing what Type Zero *is* try to place the individual in focus by ascribing various characteristics to people who aspire to being Type Zero. The corporate brand is thereby invoked by using characteristics closely associated with the patients. This may be implicitly interpreted as being in accordance with a focus of caring for the patients and placing them in the centre. Communicating a focus oriented at the patient is very common among pharmaceutical companies, and not a differentiating aspect in itself. But differentiation is normally one of the main aims of corporate branding, as mentioned in chapter 2.

It is noteworthy that the Type Zero initiative is not differentiated or substantiated with facts or norms in relation to the identity of the organisation, such as shared knowledge, history, culture, products, etc. While some people working at Novo Nordisk might in fact recognise some of the claims, using only statements relating to abstract and general traits about Type Zero without substantiating them through intersubjective facts and normative beliefs about the company may have rendered it difficult for most employees to relate to the brand. It is therefore questionable

whether social integration could be accomplished based on such abstractions. It also made it more likely that people presented with the initiative would be inclined to raise questions about the validity of the initiative in relation to the organisational identity and reality.

In fact, it might be difficult for employees to commit to the brand initiative and fully integrate and explain it in their daily work and contact with various stakeholders, because it remains unclear what the brand really stands for. If a corporate branding initiative is difficult for employees to understand or is irrelevant for them in their daily work, it may cause various kinds of organisational inertia with regard to how the potential of the brand is realised. It may for example result in alienation among the employees and negative responses about the use of the brand.

### **Sincerity**

As mentioned above, the Type Zero brochure does not refer to or express significant intersubjectively recognised knowledge about the company. The facts and normative beliefs in the brochure may therefore give rise to several issues with regard to sincerity. Using general statements that other pharmaceutical companies also use neither differentiates the company nor relates to a sincere expression of Novo Nordisk. And drawing a superficial distinction between facts and norms provides no basis for a sincere expression. And furthermore, devoting half of the text to clarifying what Type Zero is not also raises several issues about sincerity. In fact, the brochure expresses a picture of the organisation that is so detached from reality that it undermines the sincerity of the brochure itself. It might even give rise to misunderstandings. In the following, I will present some typical reactions from across the organisation that illustrates some of the critical issues with regard to possible social integration.

## **7.7 Reactions from across the organisation to the Type Zero initiative**

Type Zero was launched at IM 2005, the top management meeting at Novo Nordisk, and was planned to be implemented in four pilot markets. However, it never got that far because the managers at the meeting from across the organisation rejected the initiative. Some of the resistance was evoked by the fact that the initiative was not based on a common definition of the situation and a shared understanding among the members of the organisation.

A consultancy made a survey after IM 2005, in which managers had the opportunity to evaluate the meeting anonymously, including the sessions presenting the Type Zero corporate branding strategy. They rated the session on corporate branding with the lowest ranking with regard to content and presentation. The participants were also encouraged to give their anonymous comments on any subjects that they had an opinion on from the meeting. Many of the comments were on the Type Zero initiative. In general, these statements and arguments reflected the fact that managers in the organisation mostly agreed with the need for a corporate branding strategy in general, but could not relate to the Type Zero initiative. Some managers for example stated:

“I find corporate branding excellent, but doubt the idea of ”Type Zero”. That went too far” (Manager 1, P&O).

“The strategic intent of corporate branding is very good. The strategy and notion of the Type Zero, however, will be difficult to communicate” (Manager 2, Corporate Communications).

These two reactions summarise many of the questions raised about the initiative. It seemed that the managers agreed with the general idea of corporate branding, but

not in the Type Zero version. It is noticeable that no statement supporting the Type Zero initiative could be identified in the survey (see Appendix 13.6 for a collection of statements from the survey).

The same picture was also found when I explored how people across the organisation reacted to the initiative. They had difficulty seeing how they could relate to it in their daily work. In general, people indicated problems in relation to all four claims to validity. In fact, people often ended by asking me questions to clarify the initiative and the purpose of corporate branding. Some typical reactions with regard to the four validity claims are presented below.

### **Intelligibility**

Several members of the organisation raised issues on intelligibility regarding Type Zero, for example:

“Type Zero is a strange notion – who do you think wants to be seen as a Type Zero – a null?” (Manager 1, International Marketing).

“I do not believe that patients will like being called Type Zero, nor will MDs [doctors] like a new terminology or tag” (Employee 2, International Marketing).

“We had difficulties explaining the difference between type 1 and 2 – now we have to explain a third type – the initiative may have been tested and approved by ExecMan [executive management], but it was not very intelligent or smart” (Vice-President, Investor Relations).

”Type Zero needs further research, negative term and another type for more stereotyping!! Not to mention the medical confusion, introducing a new medically



not proven type, may create misunderstandings” (Manager 2, Corporate Communications).

“Please do not get tangled up in the Type Zero concept and don't throw a lot of money into that; it might simply cause us lack of focus and confusion” (Employee 1, NovoSeven).

These quotations are just a few examples indicating the generally challenging reactions to the Type Zero initiative. They directly and forthrightly express concerns related to issues about intelligibility. In fact, several of them even recommend that Type Zero be discarded because the term for some had directly negative connotations. These challenging statements are in sharp contrast to the statements promoting the initiative. This shows that the initiative had not managed to create any shared understanding in the organisation or eliminate the possibility of misunderstandings. It also indicates the meaning of the initiative could not be controlled because meaning is always constructed: “a creative process that cannot be planned and managed by the sender” (Christensen et al. 2009:213; Torp 2009; Christensen and Morsing 2010).

### **Facts and norms**

The reactions based on facts and norms also significantly challenged the initiative. For example:

“Concerning the corporate branding, I am in strong disagreement with the Type Zero. It could potentially send the wrong message about our business. I discussed it a lot with my affiliate colleagues afterwards and did not find any who believe in the strategy” (Manager 1, P&O).

“It does not say who we are as a company or what we are proud of making here” (Manager 2, Corporate Communications).

“It doesn’t brand us as a company. What about our history, culture and superior products? What about our triple bottom line approach?” (Manager 2, P&O).

These managers expressed their concerns about the lack of a connection between the organisational reality and the initiative. They felt the initiative lacked facts about the company and its history and products and also the normative culture of the company. Some managers even questioned its relevance for the business. The reactions illustrates the gap between vision and culture as suggested by Hatch and Schultz (2001, 2003) where the corporate branding effort suggested by management tries to move the company in a direction that the employees do not understand and support (2001:130). King envisaged that the company branding needed the support of top management, but he also recognised the need to explain the brand to the employees and saw this as a useful test of whether the strategy makes sense (1991:9). The Type Zero initiative caused a most noteworthy challenge when the CEO at IM 2005 questioned how the initiative made sense, as mentioned in the story about Type Zero.

“Type Zero did not seem to be well prepared. It is still quite mysterious as to what exactly we are supposed to do in our daily business. LRS [CEO] did not seem to support Type Zero” (Manager 1, UK).

This manager among others had noticed that the CEO apparently also had some difficulties in committing to the initiative on the day of the launch, even though he had participated in the presentation of the strategy. Commitment among top management is emphasised as critical across the brand literature (e.g. King 1991; Olins 2003; Hatch and Schultz 2008), because the management often represents

the organisation for many different stakeholders, internally and externally, but even more important because a corporate branding effort that lacks support from top management is based on a questionable foundation of validity that may affect its integration in the organisation.

The quotation also addresses the question about what employees are supposed to do in their daily business. It thereby indicates uncertainty with regard to relevance for the organisation and the actions that should follow from the initiative. It is difficult to achieve social integration if members of the organisation lack understanding about the brand and how they are supposed to coordinate their activities in relation to the strategy, as pointed out by Davis and Dunn (2002:223). The head of international marketing made the following definite comment about the initiative:

“It was a disaster. It is impossible to coordinate Type Zero with our marketing efforts. In no way could it be used to market our products. [...] It can definitely not be launched in marketing.”

This reaction, from a marketing point of view, states that the initiative was regarded as difficult to use for product marketing. The reaction was especially problematic considering marketing's important role at Novo Nordisk. The marketing department controlled resources and communication on a scale more than 50 times greater than the corporate branding department at that time. It also indicates that the initiative lacked coordination with the marketing people, although a corporate branding initiative is in many ways related to marketing.

Other challenging statements argued that it was a wrong strategy because facts about the core expertise and *raison d'être* of the company were totally absent from

the corporate branding initiative. Others again stressed the missing the scientific heritage and the history of developing superior treatment for diabetes. The typical reaction was that the initiative lacked distinct characteristics anchored in facts and the norms of the organisation. Many reactions expressed the belief that these characteristics should be a part of the basis for promoting the company in a right and sincere way. Such characteristics were also generally missing from the all the branding material and also from the above-mentioned brochure.

### **Sincerity**

It follows that challenging statements on intelligibility, facts and norms, also have a bearing on the issue of sincerity. Some typical statements indicating issues about sincerity were:

“I cannot commit myself to something that I cannot explain and understand” (Employee 2, Corporate Communications).

“Why is corporate branding always so superficial? It totally lacks a true picture of who we are and what we stand for. We are just like other companies that use branding to polish their surface” (Employee 2, P&O).

“Is Type Zero the best they could come up with? It is not a truthful expression of our company. I do not produce Type Zero people” (Manager 1, UK).

“I do not get it. Type 1 and 2 diabetes are said to stigmatise the patients. Type Zero must also stigmatise the patients. (...) The Type Zero claim is not truthful about us or the patients” (Manager 1, US).

“I do not really understand what Type Zero is, or what it is good for. It cannot express who we are as a company” (Manager 1, P&O).

All these quotations indicate issues about sincerity and how the members of the organisation could not commit themselves to the initiative. The second quotation even says that as a phenomenon corporate branding is superficial and therefore not a sincere expression of the company. Corporate branding sometimes faces this kind of challenge, questioning its relevance and contribution to the core business of the company. The reactions also indicate that conveyors of corporate branding cannot automatically assume that it is crystal clear for all members of the organisation how corporate branding in general and this initiative in particular may benefit the business, which is emphasised as basic by several scholars (e.g. Ind and Bjerke 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2008). In contrast, such challenges were taken into account in the US initiative, where the speeches made great efforts to explain how corporate branding in general and the initiative in particular could benefit the business.

It may be noted that none of the interviewees across the organisation recognised the characteristics of the identity of the organisation in the Type Zero initiative except those in the corporate branding department, which indicates a lack of intersubjective basis for the initiative. Some even felt that the brochure could be about any company, because it did not contain any specific characteristics of Novo Nordisk. When people tried to explain the Type Zero initiative, they typically began by stating what Type Zero was not, and then afterwards had serious difficulties in explaining what Type Zero meant in any positive way. Their explanations had nothing in common. Some said that it was something that you could become without specifying what it was; others said that it was a new cure Novo Nordisk were bringing to market that could eventually eliminate diabetes. In sum, the explanations were very different and not focused or based on mutual understanding.

The findings indicate that the initiative could not provide any basis for a sincere expression of the company. Finally, when the CEO directly questioned the initiative, he also challenged the sincerity of the initiative. This might have paved the way for further criticism of the initiative across the organisation. It was noted by several employees, who used his lack of commitment to question the appropriateness and sincerity of the initiative themselves.

### **7.8 Summary: Integration of the Type Zero initiative**

Taken all together, the overall findings indicate that the Type Zero initiative could not be socially integrated across the organisation. This was also indicated in the case story in the introductory chapter. Table 7.8 below summarises the analyses and empirical findings on the Type Zero initiative with regard to representation and reactions. The attempt from the management to base the initiative on managerial integration was significant and somehow resonates with how an integrated marketing communications approach recommends undertaking a corporate branding effort, by controlling all possible channels (Proctor and Kitchen 2002; Kitchen and Pelsmacker 2004).

**Table 7.3 Summary of the analyses of the Type Zero initiative**

Integration of the Type Zero initiative			
Functions/departments	Affiliates	Executive Managers	Product (therapy) areas
Corporate Branding +	US –	CEO (+) –	NovoSeven –
Corporate Communications  –	UK  –	CSR (Executive senior vice-president)  +	Diabetes  –
International Marketing  –	China  –	Chairman of the board	
P&O  – (People & Organisation)	Germany  –	–	

A cell entry with a plus indicates that predominantly supportive statements were identified in the findings with regard to both reactions and representations. A minus in brackets indicates that some initially challenging reactions were identified in the corporate branding department at headquarters. The grey cell signifies that the initiative was initiated from the corporate branding department at headquarters.

The table shows that supportive actions and statements were expressed by the corporate branding department and the senior executive vice-president responsible for Type Zero. In contrast, challenging actions and statements were expressed across functions, executive management, affiliates and even across product areas. It is especially interesting to note that people working in the area of diabetes also

challenged the initiative, although the initiative was focused on diabetes. And even the CEO changed his mind on stage on the day of the launch. It is marked by a (+) in brackets and a minus in the table.

These findings are in sharp contrast to a number of focus group interviews made by the corporate branding department. They concluded that the initiative was a new and differentiating expression of the company identity in close agreement with the intersubjective perception among the members and stakeholders of the organisation. However, it was not. The initiative was a top-down approach based on a marketing-oriented perspective primarily concerned about external stakeholders such as doctors, customers and not the members of the organisation. Support from the employees was seen an automatic process that would follow the spectacular launch, but it did not and cannot be just assumed (cf. Schultz et al. 2005; Gjøls-Andersen 2001). While the perspective was based on a marketing approach, as in the IMC perspective that suggests controlling all communication, which was very much the case at IM, it nevertheless raised considerable challenges among the people in the marketing function in the company, who found the initiative incompatible with marketing the company's products.

At the IM 2005, the primary focus was on presenting and integrating the initiative and thereby facilitating support among the 300 managers that could possibly validate and support the initiative. The presentations, the material and the reactions generally reveal that there were too many difficulties with regard to all four claims to validity with the result that mutual understanding could not be achieved. While the presentation and the material, such as the brochure about Type Zero, were planned and conceived professionally, they raised more questions than they answered. The term Type Zero resonated in a negative way among managers and employees. One significant finding is that the official material even



included contradictory statements that questioned and challenged the validity of the very initiative it was supposed to promote. Both the text and the presentations were abstract and unclear and therefore also open to various interpretations. The IM 2005 shows that managers cannot control how members of an organisation react (Hulberg 2006:67) because they are active and creative receivers who understand the brand according to their context (e.g. Christensen et al. 2009:213).

The core challenge with regard to the facts and norms used to explain Type Zero was that the initiative had no explicit reference to the culture and identity of the organisation, such as history, products, tradition, and common knowledge, and therefore was disconnected with the core of the company (e.g. Gotsi and Andriopoulos 2007:346). Instead, a primarily new normative universe focusing on the patient in totally new terms was put forward that focused on putting a new label (Schultz et al. 2005 calls it sugar coating) on the company without considering the meaning (e.g. Gotsi and Andriopoulos 2007). A significant characteristic of the initiative was that it offered statements about identity to the patients who were indirectly supposed to brand the company. The members of the organisation had difficulties in relating to the initiative because they could not see it as an integrated part of their daily activities in the future and therefore questioned how it could contribute to the business; yet it is a rather common assumption that successful branding initiatives link directly to employee behaviour (e.g. Ind 2004; Hatch and Schultz 2008). The difference between representations and reactions demonstrates a gap between vision and culture of the organisation (Hatch and Schultz 2003) because the initiative was primarily concerned about external image among the external stakeholders. Type Zero created a breach between the internal stakeholders and the proponents of the corporate branding and their approach to corporate branding. The internal stakeholders questioned its

legitimacy and relevance for the organisation because they did not really identify with it.

## 7.9 The Changing Diabetes initiative

This section analyses significant official material from the third initiative, *Changing Diabetes*, and also reactions from members across the organisation.

### Context of the analyses

The case story demonstrated that the Changing Diabetes initiative was undertaken because the Type Zero initiative failed. I also described the complex process that went on in the organisation prior to conceiving the initiative. A noticeable challenge in these processes was to achieve coordination with the US initiative. Another challenge, with the Type Zero experience fresh in mind, was to obtain support for the initiative among the members of the organisation because the branding department could not face another experience like Type Zero. In other words, it was a top priority that the Changing Diabetes initiative became a success.

While Type Zero was launched and presented to the organisation in a high-flying and extravagant way, the Changing Diabetes strategy was launched rather silently. Nobody talked about shouting or turning up the volume. The vice-president of corporate branding told me that the Changing Diabetes strategy was in accordance with the identity and culture of the organisation and could therefore be considered as already integrated into the organisation before the launch. Although the strategy was new, this comment suggests that mutual understanding and coordination were already or could easily be established across the organisation.

It may be plausible that the new concept of Changing Diabetes was rather easy to relate to the activities of Novo Nordisk because the company primarily produces diabetes medicine, but it is questionable to assume that the Changing Diabetes strategy was therefore already integrated, especially considering the experience from Type Zero, which also focused on diabetes. Gotsi and Andriopoulos argue

that re-branding often implies that the stakeholders “react to the new corporate brand on the basis of their associations with the previous brand” (2007:346). A comment from another manager in headquarters provided a contrasting reason for why the experience of launching Type Zero may have kept the branding function and the top management from initiating a new grandiose launch. “Type Zero created too many problems. People did not feel that it was truthful to the company and could not commit to the campaign. The branding department could not risk the same failure once more” (Manager 2, corporate communications).

Another manager also made a comment related to social integration in the organisation: “I think that our management and the branding experts needed to reconsider very carefully who we are as an organisation and what we want to express to the world. Apparently there is some kind of disagreement between them and us. Next time they had better be sure that their top-down branding project is in agreement with us” (Employee 2, P&O). From these comments, which raise questions regarding validity and the gap between vision and culture, it seems questionable to assume the new Changing Diabetes was already integrated when no significant prior activities with regard to its integration had been undertaken and when the previous experience of corporate branding had not turned out to be a success as expected.

It may be noted that the attention created around Type Zero could have been used to create and explicitly communicate information about organisational learning. Such learning could have demonstrated how the new initiative of Changing Diabetes was created as a further development of the brand promise in the process of putting corporate branding on the organisational agenda in agreement with the organisation. This kind of learning was limited to the corporate branding

department and a few managers although various employees in the organisation did argue for such an approach.

The launch of Changing Diabetes and the corporate branding strategy was limited to an article carried in the internal staff magazine during the summer holidays and a PowerPoint presentation at a quarterly meeting. The first time it was presented to a larger audience externally was at a booth at EASD (the European Association for the Study of Diabetes) in September 2005 in Athens. This was without any significant prior event or activity aimed at implementing it for the employees in the organisation. This time the launch was primarily externally oriented. An internal mail was sent on the day of the launch at EASD to the top managers across the organisation. “Executive Management decided that we needed to improve our global competitiveness by building a global corporate brand reputation around our company values and our many diversified efforts” (mail 14 09 2005). The mail informed the top managers in the organisation about the corporate branding strategy and Changing Diabetes. It was thereafter up to them to integrate the initiative further across the organisation. No spectacular effects or branding materials were distributed, such as wristbands, banners or footprints on the floor. The initiative was based on an assumption about implementing the brand primarily through the communicative channels in the organisation. At the same time as the EASD launch, a brand portal was opened on the intranet. The purpose was to provide the organisation with knowledge and guidelines about the corporate branding. The integration of the Changing Diabetes strategy was primarily aimed at the markets and followed a plan of a stepwise implementation.

### **Qualification of examples for a closer analysis**

Internal presentations, memos, strategic papers were examined in the analysis of the official material. Like the other initiatives, a central brochure distributed at

EASD and later among the employees was chosen for a closer analysis. It was strategic and outlines the Changing Diabetes initiative in a concise way. The brochure was, in fact, the primary piece of strategic communication outlining the initiative.

In addition, a short article called “Building the brand”, which was published on the intranet in June 2005 in the internal magazine called People+, is analysed. It was edited and approved by the vice-president of corporate branding, the vice-president of corporate communications, and the editor of the magazine, and it can be taken as an official statement of Novo Nordisk’s corporate branding strategy at top management level. It contains the views of the CEO, the senior executive vice-president of the area of *people, reputations and relations*, and the vice-president of corporate branding. The article explained some of the reasons for the Changing Diabetes corporate branding initiative. This article was a central piece of internal cross-organisational communication about the initiative aimed at the employees. The article is also interesting because it relates Changing Diabetes to the US initiative. The article and the brochure are included as significant representations of the Changing Diabetes initiative because they summarise the arguments that were later distributed across the organisation.

Significant reactions to the strategy were collected through interviews with, and comments from, managers and employees in accordance with the outlined cross-organisational structure. The reactions presented represent typical reactions to the initiative. Among these, some statements from US managers are analysed because it is particularly interesting to see their reactions.

Unlike the presentations of the analyses of the US initiative and Type Zero, the presentation of the Changing Diabetes initiative combines representations with reactions from members across the organisation.

## 7.10 Analysis of the People+ article, “Building the brand”, and reactions

The article “Building the brand” features a picture of some employees building a brick wall on the front page of the internal magazine People+ to illustrate the importance of the employees building the brand. However, the article does not provide any specific details on how the employees are going to be involved, as will be shown in the analysis below.

**Figure 7.4** Front page of the internal magazine People



Source: People Magazine 03/2005

It is interesting to consider that a brick wall is used here to symbolise the brand building processes, which associates it with a concrete activity. The first noticeable trait is that the article provides some similar arguments for corporate branding to those put forward at the launch in the US affiliate. In fact, the importance of the US initiative for the branding activities of the whole organisation was now officially recognised. In the article, the senior executive vice-president was quoted as saying “We can learn a lot from Novo Nordisk in the United States”, thereby officially acknowledging that the US initiative was ahead of headquarters. The vice-president of corporate branding was also quoted in the article as saying:

“When Novo Nordisk’s US affiliate launched its corporate branding effort last spring, it was in recognition that awareness about Novo Nordisk – for the right reasons – was paramount to success in this highly competitive market. The same rationale lies behind Novo Nordisk’s current global branding efforts” (People Magazine 03 2005)

This quotation is interesting for several reasons. First, it shows that headquarters now officially articulates the US initiative as *corporate*, although this was an issue of disagreement about intelligibility earlier. This is an indication that coordination between the initiatives was emerging. Moreover, the quotation repeats a widely shared and fact-oriented argument about creating awareness and the need to succeed in a highly competitive market. This is the first time that the US branding initiative and Novo Nordisk’s general branding strategy were officially grounded in the same rationale. The facts and norms provided in the US corporate branding initiative were, in fact, used to underpin a global corporate branding strategy. This



also implies that the argumentation was significantly influenced by a marketing perspective.

There could be several strategic motives for announcing agreement between the two initiatives. First, it opened new opportunities for coordination across the organisation in the future when past disagreements were overcome. It further specifically signalled headquarters' recognition of the US branding initiative to the US affiliate in an attempt to eliminate any potential resistance in the US to the new Changing Diabetes initiative. Second, it also indicated how headquarters had learned and implicitly signalled to the members of the organisation that corporate branding was now beyond the Type Zero failure. And third, recognising and being associated with the success in the US initiative could have a positive effect on the Changing Diabetes initiative.

Acknowledging the US Initiative and signalling distance to the Type Zero initiative can be seen as an important strategic move to create a new possibility of involving the organisation in the third corporate branding initiative. While the article is a significant empirical example of how the past differences between the initiatives were eliminated, in this analysis it is also an indication of how the conditions for establishing social integration were increasing.

*Changing Diabetes* and the US campaign line of *Changing the Course of Diabetes* are rather similar, which made coordination between the two initiatives less complicated. Just over a year later, this article uses an almost identical line of argumentation in almost the same wording as at the launch in the US affiliate. This indicates that integration between the two initiatives was accomplished primarily under influence of the US initiative, in contrast to the incongruent Type Zero initiative, which would have been more difficult to integrate. A US manager made

the following comment about the difference between Type Zero and Changing Diabetes: “It was impossible to align Type Zero with our branding campaign. I am relieved that headquarters came to its senses and decided to use the Changing Diabetes concept” (Manager 1, US).

### **Intelligibility**

The article opens with some questions indirectly indicating what corporate branding is about. “What does Novo Nordisk’s corporate brand stand for? What is it that the blue Apis bull signifies – to us as employees, and to the world around us? What is it we would like the world to know about us? And if the world knew a little more about Novo Nordisk, what kind of advantages would that give in an environment that is increasingly critical of our industry, and in which competition in the diabetes area is getting tougher? These are questions senior executives at Novo Nordisk started to ask a little over a year ago. They became the starting point for an ambitious, global, company-wide effort: the corporate branding initiative” (People Magazine 03 2005).

While the quotation illustrates that existential questions about the organisational identity had been a part of the branding process, it also offers an opportunity to see some of the considerations behind the branding effort, unlike the Type Zero initiative. It is indicated that the corporate branding initiative is a top-down project and a global company-wide effort. It tries to include the reader by using inclusive pronouns, thereby suggesting that there is already some kind of agreement with both the readers of the article and the members of the organisation. This way of presenting the corporate branding strategy was also significant at the US launch. As the quotation addresses the problem of finding answers to some questions that were the starting point for the corporate branding initiative, it thereby also indirectly relates to the aspect of intelligibility.

Unlike the US initiative, neither the article nor any other material promoting Changing Diabetes clarifies the issue of intelligibility. Instead it talks about possible benefits to the company from corporate branding. Excluding an intelligible clarification of corporate branding in an article that is supposed to integrate headquarters' second corporate branding initiative suggests that the managers responsible simply forgot it or found it unnecessary based on an assumption that the members of the organisation were already well informed. However, omitting a clear explanation can be a precarious matter considering the Type Zero experience, and especially considering the possibility that some members of the organisation might regard corporate branding as a superfluous activity. Explaining the basics of what branding is about can provide a foundation for the effort which helps to align corporate and individual goals (e.g. Harris de Chernatony 2001) although it is a challenging effort with limitations (Torp 2009:202f).

### **Facts and norms**

The article primarily provides facts and normative beliefs about internal organisational capabilities and external threats as the reasons underpinning the strategy. The article particularly emphasises short-term facts about the competitive situation to justify the strategy. Explanations similar to those used at the US launch, about how sales representatives were confused with representatives from other companies like Novartis, were provided as well-known factual reasons. The bad image of the industry was also included as a kind of factual reason for the corporate branding strategy. The article cites the vice-president of corporate branding as stating:

“It has never been more important for Novo Nordisk to stand out, because the reputation of the pharmaceutical industry is at an all-time low while competition in the diabetes market is heating up. (...) The industry at large is known for unscrupulously putting money and shareholder interests before lives. We need to differentiate Novo Nordisk from that image and get known for the right things; for example that we are a company that passionately cares about the lives of people with diabetes” (People Magazine 03 2005).

This quotation combines facts with a normatively oriented argument that highlights the company as different from the industry. The fact that the industry has a bad image and the normative claim about Novo Nordisk being “a company that passionately cares for the lives of people with diabetes” provide two complementary arguments justifying the corporate branding initiative.

Several reactions from members across the organisation took up the issue of branding the company as caring for the patients. “It is rather common. All big pharma companies are known for branding themselves as caring for their patients. We need something more to break away from the crowd. Fortunately we have many different activities that may be used to brand us” was the reaction from one manager (Manager 2, Corporate Communications). Another made the following comment: “To overdo the patient focus may be counterproductive because they [the customers] know that what really counts in the long run is making a profit” (Manager 2, Investor relations). A third comment: “I have to be frank; I have been working at Novo for 17 years without thinking about caring for the patient every day. And neither have my colleagues. We [the employee and his colleagues in his department] hardly ever discuss the patients, although we know that they are important for our business” (Employee 3, NovoSeven). And finally: “I admit that branding is necessary, but all this about caring for the patient is a classical

marketing stunt. It places the customer at the centre to remove the focus from the fact that we earn money from sick people. It is also known as the customer is king among marketers” (Employee 2, P&O). These comments in various ways challenge the idea that a patient focus is enough to differentiate Novo Nordisk. They also indicate that it may not be anchored in the way all members of the organisation relate to their company. Instead they seem to relate to facts about how the organisation makes profit and thereby pay less attention to normative statements about caring for the patient. However, not one of the reactions regards branding as unnecessary for the business. These different reactions also illustrate how people with different backgrounds relate to and understand a branding effort according to their specific context in the organisation, which may raise challenges concerning creating mutual understanding and consistency of the brand (e.g. Torp 2009; Christensen et al. 2009; Christensen et al. 2008).

The vice-president of corporate branding was cited in the article about the necessity of branding as saying: “This is the everyday reality that we are trying to change by making Novo Nordisk’s global branding efforts much more bold and distinctive. We need to make crystal clear who we are as a company and what it exactly is that we stand for” (People Magazine 03 2005). Such a crystal clear picture relates to a common understanding of the organisational identity and the values in the organisation (e.g. Harris and De Chernatony 2001; de Chernatony 2002) and therefore also to the validity among the members of the organisation as argued earlier (e.g. Eriksen 2000).

This statement was supplemented by the senior executive vice-president: “We have so many passionate people and so many great initiatives, but we don’t get enough credit for it among our stakeholders” (...) “If we do not have a strong brand, it could damage our business” (...) “Doctors might not prescribe our

products, talented people might not want to work for us, and shareholders might not be so interested in investing in Novo Nordisk” (People Magazine 03 2005).

The first part of the quotation demonstrates the disadvantages of not having a strong corporate brand in a fact-oriented way. It repeats the US line of argumentation in a reverse way as it highlights the possible negative consequences of not having a strong brand. It is noticeable, that a fact-oriented business argument is provided that emphasises prescription of products and shareholder investments as reasons for the corporate branding initiative. This may complement the claim about differentiating the company as a caring company that is not “unscrupulously putting money and shareholder interests before lives”, but it may also be seen as a contradiction if it is not crystal clear how the Novo Nordisk triple bottom line approach balances economic, environmental and social issues of the business. It is noticeable that the last part of the quotation repeats or rather copies exactly the same argumentation and wording as the US initiative.

As the article continues it provides arguments about the corporate branding strategy and the Novo Nordisk way of doing business thereby trying to reflect the brand promise (Novo Nordisk is leading the fight against diabetes. Defeating diabetes is our passion and our business). The article quotes the vice-president as linking the promise to Changing Diabetes in the following factual way: “We have turned this brand promise into one strong sentence: Changing Diabetes. (...) It connects our history, our present and our future, and links all of our actions into one unifying platform” (People Magazine 03 2005). To further substantiate the brand concept in facts about the identity and history of the organisation and make the purpose of corporate branding clear, the vice-president is quoted as saying: “Diabetes is where we have our history; where our long-term aspiration of defeating diabetes, working in partnerships towards common goals of prevention,

detection and treatment, remains the backbone of our reason for being” (People Magazine 03 2005).

By linking the branding effort to common facts about the history and activities in the company, it indicates that the corporate branding strategy, the brand promise and the concept are aligned, so there is no gap between management’s vision and the organisational culture (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2003). The importance of these facts is further emphasised as the “reason for being” and thereby the identity of the company. Most of the organisation may probably agree that the diabetes focus is the reason for being, but people outside the diabetes area may see it differently, as indicated in this reaction from a manager: “How are the other therapy areas going to be included in the Changing Diabetes focus? Will we soon be facing a new demerger?” (Manager 1, NovoSeven). This manager was reacting to the facts underpinning the brand initiative and implicitly took the validity of the brand into logical consideration and inferred the possibility of a coming demerger. This reaction indicates how members of an organisation are, in fact, not passive receivers (e.g. Christensen and Morsing 2010; Christensen et al. 2009), but actively check the validity and background knowledge of the company related to the brand and draw the logical conclusion of, in this case, either demerger or probably an issue concerning facts and in the end sincerity.

The article tries to provide an explanation about how a focus on diabetes as a unifying platform will influence the other product areas. The CEO is quoted as emphasising organisational facts with regard to the relationship between diabetes and the other product areas: “We must recognise that diabetes accounts for about 70% of the company’s turnover and that will be the case long into the future. (...) NovoSeven® and the other therapy areas outside diabetes will carry with them the endorsement of the Novo Nordisk brand. They will be positioned as innovative,

significant and high-quality products offered by a responsible and caring company. That will not lessen their importance either in our priorities or in terms of resources” (People Magazine 03 2005).

In terms of integrating the focus on diabetes across the other areas, the article provides several factual statements by the CEO that may indicate that the employees working in these areas are important in terms of future priorities, probably in order to address question raised among the members of the organisation working with NovoSeven. However, the article does not further specify how the other product areas are going to contribute to the brand, just that the single diabetes focus will create value for the whole company. The senior executive vice-president, for example, is quoted as saying: “If people do not think of us when they think about diabetes, we have blown it. (...) A strong diabetes brand provides a strong base for the other therapies” (People Magazine 03 2005). Various employees within the NovoSeven area made some critical comments that indicated they did not really understand the idea of how they could be integrated in the diabetes brand and some still doubted that they would be a part of the company in the future, for example: “of course, management cannot say whether we are a part of the company in the future, because that would be ground-breaking news for the stock exchange. But until then, we must live with the uncertainty about our future role in the company. (...) I really doubt how I can contribute to the brand because I know nothing about the diabetes area” (Employee 2; NovoSeven). This is another example of how employees relate a branding effort to their understanding of the company and also how employees in fact may think knowledge and probably education and training to be active contributors to the branding effort (e.g. Davis and Dunn 2002; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006:770).



The article ends by underlining the importance of the employees to the corporate branding strategy: “Novo Nordisk’s effort to sharpen its corporate brand starts with its own employees. They are the builders of the brand” (People Magazine 03 2005). This quotation accentuates the importance of social integration of the corporate branding strategy, but the article does not provide any guidance on how the employees are going to be builders.

### **Sincerity**

Mentioning the employees “as builders of the brand” but not explaining how they are going to be involved may indicate issues of sincerity. Often corporate branding strategies are said to be based on employees living the brand and becoming brand ambassadors (e.g. Ind 2004), but without this aspect being elaborated at all. At Novo Nordisk employees also raised this issue, for example: “I don’t get it; how can we be builders of the new brand, without doing anything else than before? I am not an expert on branding so management needs to clarify this issue. I really would like to help, but I don’t know how to or what is expected of me” (Employee 1, Corporate communications).

Another article published in February 2006 called “Tools to change diabetes” and subtitled “Employees play a big role in making Novo Nordisk’s brand visible internationally” also stressed the importance of the employees without explaining how they were going to be involved. It repeated the same point as the “Building the brand” article and placed the employees at the centre without involving them. However, the “big role” of employees was not explained. For some curious employees, this article may involve them in the corporate branding initiative, but in terms of reaching the organisation in a company-wide initiative, it is questionable how many will actually find corporate branding relevant and therefore follow such encouragement to commit them to something they do not

really know much about. There are no automatic mechanisms that mobilise the employees, as pointed out by Schultz et al. (2005:15) and when the “big role” of the employee’s remains unqualified, it leaves them in a vacuum that may cause issues of sincerity.

Finally, there is another issue on the subject of sincerity present in the article concerning the integration between internal and external communication (Ind 1998). It could be considered inconsistent to argue that Novo Nordisk is different from the rest of the industry which is known for “unscrupulously putting money and shareholder interests before lives”, when the same article emphasises the importance of the brand to the business and the shareholders. While people who know Novo Nordisk thoroughly may be clear about the agreement between the business arguments on the one hand and the humanitarian characteristics of the company on the other, people not aware of this may understand the argumentation as insincere. Since the purpose of the corporate branding initiative is to create awareness of the Novo Nordisk brand among stakeholders not aware of the company, this argumentation may need to be explained more carefully. Ind (1998) argues how internal and external messages need to be integrated to provide consistency. This is also an important element for securing sincerity across the organisation because the internal members also identify with external communication (e.g. Christensen and Morsing 2005).

### **7.11 Analysis of a brochure about Changing Diabetes and reactions**

In what follows a strategic corporate branding brochure and some typical reactions are analysed. A brochure called *Changing Diabetes* was published in August 2005 in connection with the release of a new brand concept at EASD. This brochure was conceived with two purposes, according to the managers in the brand department: 1) to educate spokespersons on the new concept and strategy, and 2)

to communicate the new brand initiative internally and externally. The brochure was the first of its kind to argue for the meaning of the concept of Changing Diabetes. It incorporates both explicit and implicit reasons for the corporate branding campaign and is carefully designed with photos and matching text. The brochure is a piece of strategic corporate branding material that contains a self-description of the company in relation to Changing Diabetes.

**Figure 7.5 Front and back cover of the Changing Diabetes brochure**



Source: Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005

Two young girls decorate the cover of the brochure. One girl is playing with a doll while the other is talking. Technically and aesthetically the brochure is professionally designed. The visual look of the brochure is arranged with people wearing the blue Novo Nordisk colour so they consistently represent and relate to

the Novo Nordisk corporate branding initiative. The manager responsible for the brochure told me how the use of colours was an important controllable element that supports the corporate branding initiative and its visual side, and thereby indicated that great effort was put into the graphic side of the new effort.

### **Using our and we**

One distinct characteristic in the text is the extensive use of inclusive pronouns like we and our. This suggests that intersubjective recognitions are already established across the organisation and is in accordance with the purpose of a corporate branding strategy. For an employee, the text is a good indicator of what they should identify with in relation to the corporate branding strategy. For an external stakeholder, it is a piece of information that signals what the company stands for in a positive way. The use of we and our expresses a unified organisation behind the words. It signals no gap between vision and culture (Hatch and Schultz 2001), but coherence and consistency between the corporate branding strategy and the members of the organisation. However, as mentioned before, the use of inclusive pronouns does not automatically make every employee agree and act in accordance with the text because it is a question of identification that can be challenging to validate.

### **Intelligibility, facts and norms**

The aspect of intelligibility is primarily implicitly assumed in the brochure, because it does not directly state what corporate branding is. The brochure provides several examples related to corporate branding strategy that may contribute to the aspect of intelligibility. Unlike the Type Zero brochure, it does not state what Changing Diabetes is not. It thereby indicates that Changing Diabetes is not expected to invoke the same kind of misunderstandings among the stakeholders.

The brochure is structured with six headlines and sections covering different aspects of Changing Diabetes and characteristics of the company:

1. Changing how we **treat** diabetes
2. Changing the way we **look** at diabetes
3. Changing the way we **live** with diabetes
4. Changing the way we **work** with diabetes
5. Changing Diabetes
6. Changing the **future** of diabetes

Source: Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005.

Each headline starts with changing and ends with diabetes. In between changing and diabetes one word is in bold letters to emphasise an aspect in the accompanying text. The headlines demonstrate how the brand concept is used in various ways to underline different characteristics and activities of the company. The six sections try to elaborate and substantiate Changing Diabetes so it becomes meaningful for the readers and provide supportive argumentation about why and how Novo Nordisk is actually Changing Diabetes.

The first section *Changing how we treat diabetes* primarily emphasises facts about Novo Nordisk, such as its historical heritage of introducing insulin to the world, its product line, its future research activities, and its partnerships with various stakeholders. The facts function as a kind of confirmation of the corporate branding strategy and concept Changing Diabetes by referring to the state of affairs in the organisation. The reference to facts in the brochure is underlined by sentences stating what Novo Nordisk is, for example: “Our science is our future”, “Our scientific heritage is exceptionally strong”, “Novo Nordisk is committed to

pursuing its business goal in a responsible manner”, and “Our product line is without equal” (Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005).

While the brochure starts by stating that “science is our future” and outlines a number of facts about science, later it states several times that “making a real difference requires more than science alone”. In fact the brochure devotes one of the six sections to science and the development of pharmaceuticals and the other five sections to other normative characteristics and activities describing the company. One reaction from a manager took up this issue in the following way:

“The corporate branding brochure is a typical product that promotes the activities in the stakeholder relations department. I think that the branding campaign tends to turn things upside down in its priorities. (...) They [the people responsible for corporate branding activities] only promote activities under the CSR area [corporate stakeholder relations] and forget that our primary job is to develop and produce medicine. They fail to remember that there wouldn’t be any CSR activities if we stop making and selling superior medicine for the market” (Manager 2, International Marketing).

This reaction illustrates a typical issue of coordination across the organisation in relation to establishing a common understanding about the different functional areas in an organisation, although marketing had in fact been involved in developing the branding initiative. Apparently this comment indicates that the normative characteristics are considered as too dominant in the corporate branding material. The manager refers to facts about the importance of the products for the business and thereby indicates that the branding brochure may cause issues of sincerity. The manager’s comment implicitly indicates that the corporate branding brochure fails to explain how the CSR area can contribute with value to the whole

organisation. In contrast to the US campaign, it fails to explain the business rationale for the whole organisation undertaking a corporate branding initiative with the chosen emphasis on the activities in the CSR area. Although this may be evident for the people working with branding, it cannot be assumed to be the case for the whole organisation. It may therefore raise issues about the validity of the identity statements provided in the brochure. The comment may also indicate another issue about how internal turf wars between departments and functions may challenge a corporate branding effort (e.g. Einwiller and Will 2002:100) and therefore raise questions regarding validity and understanding.

The next quotation illustrates the relationship between the scientific facts and the more normative-oriented approach to business. “Our scientific heritage is exceptionally strong and multifaceted, and yet it is still driven by something simple: our commitment to help people live better” (Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005). The quotation suggests that the facts listed, such as a multifaceted scientific approach, can be condensed into a normative claim of helping people live better lives. It further demonstrates that the corporate brand brochure itself tries to condense and maybe even subsume various activities into short and simple statements with normative value-laden characteristics. While the normative aspects of the company are emphasised as common denominators that relate to the whole organisation and the members, it also raises the issue related to validity of whether normative consistency can be accomplished (e.g. Torp 2009:202).

The last five sections of the brochure are primarily devoted to emphasising how the normative sides of the company substantiate the corporate branding strategy, for example having the courage “to approach this global epidemic with humanity, and with policy” (Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005) and continues: “Most healthcare companies were founded by a love of science. Novo Nordisk was founded by the love of a husband for his wife and their search for a cure for her

diabetes. It's this sense of caring and humanity that still influences everything we do to this day".

The argumentation again indicates that the normative characteristics, such as humanity, care and love, are primary traits of the organisation that can differentiate it from other healthcare companies. In fact, the argumentation indicates that Novo Nordisk's humanitarian approach is what differentiates it from other companies and not its science in diabetes. However, this is not totally in harmony with the observation at the beginning of this project in the case story. In the introduction about Type Zero, the CEO said that it was not good enough that the company was caring and friendly, thereby emphasising the strategic intent of the coming corporate branding initiative to brand Novo Nordisk as courageous. Furthermore, the case story described a related observation about Novo Nordisk being too much "Florence Nightingale", which meant that the humanitarian side was too dominant. The fact that "Florence Nightingale" is still an important part of the branding campaign, after all the efforts, indicates that Novo Nordisk's identity with its focus on the humanitarian side still has significant influence on its corporate branding initiatives. It is beyond this analysis to decide whether the initial strategic objective of the branding initiative has been achieved from an organisational point of view, but the fact that the new branding initiative is close to the original brand indicates that the identity of Novo Nordisk is difficult to change through branding alone. It may be seen as an illustration of how common values and shared understanding play a role in organisation and also as an example of the challenge between changing and adapting either organisational culture or the brand (Hatch and Schultz 2008:147).



## Sincerity

The concept Changing Diabetes and the four words emphasised (*treat, look, live, and work* included in the headlines of four of the sections) are verbs referring to activities in the organisation. Linking words and action in this way suggests that actual activities are indeed taking place that substantiate the corporate branding strategy. It indicates that there is no gap between words and deeds. This is further elaborated as the accompanying texts under the headlines primarily describe organisational activities. Referring to well-known organisational activities may provide employees with knowledge about what it is all about and demonstrate that corporate branding is based in organisational reality as a sincere representation. The further brochure states: “Every employee demonstrates this spirit and that makes us a stronger company” (Changing Diabetes brochure 08/2005). This statement, however, may be jumping to conclusions with regard to sincerity because the employees have not yet been presented to the corporate branding material and it is therefore not possible assume understanding and coordination in advance among the employees. Yet the claim clearly implies that every employee already supports the corporate branding strategy when it says that “every employee demonstrates this spirit”. This is an example of a strategic claim in the sense that employees are supposed to believe it and act in accordance with the words if the words are going to have any meaning in practice. While it is also an example that indicates managerial integration through normative statements that try to influence and control how employees behave and act in accordance with the brand, it may also raise the question of whether such control is achievable at all or beyond reach (e.g. Torp 2009; Christensen et al. 2009).

**Table 7.4 Summary of the analyses of the Changing Diabetes initiative**

Integration of the Changing Diabetes initiative			
Functions	Affiliates	Executive Managers	Product (therapy) areas
Corporate Branding +	US +	CEO +	NovoSeven (+) –
Corporate Communications +	UK +	CSR (Executive senior vice-president) +	Diabetes +
International Marketing +	China +	Chairman of the board	
P&O + (–) (People & Organisation)	Germany +		

A cell entry with a plus indicates that predominantly supportive statements were identified in the findings with regard to both reactions and representation. A minus in brackets indicates that some initially challenging reactions were identified in the corporate branding department at headquarters. The grey cell signifies that the initiative was initiated from the corporate branding department at headquarters.

The analysis indicates that the initiative was conceived without significant challenges regarding validity. Neither of the texts explains corporate branding precisely, but they do indirectly exemplify corporate branding in various ways. Both texts primarily emphasise the normative sides of the corporate branding initiative, only secondarily relating to facts. An issue of sincerity may be identified

in both strategic texts, because they seem to suggest that the employees were already building the brand, even before the initiative had been presented to them.

The cross-organisational reactions to the initiative were primarily supportive. Some reactions were raised about facts and sincerity and how the other product areas could relate to the initiative. Furthermore, some reactions challenged the normative approach because the respondents felt that the factual sides of the organisation were under-prioritised. Apart from these reactions, mostly supportive and acknowledging reactions across the organisation were identified.

Taken together, the brochure and article cannot stand alone without further elaboration. They do, however, offer a picture of the branding effort that is substantiated in intersubjective facts and norms among the members of the organisation. Although there are some issues about validity that may be challenged, the initiative is generally considered as capable of creating social integration among members of the organisation, although it remains unclear for the employees across the organisation how they are going to become “builders of the brand”.



## **8 Summary of empirical findings**

It is atypical that an organisation initiates three strategic corporate branding initiatives within a relatively short period of time. It accentuates a question of how to establish some kind of coordination not only between the initiatives, but also across the organisation. Internally it raised a question of clarifying why there were three initiatives and how they related to each other. Such explanations were mostly implicit and that led to rumours and speculations in the organisation. Even though the three initiatives were based on the same brand promise and were planned in great detail and expected to be successful, they integrated into the organisation in very different ways, with aspects of managerial and social integration. This chapter summarises the significant differences and similarities between the three strategic initiatives and furthermore gives an overview of the whole case and the central findings.

A number of similar circumstances were present in all three initiatives. First, all three initiatives involved a strategic approach based on aspects of managerial integration and strategic action for corporate branding which was initiated and communicated from the top down. Top managers stood behind the initiatives and were closely involved in the corporate branding processes. Second, the purpose of the initiatives was to attract attention to the company and its identity, and thereby make corporate branding an integrated part of the business. The rationale was that corporate branding was a necessary and strategic value-adding activity. Third, they were all based on the same brand promise, namely, “Leading the fight against diabetes. Defeating diabetes is our passion and our business.” Although this promise was common, the initiatives turned out to be very different. Fourth, they were all prepared in great detail and presented as complete strategic corporate

branding initiatives, ready for both internal and external launch. Finally, all three initiatives were, of course, expected to be successful.

### **8.1 Significant findings in the initiatives**

The analysis demonstrates that the US affiliate managed its corporate branding initiative in intersubjective agreement with the US organisation, making clear statements that were based on all four claims to validity. No challenging statements could be immediately identified. Under the surface, however, sincerity turned out to be a problem. The US initiative, after all, was one of two parallel corporate branding initiatives, just developing much faster than the initiative at headquarters. The two initiatives were bound to an agreement on the brand promise, but there was no coordination on strategy or concept. Although lagging behind, headquarters tried to define the situation and influence all the corporate branding activities in the organisation. However, nothing was changed in the US initiative; they went ahead in accordance with their own plans in spite of headquarters' requests.

The difficulties of cross-organisational coordination between the two initiatives raised the issue of sincerity with regard to the US campaign because recognition from headquarters was lacking. Novo Nordisk, as a whole, did not sincerely stand behind the US initiative; it was, quite literally of 'two minds' about the corporate brand. It should be noted, however, that no challenging statements on the issue of sincerity have been identified from the employees in the US affiliate or from anyone else across the organisation. The sincerity of the US initiative was undermined simply because the branding department at headquarters did not completely recognise and support it as such and in its specifics.

The branding initiative at headquarters developed more slowly than the US initiative and almost a year had passed from the launch of the US initiative before headquarters was ready to launch Type Zero. In the meantime, a corporate branding function had been established in headquarters. Their first task was to develop a strategic initiative that would include the whole organisation and thereby also the US initiative. Type Zero and was the first result from the new function. At the launch, it was presented as a team effort between the new corporate branding function, the international marketing function, and the affiliates from the US, the UK, China and Germany in order to signal that the corporate branding initiative was based on common agreement in the organisation. However, several statements from managers in the affiliates and other functions challenged the initiative. One manager noted that:

“We [the team] never really achieved a common agreement about the corporate branding strategy for the organisation. It was headquarters that managed the project in accordance with their purpose and agenda. It was rather a question of headquarters looking for and soaking up bits and pieces of usable information, especially from our initiative. They tried to make it look like a collaborative team effort, but the ball never really left headquarters” (Manager 2, US).

The analysis demonstrates that all four validity claims were raised in the reactions to challenge the Type Zero initiative among the members of the organisation. And, even more notably, the analysis even demonstrates that the Type Zero branding material contained several issues regarding the validity of its official statements. In fact, the Type Zero initiative turned out to be even more remote from the organisational identity than the old *I wish* campaign it was intended to replace. This is also interesting because one of the important reasons for the strategic focus

on corporate branding was that the *I wish* campaign had not reflected the organisational identity.

The Changing Diabetes initiative would never have been developed if Type Zero had not been rejected. While the analysis indicates that Changing Diabetes was based on all four claims to validity in a way that could create emerging support from members of the organisation, it also had some challenging reactions concerning the product areas outside diabetes. The analysis further demonstrates that the Changing Diabetes initiative had several similarities with the US initiative with regard to wording, argumentation and validity claims. Even the concept resembled the US concept, a fact which consequently made coordination easier. An article published on the intranet explicitly recognised the US effort as so important that the whole organisation could learn from it, yet this necessary sincere recognition of the US corporate branding initiative came approximately one and a half years after it was launched.

In what follows, I briefly summarise the most significant differences and similarities in the four validity claims of the three initiatives.

## **8.2 An overview of the general findings in the initiatives**

The official corporate branding material representing the organisation and the reactions across the organisation are summarised in the tables below. Table 8.1 summarises the findings on the official material representing the corporate branding initiatives. Table 8.2 summarises the findings on the reactions to the corporate branding initiatives. The supportive and challenging statements, indicated by a plus or a minus respectively, reveal that there are certain significant differences as to how the three initiatives could establish social integration across the organisation.



This is not a quantitative statistical inquiry in the sense of being representative and including equally every member and piece of corporate branding material across the organisation. However, it is indicative of how corporate branding was presented and received among the members of the organisation interviewed.

A plus in a cell entry indicates that more than 50% of the statements examined in the empirical inquiry were generally supportive in terms of social integration of the given corporate branding initiative. A minus in a cell entry indicates that more than 50% of the examined statements generally challenged social integration of the given corporate branding initiative. An empty cell indicates that no empirical information was available. There were no instances that indicated an equal number of challenging and supportive statements in the inquiry. Finally, in instances where there was a change from, for example, a supportive to a challenging statement in the period of the case study, the first observation is indicated with a plus or a minus in brackets and the second without.

**Table 8.1 Summary of integration of representations**

Summary integration of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk: Representations												
Strategy	Changing the Course of Diabetes				Type Zero				Changing Diabetes			
Validity claim	I	F	N	S	I	F	N	S	I	F	N	S
Official corporate branding material	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+

I (intelligibility), F (facts), N (Norms), S (sincerity)

Table 8.1 demonstrates that, according to the analyses, the representations in the official corporate branding material differed with respect to validity. The

Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative was based on all four claims to validity. By contrast, the Type Zero initiative was not. The Changing Diabetes initiative had some challenging statements on the issue of intelligibility, particularly with regard to the other product areas, but was conceived in a way that was based primarily on supportive statements. The case story and the significant findings above indicate that the Changing Diabetes initiative had developed into an initiative similar to the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative.

### **Intelligibility**

The US affiliate managed to provide an intelligible explanation of corporate branding, the company identity and the relevance of the campaign to the employees. Great effort was put into explaining corporate branding in a simple and concrete way. By contrast, the Type Zero initiative was communicated in an abstract way because it explained neither corporate branding nor recognisable characteristics of the company identity in a straightforward and intelligible way. Because the Type Zero material invoked a whole new set of terms that made no reference to an intersubjectively shared background in the organisation, the concept and terminology were never rendered intelligible to the organisation. Finally, the strategic attempt to integrate Changing Diabetes into the organisation included both clear and unclear issues with regard to intelligibility. While the US initiative approached the question of intelligibility in a direct way, the Type Zero initiative neglected to clarify any questions of intelligibility, and the Changing Diabetes initiative managed the question of intelligibility in a way that can be considered as something between the two other approaches.

### **Facts and norms**

The US affiliate made the corporate branding initiative concrete and relevant and provided strong argumentation for its necessity to the business. Attention was called to several recognised facts and norms about the company. The five speeches

managed to connect internal qualities to the corporate branding initiative and furthermore provide a persuasive case as to the necessity of corporate branding.

The facts offered in the branding material about the Type Zero initiative were primarily statements which explained what the initiative was not. These were predominantly made to prevent patients and doctors from making incorrect associations when interpreting the initiative. The normative beliefs explaining the initiative were abstract and open to different interpretations, so that Type Zero could, ultimately, stand for nearly anything. Furthermore, some of the normative beliefs explaining the concept were virtually prescriptive in kind, describing how patients ought to conduct their lives. The Type Zero initiative was not based on recognised facts or norms in the organisation.

By contrast, the facts provided to support the Changing Diabetes initiative strategy were primarily recognised characteristics of Novo Nordisk. While some well-known facts were presented, the Changing Diabetes initiative was mainly explained through various norms relating to the identity and the on-going activities of the company. The dominant normative approach included an emphasis on the humanitarian sides of the company and how the company cares for the patient. This approach was in accordance with the organisation and not so different from the Being There campaign which it was intended to replace.

### **Sincerity**

The US initiative provided, as it was sometimes put, “proof” of how the company was “walking its talk”. This was to demonstrate how the corporate branding strategy was based on a sincere and truthful picture of the company. The speeches even considered how the other product areas should be involved in the initiative and thereby also made it possible for the members of the organisation who were

not working with diabetes to recognise and possibly support the campaign as sincere. In contrast, the Type Zero initiative did not even consider the aspect of sincerity. However, several issues of sincerity were implicitly present in the Type Zero branding material, although this was unintended.

The Changing Diabetes initiative did not frame the aspect of sincerity as a question of “walking the talk” or “proof”. Instead the aspect of sincerity was mostly implicit. The employees were mentioned several times as important for realising the brand, but without further elaboration as to how they were going to be involved. In fact, no significant action or communication addressed the issue of how to involve the employees across the whole organisation. Apparently, they were to continue their business as usual; they were already, according to the corporate branding department, reflecting the Changing Diabetes strategy.

### **Summary of integration of reactions**

The reactions across the organisation approximately reflect the analyses of the representations with regard to validity. In fact, the findings demonstrate that the representations and reactions correlate to a great extent. The reactions are based on 28 interviews and 34 comments from across the organisation during the period of the case study. Below, Table 8.2 summarises reactions across the organisation.

**Table 8.2: Summary of social integration of corporate branding**

Social integration of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk: Reactions												
Strategic initiative	Changing the Course of Diabetes				Type Zero				Changing Diabetes			
	I	F	N	S	I	F	N	S	I	F	N	S
CEO	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
Senior executive vice-president	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Chairman of the board	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
Corporate Branding	+	+	+	(–) +	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Corporate Communications	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
People & Organisation	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	–
International Marketing	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
US	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
China					–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
Germany					–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
UK	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+
NovoSeven	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Diabetes	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	+	+

I (intelligibility), F (facts), N (Norms), S (sincerity)

No challenging statements were identified on the issues of intelligibility, facts or norms with regard to the US initiative among the members across the organisation. In fact, this initiative managed very clearly to establish an intersubjective recognition of corporate branding. This was further emphasised when headquarters, more than a year later, officially recognised the US effort and made use of the US argumentation and statements in their initiative (illustrated in the table by a minus in brackets and plus without brackets).

In contrast, Type Zero faced challenging reactions from top management, affiliates, functions and product areas on all four validity claims. The initiative created confusion and misunderstanding about how it should be understood. Some members of the organisation also recommended that the management abandon the initiative because of its lack of sincerity. Only the corporate branding department and one executive manager were supportive of the initiative.

The reactions to the Changing Diabetes initiative were mostly supportive. However, the findings also include challenging statements to some extent, especially with regard to the issues of intelligibility and sincerity. It is also notable that the headquarters function called *People and Organisation* had an issue about sincerity with regard to the Changing Diabetes initiative. The function understood the initiative but did not support its specifics. They did not use the branding material in the period of the case study. This was critical because People and Organisation communicates a lot internally and externally; for instance, they continued making job advertisements with the old outdated branding material even for a long period after this case study ended.

Finally, it is noticeable that the product area of NovoSeven did not recognise the initiative at all (illustrated with a minus in the table). It turned out that some

people working in other product areas questioned the initiative as representative for the whole organisation. Managers from the NovoSeven area expressed challenging statements on all four validity claims. They felt that the corporate branding initiative did not reflect NovoSeven's contribution to the organisation. Moreover, several reactions from employees raised questions as to whether their area would obtain sufficient resources in the future. Some even raised concerns about the area being sold to another company. The analyses specifically indicate that the product area of NovoSeven was critical in relation to the initiatives of Type Zero and Changing Diabetes but not to the US initiative. The branding department could therefore probably also learn from the US experience here.

Whereas the analysis of the representations indicates the quality of validity in the official material, the analyses of the reactions shows in more detail how the members of the organisation reacted. The detailed analyses provide an insight into some questions of validity that are similar and different when the representations and reaction are compared and thereby provides an indication of where an extra effort should be made to convince the employees of why a branding initiative is a good idea. However, the correlation between the analyses of representations and reactions indicates the where the possibility of social integration in the organisation may emerge.

### **8.3 An overview of the findings in the whole case study**

The case story and the detailed analyses were interpreted against a background reflecting parts of the discussions from chapter two, three and four with a particular reference to insights from the literature on communications and branding. Various interpretations have been offered through chapter six and seven which have indicated aspects of both managerial and social integration. Even though I have argued that social integration is an assumption for managerial

integration, when a corporate branding strategy is realised, it is, however, not every interpreted aspect of a branding initiative that may be strictly categorised according to this distinction. A top down approach, building on the purposive rationality, as an example of strategic action can create mutual understanding if the members of the organisation agree on and support a suggested corporate branding effort as demonstrated in the Changing the Course of Diabetes initiative. It is not always possible that all aspects of a branding initiative are examples of social or managerial integration. While some aspects may indicate managerial integration, other may indicate social integration in the same branding initiative.

Through the analyses several aspects with reference to the themes raised in chapter two, three and four have been in focus to illustrate partly the complexity and partly how various characteristics and features of the developing corporate branding processes have an influence on the initiatives and the members of the organisation seen through the lens of the framework. The below Table 8.3 summarises central points from these previous discussions and findings from the whole case study.



**Table 8.3 Summary of central aspects of the whole case study**

<b>Summary of central aspects of the analyses of the whole case study</b>			
<b>Central aspects</b>	<b>Changing the Course of Diabetes</b>	<b>Type Zero</b>	<b>Changing Diabetes</b>
Responsible for initiating and developing the initiative	US managers assisted by external consultants DeLoor	Corporate branding department	Corporate branding department in collaboration with managers across the organisation
Strategic approach	Fixed strategy open for employee contribution	Fixed strategy	Emerging aspiration based strategy planning
Identity approach	Revealing who the organisation is	Telling the organisation who it is	Relying on who the organisation is based on its culture
Corporate branding execution	Launch	Launch	Gradually emerging through “silent” launch
Responsible for branding processes	Top management	Top management	Top management
Primary reason for branding initiative	The company needed attention because it was unknown in the market	The company was to soft and humanitarian and needed a new courageous profile to create attention	The Type Zero failure and the need for the company to be focused on diabetes
The brand focuses on	The diabetes business	A new way to conceptualise diabetes	A broad approach to changing diabetes
Who is giving voice to the initiative?	Management and their invitation to employee participation	Management and external stakeholders	Management and their invitation to employee participation
Focused on results or processes	Results and processes	Results	Results and processes

**Table 8.3 (continued) Summary of central aspects of the whole case study**

<b>Summary of central aspects of the analyses of the whole case study</b>			
<b>Central aspects</b>	<b>Changing the Course of Diabetes</b>	<b>Type Zero</b>	<b>Changing Diabetes</b>
Approach to results	Emerging	Defined in advance	Emerging
What was changed through corporate branding?	Still the same company but a more shouting organisation	Whole new way to talk about the company and diabetes	Company business as usual but primary focus on diabetes
Attention primary through	Shouting from neon towers on Times Square and employee initiatives	Turning up the volume about the new type through brand concept material	Cross-organisational communications effort through existing channels

All the aspects in Table 8.3 were not discussed in the same order as listed in the analyses of each initiative. However, the table illustrates the primary discussions and how different aspects of each initiative can have a bearing on the corporate branding processes. It is, for instance, notable how the US initiative, based on a top down approach and marketing perspective, managed to establish understanding and support among the employees when Type Zero, also based on a marketing and top down approach, was challenged. One difference between the initiatives was how they approached the organisational identity and how they involved the employees. Where the US initiative got the brand behind the employees (to paraphrase Hatch and Schultz 2008), Type Zero could not at all establish any commitment that could get the brand behind the employees or the employees behind the brand. While these two initiatives to some extent built on the same conditions and perspective, their approach to establishing validity among the employees differed significantly. Type Zero tried to control how meaning was

established among the employees as an example of managerial integration. In the US it was much more a process of creating mutual understanding related to the specific situation among the employees as an example of striving for social integration. The findings in Table 8.3 give an overall view of the discussed aspects of branding and also indicate the limits and possibilities of each aspect seen through the lens of the framework.



## 9 Conclusion

*“Good branding starts from within, so the first step is to make sure that we, and those around us, get the best opportunities for walking the talk”.*

This quote from the Novo Nordisk Brand Letter (2005:2) underlines the connection between a corporate branding strategy and the organisation that adopts it and points towards the social processes where corporate branding is created and developed in the interaction between people.

The case study about the emerging corporate branding initiatives at Novo Nordisk revealed that it is by no means easy to walk the talk across an organisation. The three different strategic initiatives led to three different outcomes. Corporate branding may be an innovative way to meet and manage contemporary business challenges in the 21st century, but it is not a flawless alchemy for contemporary companies that will automatically turn the organisational identity into a lasting gold mine. Rather, it takes great effort and careful consideration to make corporate branding a cross-organisational and valuable activity for organisations. The conclusion summarises the main findings of the project and reflects upon their implications. It is structured as follows:

First, a discussion of the main theoretical findings to emphasise how the inquiry about integration in corporate branding processes may contribute with new insight. Second, a discussion of the empirical findings as to what can be generally concluded about Novo Nordisk and their corporate branding initiatives. Third, a reflection on method, theory, empirical material and the character of knowledge produced with regard to the particular case and the possible general contribution to an alternative understanding of corporate branding. Finally, an emphasis on some

additional key points, managerial implications and indications for further research ends the project.

The project was initiated as a result of an interest in an empirical problem: How could a resourceful company like Novo Nordisk, awarded several times as a one of the best communicators, make a corporate branding strategy that raised significant unforeseen challenges among the members of the organisation? Were there overlooked factors, conditions and assumptions that influenced the realisation of corporate branding?

My reflections on these unanswered problems formed the background for the overall research question:

➤ *How is a corporate branding strategy integrated across an organisation like Novo Nordisk?*

To explore this problem, I set out to combine two concepts from two different worlds. The rather new management phenomenon, corporate branding, was brought together with the traditional concept of social integration from the field of sociology. The main thesis was that realising the potential of a corporate branding strategy relates to social integration among the members of an organisation. By introducing central insights from Habermas's theory of communicative action (1984, 1987) the aim was to inquire about how social integration related to corporate branding through a communicative perspective. While this communicative perspective emphasised the necessity of reaching mutual understanding as a basis for integrating a corporate branding strategy into an organisation, it also offered an alternative approach to important challenges of corporate branding.

## 9.1 The theoretical conclusions

The two theoretical sub-questions focused on specific integrative aspects of corporate branding:

1. *How are corporate branding processes in an organisation related to managerial and social integration?*

The first question was examined from a critical, constructive and communicative perspective into the parts of the contemporary literature on corporate branding, marketing, integrated marketing communications, and corporate communications. The aim was to explore central integrative aspects of involving the internal members of an organisation in a corporate branding effort complemented by a focus on the concept *understanding*. The inquiry conceptualised two different aspects of integration, respectively managerial and social integration. While the inquiry revealed that the internal processes of integrating corporate branding across an organisation in terms of mutual understanding among the employees seemed to some extent to be neglected, it was more significant how various scholars suggested managerial approaches to integration that in different ways tried to control the internal branding processes among the employees.

The inquiry further suggested that managerial control could broadly be conceptualised as managerial integration. However, it was also argued, that managerial integration was insufficient to account for the processes that involve the employees and establish mutual understanding in relation to a corporate branding effort. To the limited extent that understanding was in focus in the branding literature, it was also primarily assumed to be a controllable aspect of a corporate branding effort which, in fact, ignored the common insight from contemporary communications theory about how meaning cannot be controlled

(e.g. Christensen et al. 2009; Christensen and Morsing 2010; Habermas 2001, 1987, 1984). An exception was indicated in Hatch and Schultz suggestion of getting the brand behind the employees (2008).

While the aspect of understanding and mutual understanding are only considered to a limited extent in the literature on branding, and often only implicitly, there are several indications and examples of how understanding is an inevitable assumption that influences in corporate branding processes in organisations (e.g. Ind 2004; Hatch and Schultz 2008; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Christensen et al. 2009). Hence, the answer to the first theoretical question was that corporate branding in many ways relates to questions about integration, where most approaches assume that managerial integration can control a corporate branding effort completely. However, social integration was also suggested as complementary concept, related to corporate branding, to explain the processes that create mutual understanding among the members of an organisation. The second theoretical sub-question therefore focused on:

*2. How is corporate branding influenced by social integration among the members of an organisation?*

The second sub-question was answered by introducing parts of Habermas's theory on communicative action and the notion of social integration. Social integration was examined as a concept that could account for the organisational aspects of establishing mutual understanding among employees in relation to a corporate branding effort. In explaining the intricate relation between strategic action and communicative action, where communicative action through the validity claims creates mutual understanding as the basis of social integration, I suggested that a corporate branding strategy depends on and is influenced by social integration.



This follows from the key assumption and core argument which is based on a central insight from Habermas's theory where communicative action and reaching understanding are explained as primary to strategic action because any strategic action based on purposive rationality presupposes that mutual understanding has already been established. So, an answer to the second theoretical sub-question was that corporate branding is influenced by social integration through the processes that create mutual understanding based on the validity claims.

The validity claims were then suggested as a basic and relevant framework that could serve as conceptual and analytical tool for exploring how a corporate branding effort is based in the underlying dynamics of intersubjective validity in an organisation. The framework focuses on the detailed claims of validity that are a part of corporate branding processes in terms of the support and challenges that may arise in both strategic branding efforts and in the reactions to them.

The framework makes it possible to analyse what underpins a corporate branding effort in detail by dissecting statements into the basic categories of intelligibility, facts, norm and sincerity. It can be used for analytical reflection in the process of developing a strategy, to both anticipate and evaluate possible questions in regard to validity, but also to explore and account for the mutual understanding and social integration of an existing corporate branding strategy. This project used the framework for analysis of the case, which may also imply that corporate branding management can use it a tool for planning, implementing and evaluating a corporate branding effort because it provides insight into the essential communicative basis that underpins any corporate branding strategy. The analysis of the US initiative, in fact, revealed that corporate brand management had carefully considered how to balance the claims to validity when they planned to release the branding effort, although not aware of them. An explicit recognition of

and focus on these claims may possibly create higher awareness and deeper insight into the underlying dynamics that create the basis for a successful corporate branding effort, or of course the opposite.

## **9.2 The empirical conclusions**

The empirical inquiry is a detailed chronological case study about the development of corporate branding at Novo Nordisk. It includes a detailed analysis of the three strategic initiatives by means of a framework focusing on how validity may create mutual understanding and thereby social integration. The empirical inquiry was conducted through a detailed description and analysis of how corporate branding emerged at Novo Nordisk. The basis for the empirical inquiry was the framework and a distinction between the representations, understood as the official strategic corporate branding effort, and the reactions, understood as supportive or challenging reactions among the members of the organisation. This distinction not only made it possible to explore how the corporate branding initiatives were intersubjectively recognised in the organisation, but also any possible gaps. Two empirical sub-questions respectively focusing on social integration in the official material denoted as representations, and among the members of the organisation denoted as reactions, guided the inquiry. The first empirical sub-question was:

1. *How does a corporate branding strategy develop across the organisation of Novo Nordisk?*

The answer to the first empirical sub-question was a chronological case story which revealed the branding ambition and potential for establishing a successful brand in the organisation on the one hand, but also the complex internal processes that kept challenging the different corporate branding projects on the other hand. One notable finding is that three strategic corporate branding initiatives were

initiated in the organisation within a relatively short period. The story also demonstrated that there was no master or “truly” corporate strategy that included all three strategic initiatives, although they were all based on the same brand promise. The case study revealed a difficult process and illustrated agreements and disagreements between the initiatives and the responsible managers. Difficulties were indicated in various ways: it was difficult to reach coordination between the three initiatives, even though they were based on the same brand promise, and it was also, to varying degrees, difficult to reach mutual understanding as to what the corporate brand meant and how it could make a difference among the members of the organisation.

In general the story indicated that although managerial control in various ways tried influence how the members of the organisation should understand and relate to the branding efforts, the members related to the brand through their own understanding and did not necessarily act in full accordance with the managerial intentions. However, in the process of reaching a master strategy, the three initiatives all played a significant role in influencing and developing the corporate brand of Novo Nordisk into what it is today. The case story then provided the background for the closer analysis of the three strategic initiatives.

## *2. How do the members of the organisation react to the corporate branding strategy at Novo Nordisk?*

The second empirical sub-question was answered by employing the framework in a detailed analysis of validity claims in the three strategic branding initiatives by focusing on material representing each initiative and the reactions to it among the members of the organisation.

Table 9.1 provides an approximate summary of the overall findings of the analyses of the three initiatives including both representations and reactions. A plus implies that social integration is generally indicated in the findings and a minus the opposite.

**Table 9.1 Summary of integration of representations and reactions**

	Changing the Course of Diabetes	Type Zero	Changing Diabetes
Social integration across the organisation	(-) +	-	+

The US initiative and the Changing Diabetes initiative were generally intersubjectively recognised in the organisation, whereas Type Zero was rejected. The minus in brackets illustrates that the US initiative was not at first recognised in headquarters. The *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative was rather unusual in some ways. It was initiated from an affiliate, but the ambition of this branding initiative was to influence the whole company. Furthermore, it started in disagreement with headquarters, but in the end the affiliate was recognised for its initiative. Although it was based on a marketing perspective that usually is significantly influenced by the purposive rationality, it nevertheless achieved mutual understanding through an involvement of the organisational members and thereby also social integration. The initiative, in fact, managed to create so much commitment and inspiration that it influenced headquarters and their upcoming initiatives.

By contrast, the analysis of the *Type Zero* indicated several challenging questions about the initiative. Trying to rationalise after the fact, management explained it as

a semantic problem, suggesting that the employees simply did not understand it. They were right from a managerial point of view and therefore never considered reaching understanding as a mutual challenge between the corporate branding effort and the members of the organisation. The initiative build on managerial integration, as for example suggested in a integrated marketing communications perspective, and tried to control not just all communicative activities but also how the members of the organisation understood the initiative. While Type Zero illustrates the limits of managerial integration, it also emphasises the relevance insight from the theory of communication because meaning is created in reciprocal processes among the members of the organisation. Type Zero indicated that the possibility of reaching social integration was lacking and could not be achieved. But although Type Zero was a mistake and caused a lot of unforeseen reactions, the initiative also created a lot of attention to corporate branding and forced management to look for alternatives.

The *Changing Diabetes* initiative bears noteworthy resemblance to the *Changing the Course of Diabetes* initiative. In a way, it is an amplified version of the US initiative based on influence from a communications perspective that recognises the limitations of the purposive rationality. Its ambitions were formulated in an open aspirations based strategy to corporate branding that recognised the need to include the members of the organisation in the ongoing and developing corporate branding processes to reach the aim of getting all the employees to become brand ambassadors. The Changing Diabetes initiative was probably the most conventional of the three initiatives in terms of evoking both supportive and challenging statements. While it is unusual for initiatives to be totally recognised or rejected from the beginning, like Type Zero, it is more frequently a process of reaching mutual understanding, in which the members of the organisation

gradually get used to a new branding initiative so it becomes meaningful to their context.

It is interesting to note how official corporate branding material that was conceived with respect for and in accordance with the intersubjective knowledge of the organisation also to a great extent resulted in supportive reactions among the members of the organisation, and vice versa in the case of Type Zero. This finding supports Hatch and Schultz (2001, 2003) and others about the necessity of closing the gap between vision and culture. The correlation might not be surprising, but it is an indicator with possible managerial implications of the need to take the validity claims into account when planning and executing a corporate branding strategy. The claims offers a way to look beneath the surface and through specific questions explore the meaningful foundation that can connect corporate branding visions with the culture and values rooted among the members of an organisation.

Table 9.2 illustrates and approximately summarises the correlation in the overall findings on supportive and challenging statements in the official material and in the reactions across the organisation in the three strategic initiatives. It is noteworthy that the official Type Zero material itself included statements that challenged the initiative.

**Table 9.2 Correlation between representations and reactions**

	<b>Representations</b>	<b>Reactions</b>
<b>Supportive statements</b>	Changing the Course of Diabetes Changing Diabetes	Changing the Course of Diabetes Changing Diabetes
<b>Challenging statements</b>	Type Zero	Type Zero

Novo Nordisk made three different strategic attempts to reap the benefits of corporate branding. The analysis indicates how the validity claims influence the possibility of not only social integration but also managerial integration in the organisation. In fact, it supports that the strategic management of corporate branding depends on the validity claims and social integration in the organisation. The next section continues with reflections about the case study and the character of the knowledge produced.

**9.3 Reflections about the project**

The project was based on a single qualitative case study without any intention of achieving objectivity with regard to the results or generalising the findings on a larger scale. The intention was to conduct explorative research in a way that could produce qualitative knowledge on a particular subject.

The study explored a single case through a Habermasian framework conceived through an inquiry firstly into parts of the contemporary literature that relates to and focuses on issues about integration of corporate branding efforts among the members of an organisation, and secondly into the communicative basis of the theory of communicative action. The research approach, combining two concepts from two different worlds, is rather unusual, because the issue of social integration

has not been applied to the subject of corporate branding before. Furthermore, the internal organisational aspects of how to achieve mutual understanding in corporate branding processes constitute a topic of relatively minor interest among researchers. These circumstances explain the explorative approach of this project.

When the theoretical inquiry, the framework and the outlined method are considered, a relevant question is: Are the theory and method appropriate and in accordance with the purpose of the project which was focused on finding knowledge about the managerial and social integration at Novo Nordisk that may influence the success of a corporate branding strategy?

While the theory and methodological approach focus on the specific issue of creating understanding through validity, it was demonstrated that this focus could provide knowledge in accordance with the purpose. The findings, in fact, demonstrate central aspects of how understanding influences the realisation of a corporate branding strategy beyond the level of just automatically assuming the support of the members of an organisation. It is possible to consider in detail what the underlying communicative basis is both of a corporate branding strategy and among the members of an organisation. The differences between representations and reactions gave some clear indications of the managerial and social integrative aspects of the three strategic corporate branding initiatives.

However, the character of this knowledge based on the method may be questioned as to whether it offers any new knowledge to the field of corporate branding. While the field of corporate branding has become multidisciplinary with many different perspectives contributing with knowledge on how to manage and brand organisations, and organisations furthermore consists of many different people that cannot just be controlled, it becomes complex to realise a corporate branding



effort. People have different understanding and approaches to corporate branding that influence the field and the possibility of establishing a clear understanding. The focus on the communicative basis and the validity claims may indicate the possible commonalities and differences between different perspectives in a corporate branding process. Such knowledge influences a corporate branding effort regardless of whether it is considered or not, which makes it central to take into account. However, the communicative basis cannot eliminate any possible disagreement but may provide a lens through which it becomes possible to recognise how the failure or success is susceptible to the underlying validity in an organisation. Insight into such knowledge is new and may offer a way to understand the inevitable dynamics that also constitute a corporate branding effort.

My aim in the introduction was to create knowledge *of* corporate branding and not *for* corporate branding. Throughout the project I have constructively challenged some established conventions in part of the corporate branding field and offered an alternative way to recognise what goes on in corporate branding processes. While this knowledge is knowledge *of* corporate branding, it can also be used as knowledge *for* corporate brand management as indicated with significant managerial implications.

One objection to part of the method in the empirical inquiry might be that the framework was used too rigorously, leaving no room for flexibility in the interpretation. I think that the analyses and conclusions demonstrate that the rather abstract validity claims in the framework were flexible enough to explore the various aspects of the case. The validity claims do not suggest what is true or false, right and wrong but only raise these questions in relation to a specific context which therefore opens space for interpretation with regard to answering the specific validity claim related to the particular subject in question.

Another objection to the method and empirical inquiry might be a criticism of the importance and weight given to representations and reactions in the analyses, and in particular the priority given to analysing the representations before analysing the reactions from the members of the organisation. Indeed, it might be objected that, to some extent, the representations are analysed in more detail than the reactions. The analyses were conducted in this order and priority because logically the initiatives had to be launched before the reactions could appear. The priority is furthermore based on their weight within the organisation and on the above-mentioned strategic importance of the representations as prescriptive in character with regard to how the organisation was supposed to integrate corporate branding. The subsequent analysis of the reactions is provided through significant examples of how members reacted and thereafter summarised in tables as another way to illustrate how members reacted to the strategic corporate branding initiatives. However, a different priority in the analyses could have emphasised the reactions even more, but not with another outcome.

An objection to the theory employed might be that Habermas and the theory of communicative action are irrelevant for the study of issues connected with corporate branding. It might be argued that the theory is too ideal and complex to have any real exploratory relevance for the study. Habermas's thinking is, indeed, based on a complex universe including numerous assumptions. The ambition, however, was not to employ all of it, but just to use some insights, arguing for their relevance (see also Bordum and Hansen 2005; Karsten 2006; Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Kernstock and Brexendorf 2009; Forester 2003; O'Donnel et al. 2000). While the theory is complex, I have nevertheless only used a part of it to explore the specific object of understanding and social integration, and indicated the possible kinds of knowledge that can be achieved. While the abstract validity

claims in Habermas's theory are derived from everyday communications practices (Habermas 2001), I have just brought them back and close to these communications practises again to explore an empirical case. The insight gained from this effort indicated their relevance because they were able to raise and question the implicit and often taken-for-granted assumptions. Furthermore employees at Novo Nordisk did, in fact, question facts, norms and sincerity and they raised several issues concerning intelligibility on specific matters which illustrated a need to focus on these claims. And finally the contemporary literature on corporate branding also indicated that several aspects of the communicative perspective were important, primarily understanding and sincerity, though without it was possible to locate a suggestion on how to conceptualise these aspects.

Finally, it might be asked how rewarding it has been to apply the aspect of social integration to a corporate branding issue. I think it has been rewarding to focus on some aspects that are not discussed much in the branding literature and suggest a way to approach them. The conclusions point to several issues relevant for corporate branding strategies, for example the indication of the correlation between representations and reactions in the empirical analysis, which implies that managers of corporate branding in particular may benefit from considering social integration and the four validity claims in all phases of a corporate branding project. Contemporary scholars who recognise how corporate branding needs to be understood among members of organisations also relate to the issues included this inquiry about social integration (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2001, 2008; Schultz et al. 2005; Davis and Dunn 2002; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Ind 2004). This project with its alternative perspective on corporate branding relates to and unifies some underlying questions in the established literature on branding, and this may indicate the possible contribution of this project and open a door for further research.

Following from this project is an argument about the relevance of the need to consider and reflect on the following questions when planning, executing and evaluating a corporate branding strategy:

1. Is the corporate branding strategy *intelligible* to the organisation?
2. Is the corporate branding strategy based on solid *facts* about the organisation?
3. Is the corporate branding strategy based on the organisation's culture and *norms*?
4. Is the corporate branding strategy a *sincere* expression of the organisation?

Although questions about truth, rightness and truthfulness may seem far from business concerns, they are necessary not just to underpin a corporate branding strategy but also to release its potential. These four questions are inevitable and therefore important to ask in the process of realising a corporate branding strategy, and they will still be relevant even if not asked or considered explicitly. While support among the members of the organisation is a complex matter that cannot be taken for granted, the questions above indicates a way to approach and understand it.

#### **9.4 Key points, managerial implications and indications for further research**

So the success of a corporate branding strategy depends on social integration, but there are a number of key points that follow from this conclusion. In this section I will discuss these points and their managerial implications. Furthermore, some suggestions for further research are also indicated.

*The Type Zero initiative was a valuable learning experience for Novo Nordisk to some extent.*

The branding department would have preferred a success instead of the failure of Type Zero. However, Type Zero did create a lot of awareness about corporate branding and was an important stepping stone in the development and qualification of the Changing Diabetes initiative. The kind of awareness that Type Zero created was not intended, but it was a wakeup call that really helped to put corporate branding on the agenda in the organisation. It not only led to a lot of talk in the corridors about the mistaken initiative, but also to a lot of attention on corporate branding. The attention helped to raise expectations about the next initiative and created some understanding of what corporate branding is all about for managers and employees. An open question is whether the Novo Nordisk corporate branding initiative of Changing Diabetes could have been arrived at without going through the Type Zero experience. The unexpected failure, in fact, gave valuable knowledge to the managers of the corporate branding department, for example about the processes and influence of the members of the organisation. The managerial implications that follow from the experience of the three initiatives are that the company can take advantage of both failures and successes more systematically to obtain organisational learning.

In other words, the three initiatives, and the Type Zero initiative in particular, created some organisationally inevitable learning for the branding department about how the members of the organisation could possibly support a corporate branding strategy. The organisational learning perspective is not a part of the explicit focus in this project, but it could be an adequate perspective for further research. The analyses of the initiatives implicitly indicate how it became necessary for the managers to learn from the difference between representations and reactions.

The Type Zero initiative in particular created what Argyris and Schön (1978) call single-loop learning. In single-loop learning, individuals, groups, or organisations adjust their actions in accordance with the difference between expected and obtained outcomes. Single-loop learning occurred when the expected outcome of the Type Zero initiative was not obtained, and as a consequence it was replaced by the Changing Diabetes initiative. However, if the branding managers had taken more systematic advantage of the learning experiences from the initiatives, it could have obtained double-loop learning. Double-loop learning is learning about single-loop learning, which is to reflect on and question the knowledge and assumptions that led to the initiatives in the first place. In a way, this project can be read as an analysis of the assumptions and knowledge behind the three initiatives because it focuses on their validity. This kind of positive thinking about creating awareness and learning from the Type Zero initiative in particular is, of course, a rationalisation after the fact. It was not a part of the reflections of the branding department because they did not explicitly consider the possibility of taking advantage of the mistake in these ways. Nevertheless, Type Zero was a valuable experience and stepping stone that helped to qualify and develop the Novo Nordisk brand into what it is today.

*The corporate branding process is just as important as the corporate brand.*

This project focused on the corporate branding processes and not the corporate brand. We often focus solely on the corporate brand, because it attracts attention as a powerful expression, and therefore forget to pay attention to the processes of corporate branding. However, the corporate branding processes that continually support and maintain the brand on a day-to-day basis are the necessary underpinning for the corporate brand. Antorini and Schultz note that “the corporate brand is created and develops through social, and often informal

processes” (2005:226). They continue “the corporate brand is managed in the interaction between people. The corporate branding process is therefore a social process that bounces back and forth within the organisation as sense-making and sense-giving processes” (2005:226). Making and giving sense to corporate branding involves processes in which members of an organisation consider how to understand and possibly support or challenge a corporate branding effort. The social processes that support a corporate branding strategy cannot be assumed to function automatically without considering how to involve and engage the members of the organisation. “The problem with simply assuming that corporate branding automatically mobilizes employees is that the critical insight and knowledge that employees possess gets lost in the process” (Schultz et al. 2005:15).

The managerial implication that follows from the argument about the importance of the organisational processes could be to consider social integration and be prepared to take both supportive and challenging reactions into account. Such reactions will eventually qualify and possibly validate a corporate branding strategy and contribute with knowledge about how a strategy can succeed. Managers that pay attention to these processes may obtain what we might call complementary knowledge about the strength of their strategies and accompanying processes in the organisation, which is just as important as the brand.

One possibility for further research might be to consider how to take account of the organisational processes during the whole process of both developing and implementing a corporate branding strategy. The mistakes of the Type Zero initiative could probably have been avoided if the members across the organisation had been consulted earlier in the development phase and their understandings had

been taken into account. This could have either stopped the development or have qualified it further in agreement with the organisation. The four validity claims may qualify the development of a corporate branding initiative even in the early phases of the process, because corporate branding is an on-going process and not a simple linear process based on instrumental rationality whereby the means automatically determine the end. Schultz argues that corporate branding is a cyclical process of creating and implementing the corporate brand (Schultz 2005:183ff), which underlines the on-going processes related to corporate branding. Social integration will be important regardless of how corporate branding is considered, principally because mutual understanding among the members of an organisation also influences a strategy as a on-going process. Insight into these social integrative processes complements a strategy and provides necessary knowledge about the critical factors that make a strategy succeed.

*Novo Nordisk became a distinct and shouting Florence Nightingale in the corporate branding process.*

Type Zero was an innovative and very creative initiative. It was differentiating and invented a whole new perspective on the organisation, but was rejected by the 300 top managers at IM 2005 who held other beliefs about Novo Nordisk. The question then becomes: Is it at all possible to implement a creative corporate branding initiative in an organisation with a strong heritage and culture like Novo Nordisk? This cannot be answered definitively, but there are some important aspects, such as time, business and identity that may require consideration. To some extent, trying to apply a new corporate branding strategy always implies changing and sometimes challenging the identity and beliefs of an organisation. However, challenging the identity does not necessarily cause resistance and, in the worst case, rejection among the employees. If the culture, heritage and traditions are reflected and acknowledged in the new corporate branding strategy, then there



is a possibility of establishing mutual understanding among the employees. The case study significantly demonstrated the importance of including elements of the identity in a corporate branding strategy to make recognition possible. It is, of course, dependent on the particular organisation to what degree well-known elements of the identity can be combined with the new elements of the branding strategy. Issues like the business of the company, its age, and how fast creative corporate branding processes proceed will influence the readiness to change. Pharmaceutical companies like Novo Nordisk, which are built on a strong basis of research and development with activities where it takes about ten years to bring a new product to market, may need a longer time to change their corporate brands because new things do not happen quickly. The age of the company may also influence the readiness to change because traditions and heritage are important factors among the members of the organisation. For a young company in a fast-developing business, it might be the other way around. A change takes time relative to the business and age of the company.

The aim of Novo Nordisk was to change considerably, from an organisation characterised with words like caring, friendly and Florence Nightingale-like to an organisation that could be characterised with words like proactive, courageous, innovative, and assertive according to the CEO. None of the three initiatives achieved this aim. However, it can be argued that the Type Zero initiative tried to make this change in one step by radically challenging the existing identity. The other two initiatives were more conservative because, to a large extent, they were built on the existing identity and beliefs in the organisation because they recognised that a strong culture and well-established beliefs about identity could not be changed at once. The caring and friendly profile and the normative values were therefore still the most apparent characteristics of the company. The change accomplished by the initiatives may, in the words of Novo Nordisk, be

characterised as a shift from an unclear Florence Nightingale to a more distinct and shouting Florence Nightingale. The possible managerial implication, which is also recognised among scholars (e.g. Hatch and Schultz 2001; Gotzi 2007; King 1991), is that culture and norms influence and enter into corporate branding processes. The validity claim concerning norms can offer a way to understand the organisational culture through specific questions.

*Social integration is necessary to make a corporate branding strategy succeed!*

A corporate branding strategy that is neither intelligible, nor built on shared facts and norms, and lacks sincerity is likely to fail. Even if just one of the validity claims becomes challenged, there is a risk that a strategy will fail. Corporate branding is a phenomenon which is understood differently according to different perspectives in theory and practice and which consequently raises questions about understanding. It is also a phenomenon that is sometimes regarded as a superficial endeavour that does not really contribute to the core activity of a business, which therefore also raises questions about providing persuasive arguments. The validity claims can serve as a litmus test for a strategy and provide the complementary knowledge necessary to make a corporate branding strategy succeed. And the validity claims may further serve as a guide to providing a strong argument that makes it more likely that a corporate branding strategy will succeed. Finally, the validity claims can connect the strategies conceived at the organisational level with the understandings at the individual level.

### **Indications for further research**

This project focused on a single case study. However, it might be interesting to make a comparative study of social integration across different sectors because this would reveal how differently companies rely on validity and social integration

among their employees. Is there, for instance, a pattern as to how validity is based across the various sectors?

It might also be interesting to extend the framework analysis to reactions among external stakeholders and consider how their impression of a company is based on validity. This would indicate possible discrepancies between internal and external sources of validity and provide implications to managers on how to create corporate branding strategies. It would probably also be worthwhile considering social integration outside the remit of branding. A study of how strategies more generally rely on social integration among members of an organisation might reveal some qualitative aspects complementary to the means–end thinking that influences some strategy thinkers. In fact, it could be especially interesting to develop the issue of social integration as a complementary subject for contemporary leadership and management thinking. Habermas’s theory based on a broad communicative perspective is particularly relevant for studying organisations because it provides suggestions that may explain contemporary challenges in organisations.

### **9.5 The final remark**

Is social integration necessary for corporate branding? Yes it is, because corporate branding builds on an assumption about agreement among the members of an organisation. This fact may be termed as the *counter factual assumption of corporate branding* to indicate that it is close to impossible to imagine a situation where every member of an organisation understands and supports a corporate branding effort in all its specifics and for the exact same reasons. Contemporary communications theory tells us that the members understand a branding effort according to their own meaningful contexts. However, the counter factual assumption may remind us of the ideal but also the inherent challenge of corporate

branding that can be approached through keeping a firm eye on the validity claims and the possibility of establishing social integration.

The project demonstrated that starting from a basic distinction between strategic and communicative action may offer insight into some of the conditions for realising a corporate branding strategy. The final remark is that focusing on social integration may complement strategies because branding starts from within. A corporate branding strategy must achieve social integration across the organisation if it is to give the employees the best chances of walking the talk.

## **10 Executive summary**

### **Is Social Integration Necessary for Corporate Branding?**

- A study of corporate branding strategies at Novo Nordisk

#### **Background**

This thesis is based on a theoretical and practical interest in strategy, management and communication. Contemporary organisations need supportive communication internally and externally to achieve their goals and visions. When organisations realise strategies, to a great extent the process and results depend on what is communicated and how. So, well-functioning communication is a major precondition for realising organisational goals. This argument was the central tenet of a book about strategic leadership communication a colleague and I wrote in 2005 (Bordum and Holm Hansen). This was an inquiry into how the power of strategic statements, such as vision, mission and values, is rooted in the underlying forces of communication and action among the stakeholders of an organisation. We demonstrated that the drivers of successful leadership are based on persuasive communication and action. This project continues this line of thought in a conceptual and empirical inquiry. It is motivated by an interest in basic knowledge about corporate branding as an integrative phenomenon.

Corporate branding is often understood as strategic activity that creates attention and value for a company. Strategic and managerial approaches to corporate branding dominate theory and practice, and suggest various prescriptions for success with a corporate branding project. Such approaches are often based on assumptions about control, with a certain sequence of steps automatically leading to a powerful brand. While there are many possible approaches to corporate branding, it seems that the question of integration is a salient issue that characterises the phenomenon in several ways. The particular focus here is

encouraged by questions and reflections about analysing and understanding corporate branding as an integrative activity using a pragmatic theory of communication.

The project starts with an empirical example: how the pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk launched a new branding strategy called Type Zero at a spectacular internal meeting with 300 top managers at the Hotel Hilton in Copenhagen Airport. The strategy was supported by substantial resources, branding material, concepts and considerable preparation to make an impressive launch. Yet the launch was not a success. It was particularly noticeable that nobody in the organisation except the corporate branding department supported the new brand strategy and concept.

### **Focus, perspective and research problem**

The story of the Type Zero strategy is an example of how corporate branding is often approached, not only in organisations, but also to a great extent in the literature on marketing. As in the Type Zero story, the literature primarily focuses on how corporate branding can contribute as a value-adding activity for customers and stakeholders. This externally oriented approach is often based on a linear and instrumental understanding and rationality which assumes that a set of known means will produce certain predetermined goals. Moreover, the internal assumption is often that employees will automatically understand and support a corporate branding effort. However, the Type Zero story shows clearly that this conventional approach does not always lead to the expected result.

In contrast to the conventional approach to corporate branding, this thesis focuses on the internal aspects of how strategies are integrated and anchored in

organisations so they achieve understanding and support among the members of the organisation.

The thesis discusses some of the established literature on corporate branding, integrated communications, corporate communications and marketing to illustrate how the literature currently treats knowledge about the internal side of corporate branding. The thesis argues that the literature does not specifically demonstrate how understanding of the strategic intentions in corporate branding can be achieved by the members of the organisation, despite the fact that this aspect is often emphasised as important. The scholars who do argue for the integration of a corporate branding strategy in an organisation primarily see this as a question of control and giving every kind of communication a management perspective. Against this background, the thesis explores the following research question:

*How is a corporate branding strategy integrated across an organisation like Novo Nordisk?*

### **The theoretical contribution**

The thesis focuses on a number of communicative assumptions that are central to realising strategies related to the managerial discipline of corporate branding. Knowledge from the field of sociology is combined with the management discipline corporate branding. The intention is specifically to explore how knowledge about social integration can assist corporate branding strategies.

A review of the contemporary literature on corporate branding focuses on how members of organisations are integrated in corporate branding processes. This inquiry demonstrates that it is often assumed that management can control these processes. In this thesis, such an approach is conceptualised as managerial

integration. In contrast to this approach, the literature also contains hints of perspectives that emphasise the importance of establishing a mutual understanding among the members of the organisation as a way of integrating corporate branding in an organisation. This approach is understood as related to the sociological concept of social integration.

Social integration is concerned with how mutual understanding and coordination between people become established according to the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas. The thesis qualifies the concept of social integration via an inquiry into some of the literature on corporate branding. In addition, an explanation of the concept of social integration is provided through a discussion of central parts of Habermas' theory on communicative action. The discussion is continuously related to empirical examples and to the assumptions in the branding literature. The central conclusion of the theoretical inquiry after discussing Habermas' insights is that communicative actions oriented towards reaching mutual understanding are inevitably needed for strategic and instrumental actions. So the project goes on to focus on how mutual understanding is decisive for strategic actions to lead to success. And this relationship leads to the following argument: Because social integration is based on mutual understanding, it is also a prerequisite for managerial integration.

From this it follows that mutual understanding among the members of an organisation is necessary for success in realising a corporate branding strategy. This argument is transformed into an analytical framework in which it is argued that four validity claims are central for the creation of understanding among people according to the theory on communicative action. These validity claims concern intelligibility, facts, norms and sincerity. Intelligibility concerns the meaning of statements that we can comprehend; facts refer to the truth of what is



said; norms involve how we justify social actions; and sincerity concerns the trustworthiness of what is said. So, the central theoretical contribution is an argument that successful corporate branding strategies are based on social integration in organisations.

### **The empirical contribution**

The analytical framework is used in an empirical inquiry about how three strategic corporate branding initiatives were integrated into the organisation of Novo Nordisk. To establish insight into the development of corporate branding in the company, the story is told about how Novo Nordisk initiated three different corporate branding initiatives to attract attention to the company within a relatively short period. The analytical framework is then used to inquire into the three strategic initiatives in some detail with a focus on how each initiative represented the company on the one hand and, on the other hand, how the members of the organisation reacted to these representations. In other words, each official representation in strategic branding material is analysed and related to the reactions to the material among the members of the organisation. Differences and similarities between representations and reactions make it possible to assess the extent to which each strategic branding initiative was socially integrated.

Analysis indicates that social integration is achieved when there is accordance between representations and reactions, which means that the validity claims are satisfied both in the official material and in the reactions from the members of the organisation. The analysis indicates that on particular corporate branding initiative in the US, called Changing the Course of Diabetes, was based on a high degree of equivalence between representations and reactions, which made it possible for social integration to be achieved. However, because this initiative was only locally

anchored in the US, a challenge emerged about obtaining recognition from the Danish headquarters.

At almost the same time, the corporate branding department at the Danish headquarters launched the Type Zero initiative across the whole organisation. This initiative was a failure and came to be challenged by 300 top managers of the company. The analysis demonstrates that the Type Zero initiative could not achieve social integration because the validity claims were not satisfied even by the official material.

The Type Zero failure led to the development of a new and alternative initiative at headquarters called Changing Diabetes. This initiative had several features with regard to argumentation and validity claims in common with the US initiative called Changing the Course of Diabetes. The analysis demonstrates that the Changing Diabetes initiative could be socially integrated over time. The analysis also showed that both the US initiative, Changing the Course of Diabetes, and the headquarters initiative, Changing Diabetes, obtained a degree of mutual understanding and coordination. The similarities between the two initiatives meant the US initiative eventually achieved recognition at headquarters.

It is unusual for a company to initiate more than one corporate branding initiative almost simultaneously because corporate branding efforts normally involve the whole company. But, taken together, all three initiatives formed part of the process that has influenced and developed Novo Nordisk's branding activities into what they are today.

## **Conclusion**

The theoretical discussions and empirical inquiry indicated that social integration is necessary to achieve the success of corporate branding strategies. A focus on social integration indicates the central assumptions and processes that make it possible for strategies to succeed. The case study supports this conclusion because Novo Nordisk eventually succeeded when a greater degree of social integration was achieved. The conclusions of the thesis can complement and contribute to both theoretical and practical aspects of corporate branding. The central conclusion is therefore that a successful corporate branding strategy requires social integration.



## 11 Danish summary

### Er social integration nødvendig for corporate branding?

- Et casestudie af corporate branding-strategier hos Novo Nordisk

#### Baggrund

Baggrunden for denne afhandling er en teoretisk og praktisk interesse i strategi, ledelse og kommunikation. Nutidens virksomheder og organisationer er afhængige af velfungerende kommunikation både internt og eksternt for at kunne nå deres mål og visioner. Når organisationer skal realisere deres strategier, afhænger processen og resultaterne i høj grad af hvad der kommunikeres og hvordan. Velfungerende kommunikation er derfor både et fundament og en forudsætning for at ledelsen kommer sikkert i mål med organisationens visioner og strategier. Dette skrev lektor Anders Bordum og jeg om i bogen ”Strategisk ledelseskommunikation” fra 2005. Bogen argumenterer teoretisk og praktisk for en række krav som man kan stille til organisationers og virksomheders ledelseskommunikation for at den er overbevisende. Denne afhandling bygger videre på tankegangen om kommunikations betydning for moderne ledelsesdiscipliner.

Indledningsvist demonstreres, gennem et empirisk eksempel, hvordan medicinalvirksomheden Novo Nordisk lancerede en ny corporate brandingstrategi kaldet Type Zero på et stort internt møde for 300 topledere i virksomheden på Hotel Hilton ved Københavns Lufthavn. Som forberedelse var der investeret betydelige ressourcer i konceptudvikling, materiale, tests og rammerne for en spektakulær lancering. Hilton var pyntet med brandingmateriale overalt. Lanceringen forløb dog ikke som forventet selvom den var nøje forberedt. Det var særligt bemærkelsesværdigt og overraskende at ingen i organisationen, bortset fra

lederne og medarbejderne i afdelingen for corporate branding støttede op om strategien og det nye brandkoncept.

### **Fokus, perspektiv og forskningsproblem**

Historien om Type Zero-strategien er et godt eksempel på hvordan corporate branding ofte gribes an, ikke bare i virksomheder, men i høj grad også i den omfattende og ofte marketingprægede litteratur inden for området. Ligesom i tilfældet med Type Zero strategien, fokuserer litteraturen hovedsageligt hvordan corporate branding kan benyttes som et værdiskabende aktiv over for eksterne interessenter som fx kunder og samarbejdspartnere. I tilknytning til den eksterne orientering bygger brandingstrategier sædvanligvis også på en lineær og instrumentel rationalitetsforståelse hvor givne midler forventes at frembringe forudbestemte mål. Internt forudsættes som regel at medarbejderne automatisk slutter op om og forstår ledelsens corporate brandingbestræbelser. Type Zero-historien viste dog at denne konventionelle forståelse af hvordan corporate brandingprocesser gennemføres ikke altid fører til det forventede resultat.

I modsætning til den konventionelle forståelse af corporate branding fokuserer afhandlingen på de interne organisatoriske aspekter af hvordan strategier kan integreres og forankres således, at de opnår opbakning og forståelse blandt ledere og medarbejdere. En undersøgelse og diskussion af udvalgte dele af den etablerede litteratur om corporate branding, integreret kommunikation, corporate communications og marketing viser at der findes viden om de interne organisatoriske aspekter af corporate branding, men ikke specifikt om hvordan forståelse skabes mellem ledelsens strategier og medarbejderne selvom mange forfattere fremhæver disse som vigtige. Enkelte forfattere har nogle bud på hvordan en corporate brandingstrategi integreres blandt medarbejderne i organisationer. Men litteraturen fokuserer hovedsageligt på integration som et

spørgsmål om hvordan det er muligt at kontrollere og underordne alle andre kommunikationsformer under et ledelsesperspektiv. På denne baggrund undersøger afhandlingen forskningsspørgsmålet:

*Hvordan integreres en corporate brandingstrategi på tværs en organisation som Novo Nordisk?*

### **Det teoretiske bidrag**

Afhandlingen fokuserer på en række grundlæggende kommunikative forudsætninger for at realisere strategier i forbindelse med ledelsesdisciplinen corporate branding. Den kombinerer på utraditionel vis viden fra sociologiens felt med ledelsesdisciplinen corporate branding. Intentionen er specifikt at undersøge hvordan viden om social integration kan komplementere corporate brandingstrategier.

Gennem en undersøgelse af nutidig litteratur om corporate branding stilles der skarpt på hvordan medarbejderne integreres i corporate brandingprocesser. Undersøgelsen viser at det ofte forudsættes at ledelsen kan styre og kontrollere brandingprocesser blandt medarbejderne i organisationer. Denne forståelse konceptualiseres i projektet i et samlet begreb om ledelsesmæssig integration. I modsætning til denne tilgang findes der også i litteraturen enkelte tegn på en alternativ tilgang som vægter gensidig forståelse blandt medarbejderne som væsentlig for at integrere corporate branding i organisationen. Denne forståelse ses som relateret til det sociologiske begreb om social integration.

Det sociologiske begreb *social integration* handler om hvordan der skabes gensidig forståelse og koordination mellem mennesker ifølge den tyske sociolog og filosof Jürgen Habermas. Afhandlingen kvalificerer begrebet social integration

gennem en behandling af udvalgte dele af corporate brandinglitteraturen. Derudover redegøres selvstændigt for social integration gennem en diskussion af centrale dele af Habermas' teori om den kommunikative handlen. Fremstillingen relateres løbende til empiriske eksempler og en analyse af forudsætningerne for corporate branding. De teoretiske diskussioner konkluderer at forståelsesorienterede kommunikative handlinger er en forudsætning for strategiske og instrumentelle handlinger. Denne forudsætning forfølges gennem afhandlingen med et fokus på hvordan gensidig forståelse og koordination af handlinger er afgørende for at primære førend strategiske handlinger fører til succes. Denne sammenhæng viser endvidere, at eftersom social integration bygger på gensidig forståelse, er social integration netop også en forudsætning for ledelsesmæssig integration.

I forhold til afhandlingens fokus argumenteres der således for, at gensidig forståelse i forbindelse med realiseringen af en corporate brandingstrategi mellem medarbejderne antages at være en nødvendig forudsætning for dens succes. Denne indsigt oversættes til en analyseramme hvor fire uomgængelige gyldighedskrav, som grundlag for at skabe forståelse, indføres som analysevariable i overensstemmelse med teorien om den kommunikative handlen. Disse fire gyldighedskrav vedrører begribe<sup>24</sup>, fakta, normer og oprigtigheden af kommunikation og aktiviteter. Begribe handler om meningsfulde sproglige ytringer, fakta handler om hvorvidt det kommunikerede er sandt, normer handler om hvorvidt at det kommunikerede er rigtigt, og oprigtighed handler om sandfærdigheden af det kommunikerede. Afhandlingens centrale teoretiske bidrag er dermed et argument for at succesfulde corporate brandingstrategier bygger på

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<sup>24</sup> Begribe står her for basal forståelse for ord. Ordet begribe bruges i stedet for forståelse, da forståelse vedrører alle fire gyldighedskrav.



social integration internt i organisationer og derfor også en række tilknyttede væsentlige kommunikative forudsætninger.

### **Det empiriske bidrag**

Analyserammen anvendes derefter i en empirisk undersøgelse af hvordan tre strategiske corporate brandinginitiativer kunne integreres socialt i Novo Nordisks organisation. Med henblik på at skabe en forståelse for udviklingen af corporate branding hos Novo Nordisk fortælles kort hvordan virksomheden inden for en relativt kort periode igangsatte tre forskellige strategiske corporate brandinginitiativer for at skabe opmærksomhed om virksomheden. Analyserammen anvendes til at undersøge de tre strategiske initiativer nærmere og fokuserer dels på hvordan initiativerne repræsenterede virksomheden og dels på hvordan medarbejdere og ledere reagerede på dem. Det vil sige at officiel repræsentation i form af strategisk corporate brandingkommunikation analyseres og sammenholdes med reaktionerne blandt organisationens medlemmer. Sammenfald eller forskel mellem repræsentation og reaktioner danner baggrund for en vurdering af i hvilken udstrækning de enkelte corporate brandinginitiativer kan integreres socialt.

Analysen viser at der skal være en overensstemmelse mellem repræsentation og reaktioner, dvs. at analyserammens gyldighedskrav i høj grad skal være opfyldt både i det officielle corporate brandingmateriale og blandt organisationens medlemmer førend social integration kan opnås. Specifikt viser undersøgelsen hvordan et amerikansk corporate brandinginitiativ, kaldet Changing the Course of Diabetes, var baseret på høj overensstemmelse mellem repræsentation og reaktionerne blandt medarbejderne hvilket dermed indebar at social integration kunne opnås. Dog var dette initiativ lokalt forankret i USA hvorfor der opstod en udfordring i forbindelse med anerkendelse i det danske hovedkvarter. Omtrent

samtidig havde corporate brandingafdelingen i det danske hovedkvarter også udviklet et corporate brandinginitiativ, det førnævnte Type Zero-initiativ, der skulle lanceres i hele organisationen. Dette initiativ blev dog, som nævnt, udfordret og afvist ved lanceringen på Hotel Hilton blandt nogle af de 300 tilstedeværende topledere. Analysen viser at dette initiativ netop ikke kunne integreres socialt fordi gyldighedskravene ikke var opfyldt, end ikke i det officielle materiale.

På baggrund af den fejlslagne Type Zero- strategi udvikledes et nyt og alternativt initiativ i hovedkvarteret kaldet Changing Diabetes. Dette strategiske initiativ havde mange fællestræk med det amerikanske initiativ både hvad angår argumentation og gyldighed. Analysen viste at det strategiske Changing Diabetes-initiativ med tiden kunne integreres socialt. Analysen viste også at det amerikanske initiativ, Changing the Course of Diabetes, og hovedkvarterets initiativ, Changing Diabetes, opnåede en grad af gensidig forståelse og koordination. De mange fællestræk mellem de to initiativer betød at det amerikanske initiativ med tiden opnåede anerkendelse i hovedkvarteret. Det er udsædvanligt at en virksomhed igangsætter flere corporate brandinginitiativer på næsten samme tid da corporate brandingstrategier normalt omfatter hele virksomheden. Samlet set har de tre initiativer dog været med til at udvikle Novo Nordisks corporate brandingaktiviteter til det de er i dag.

## **Konklusion**

De teoretiske diskussioner og de empiriske undersøgelser viste at social integration er nødvendig for at corporate brandingstrategier opnår succes. Et fokus på social integration stiller skarpt på de centrale forudsætninger og processer som gør at corporate brandingstrategier kan lykkes. Casestudiet underbygger denne konklusion fordi initiativerne først lykkedes da der blev nået en stor grad af social

integration. Afhandlingens konklusioner kan være et væsentligt komplementært bidrag til både de praktiske og teoretiske tilgange til corporate brandingstrategier. Hovedkonklusionen er dermed at social integration er en forudsætning for en succesfuld corporate brandingstrategi.



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## 13 Appendices

### 13.1 Novo Nordisk's Vision

#### Our Vision

Our vision paints a picture of what Novo Nordisk wants to achieve as a company - our place in the market and our overall goals in relation to patients, society and employees.

#### **We will be the world's leading diabetes care company**

Our aspiration is to defeat diabetes by finding better methods of diabetes prevention, detection and treatment.

We will work actively to promote collaboration between all parties in the healthcare system in order to achieve our common goals.

#### **We will offer products and services in other areas where we can make a difference**

Our research will lead to the discovery of new, innovative products also outside diabetes.

We will develop and market such products ourselves whenever we can do it as well as or better than others.

#### **We will achieve competitive business results**

Our focus is our strength.

We will stay independent and form alliances whenever they serve our business purpose and the cause we stand for.

#### **A job here is never just a job**

We are committed to being there for our customers whenever they need us.

We will be innovative and effective in everything we do.

We will attract and retain the best people by making our company a challenging place to work.

## **Our values are expressed in all our actions**

Decency is what counts.

Every day we strive to find the right balance between compassion and competitiveness, the short and the long term, self and commitment to colleagues and society, work and family life.

## **Our history tells us, it can be done**

Source: Novonordisk.com (2006)

## 13.2 Novo Nordisk Way of Management

### Novo Nordisk Way of Management

#### The charter

How we act is described in the charter. The charter describes our values, commitments and fundamentals – our basic management principles. Novo Nordisk has adopted the Charter for companies in the Novo Group – we commit ourselves to act inside this framework.

#### Company characteristics in the Novo Group

Present as well as future companies in the Novo Group must demonstrate willingness, ability and resolve to meet the following six criteria:

- Company products and services make a significant difference in improving the way people live and work.
- The company is perceived to be the innovator – in technology, in products, in services and/or in market approach.
- Company activities, practices and deliverables are perceived to be economically viable, environmentally sound and socially fair.
- The company is among the best in its business and a challenging place to work.
- Living the Novo values and business conduct principles as defined in the Novo Way of Management.
- Delivering competitive financial performance.

#### Values

- **Accountable**  
Each of us shall be accountable – to the company, ourselves and society – for the quality of our efforts, for contributing to our goals and for developing our culture and shared values.
- **Ambitious**  
We shall set the highest standard in everything we do and reach challenging goals.
- **Responsible**  
We shall conduct our business in a socially and environmentally responsible way and contribute to the enrichment of the communities in which we operate.

- **Engaged with stakeholders**

We shall seek an active dialogue with our stakeholders to help us develop and strengthen our businesses.

- **Open and honest**

Our business practices shall be open and honest to protect the integrity of the Novo Group companies and of each employee.

- **Ready for change**

We must foresee change and use it to our advantage.

Innovation is key to our business and therefore we will encourage a learning culture for the continuous development and improved employability of our people.

## **Commitments**

### **Financial responsibility**

We will work to continuously improve our financial performance by setting high objectives for growth and value creation and deliver competitive performance in these areas. We will maintain an open dialogue with our stakeholders and comply with international reporting standards.

### **Environmental responsibility**

We will work to continuously improve our environmental performance by setting high objectives and integrating environmental and bioethical considerations into our daily business. We will maintain an open dialogue with our stakeholders and report annually on our environmental performance.

- We subscribe to the International Chamber of Commerce's Charter for Sustainable Development.
- We support the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

### **Social responsibility**

We will work to continuously improve our social performance by setting high objectives and integrating social, human rights and health & safety considerations into our daily business. We will maintain an open dialogue with our stakeholders and report annually on our social performance.

- We support the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **Fundamentals**

1. Each unit must share and use better practices.
  2. Each unit must have a clear definition of where accountabilities and decision powers reside.
  3. Each unit must have an action plan to ensure improvement of its business performance and working climate.
  4. Every team and employee must have updated business and competency targets and receive timely feedback on performance against these targets.
  5. Each unit must have an action plan to ensure the development of teams and individuals based on business requirements and employee input.
  6. Every manager must establish and maintain procedures in the unit for living up to relevant laws, regulations, and group commitments.
  7. Each unit and every employee must know how they create value for their customers.
  8. Every manager requiring reporting from others must explain the actual use of the reports and the added value.
  9. Every manager must continuously make it easier for the employees to liberate energy for customer related issues.
  10. Every manager and unit must actively support cross-unit projects and working relationships of relevance to the business.
  11. Everyone must continuously improve the quality of their work.\*
- \* Novo Nordisk specific

Source: Novonordisk.com (2006)





### 13.3 Key products

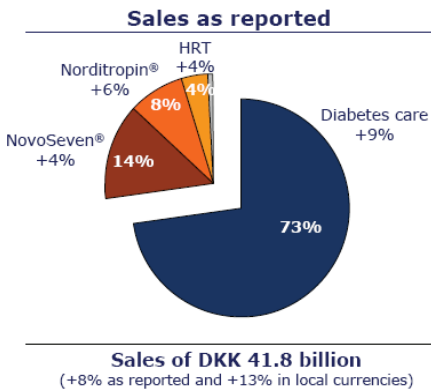
Investor presentation

Full year 2007

Slide no 12

## Key products continue to drive growth

– full year 2007



Growth analysis		
Local currencies	Growth	Share of growth
Modern insulins	35%	76%
Human insulins	-3%	-8%
Insulin-related sales	13%	4%
OAD	14%	5%
Diabetes care	14%	78%
NovoSeven®	10%	11%
Norditropin®	11%	7%
HRT	9%	3%
Biopharmaceuticals	10%	22%

changing diabetes



Source: Novo Nordisk Investor presentation 2007, slide 12.



### **13.4 Empirical material included in the analyses**

Below find an overview of the various empirical materials that were collected and produced during the case study as both background material for the case story and the detailed analyses of the three branding initiatives.

#### **Interviews and conversations**

Statements from 52 members of the organisation are included in the project. The reactions are based on 28 interviews and 24 comments from across the organisation. The people are anonymous because personal identification serves no purpose for this inquiry. However, some of the people may be recognised because there only is one position in the company that holds their title as for example the CEO. People that may be recognised are not cited for any confidential quotes.

#### **Top management**

- CEO (conversations at several occasions) during October 2003 – January 2007
- Senior executive vice-president of corporate relations (interview and several conversations ) during October 2003 – January 2006
- Chairman of Board of Directors (discussion with the chairman at several occasions, including mail correspondences, meetings at his office) during October 2003 – January 2007.

#### **Functions**

Below a systematic overview of those members of the organisation that are included in the analyses. The sample of interviews and comments are selected so equal numbers across functions and affiliates are included for the purpose of making it probable that the study reflected interviews and comments across the organisation and not only at headquarters from where it was primarily conducted.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Employees</b>
<b>Corporate Branding</b>	Vice-president Manager 1, 2	Employee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<b>Corporate communications</b>	Vice-president Manager 1, 2	Employee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<b>International Marketing</b>	Senior vice-president Vice-president Manager 1, 2	Employee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<b>People and Organisation (P&amp;O)</b>	Manager 1, 2	Employee 1, 2, 3
<b>Investor Relations (IR)</b>	Vice-president	Employee 1, 2, 3

**Affiliates**

<b>US</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>China</b>
Vice-president	General Manager	General Manager	General Manager
Manager 1, 2	Manager 1, 2	Manager 1, 2	Manager 1, 2
Employee 1, 2	Employee 1, 2	Employee 1, 2	Employee 1, 2

**Therapy area NovoSeven:**

- Manager 1, 2
- Employee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

## **Meetings**

- Corporate branding department meeting: Away day in Copenhagen 2102 2005
- Lars Live 2004, 2005, 2006 Bagsværd.
- *Lunch and Learn* meetings in corporate communications December 2004
- People and organisation (theme corporate branding)
- Annual general meeting March 2004, March 2005, March 2006
- IM February, 2006 Rome
- IM February 2005 Copenhagen
- ISMM March 2005 Copenhagen
- Weekly meetings in the corporate branding function (November 2004 – January 2006)
- Weekly meetings in the corporate communication function (October 2003 – October 2004)

## **Videos**

- History DVD
- NovoSeven DVD
- IM 2004 Video
- IM 2005 Launching Type Zero Video
- IM 2006 Video

## **Brochures**

- Changing the Course of Diabetes brochure, 2004
- Type Zero brochure 1, 2005
- Type Zero brochure 2, 2005
- Type Zero document, 2005
- Changing Diabetes brochure 1, 2005
- Changing Diabetes brochure 2, 2005

## **Documents and reports etc.**

- Internal memo 3001 2004
- Internal memo 2404 2004
- Internal memo 2301 2005
- Memo status letter to board of directors about corporate branding (5 august 2005)
- Mail to top managers 1409 2005
- Brand Strategy Report 2002
- Brand Letter 2005
- IM 2005 survey evaluation of the meeting, Relation Monitor.
- CVI Report 2002
- Manuscripts of speech 1 from US held on 26 February 2004
- Manuscripts of speech 2 from US held on 26 February 2004
- Manuscripts of speech 3 from US held on 26 February 2004
- Manuscripts of speech 4 from US held on 26 February 2004
- Manuscripts of speech 5 from US held on 26 February 2004
- Novo Nordisk History 2004
- Novo Nordisk Branding Initiative 2004
- Internal memo October 2003 from the US to corporate brand management

## **Intranet and Internet**

- Screen dump: Changing Diabetes intranet

## **Internal magazine**

- People Magazine 03 2005: Editorial p. 2.
- People Magazine 03 2005: Building the brand p. 5-7.

## **Presentations**

- Type Zero strategy and concept (01 2005)
- Type Zero Roll Out Plan (01 2005)

- Corporate branding presentation to board of directors (10 august 2005)
- CEO presentation IM 2005 (01 2005)
- Vice-president presentation (01 2005)
- Changing Diabetes presentation second quarterly meeting (08 2005)

### **Strategic documents from Stakeholder Relations**

- Stakeholder Relations' Strategic Plan 2004-05 Clarity, direction and structure (March 2004)
- Corporate Stakeholder Relations Business Plan 2005-6. People, Responsibility and Reputation – Creating leadership, innovation and trust (December 2004)
- Corporate Stakeholder relations Business plan 2006-07. People, Responsibility and Reputation. Tomorrow's leadership Capability (October 2005)

### **Strategic corporate branding documents**

- Corporate Communications Business Plan 2003
- Revitalising the Novo Nordisk corporate brand – Creating competitive advantage on the global diabetes market (January 2005)
- Driving global Diabetes Leadership for Novo Nordisk – Aspiration based planning strategy for corporate branding: 2006 – 2011 (August 2005)
- Corporate Stakeholder relations Business Plan 2006-07 (October 2005)
- Corporate Stakeholder relations Business Plan 2005-06 (December 2004)
- Stakeholder Relations' Strategic Plan 2004-05 (March 2004)
- Mid-term review of Corporate Branding (30 June 2005)

### **Folder**

- Corporate Communications – working with you to build the reputation of Novo Nordisk

### **Other**

- Berlingske Nyhedsmagasin May 2003





### 13.5 Interview guide

Semi structured interview guide basic
➤ <i>Introduce the purpose of the interview and my project corporate branding and social integration. Ask whether it is possible record the interview?</i>
1. <i>Could you please introduce yourself, your job and area of responsibility?</i>
2. <i>How have you heard of the new corporate branding strategy/initiative?</i>
3. <i>How would you describe the Novo Nordisk corporate brand?</i>
4. <i>What is corporate branding to you?</i>
5. <i>How does corporate branding at Novo Nordisk make a difference for the organisation and your daily activities?</i>
6. <i>Do you use the corporate branding in your job activities? If so, why and how? If not, why?</i>
7. <i>What do you think about the way that the corporate brand is developed, introduced and implemented to the organisation?</i>
8. <i>Is the corporate branding effort based on facts about Novo Nordisk?</i>
9. <i>Is the corporate branding effort based on a values and norms that stands for a well-known picture of Novo Nordisk?</i>
10. <i>Is the corporate branding effort sincere and truthful according to your perception of Novo Nordisk?</i>
11. <i>Who is responsible for the Novo Nordisk corporate brand?</i>
12. <i>Do you fully understand the brand terminology and what a corporate brand is?</i>
13. <i>Thank you for your time and willingness to answer my question! Could you possibly identify any other interviewees that might have some interesting point about corporate branding that may either supplement or contrast your descriptions and explanations? If you have anything to add after the interview in the next couple of days, please feel free to contact me.</i>

The purpose of the interviews is generally to collect and produce empirical statements from members across the organisation that expresses reactions to illustrate how the corporate branding activities and initiatives are integrated in the organisation with a focus on validity. A number of interviews are undertaken with employees and managers in the organisation according to the structure outlined in the chapter on method. The guide below explains some of my reflections about the questions and illustrates how the framework and additional interpretive repertoire are reflected in the questions.

Semi structured interview guide explained
<p>➤ <i>Introduce the purpose of the interview and my project corporate branding and social integration.</i></p> <p>The purpose is to establish a trustworthy situation and atmosphere where I am not considered as the expert or a representative for corporate brand management or even as a consultant who aims to reinforce the ongoing corporate branding activities in the organisation. The interview may begin with small talk about current things going on in the organisation, the weather or what immediately seems appropriate to break the ice. After that I will introduce the purpose of the interview in a concrete and non abstract way relative to my impression and prior experience of the interviewees pre-understanding of corporate branding. The interviewee is supposed to consider me as open to various understandings of corporate branding. I may if necessary, depending on the situation, underline, that I am not a spy reporting to management (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz 2000:133) and that the interview is exclusively for the purpose of research based at Copenhagen Business School. The purpose is to make the interviewee feel comfortable and in a situation where it is possible to speak openly about the subjects in the questions. I may if necessary use the “fly on the wall” metaphor or try to explain my research</p>

as an anthropologist studying people in an organisation that are introduced to a new phenomenon where my purpose is to register how different people understand corporate branding. I will inform the interviewee about being anonymous and getting the possibility to read my transcription of the interview for feed back.

➤ *Ask whether it is possible record the interview?*

Recording serves the purpose of acquiring, securing and registering a first hand impression of the answers. It further makes it easier to be present in the interview situation without writing all the time. Recording may of course put some restrictions on the interviewee speaking openly. I will therefore ask about whether the interviewees have any additional comments when the recorder is stopped. If the interviewee prefers speak without recording, I will ask whether it is possible to make some hand written notes.

➤ *Some additional things to remember:*

Conduct the interview in a calm room without disturbance, so the situation is a focused as possible.

I must remember to briefly resume what is said, whenever it seems appropriate during the interview, to signal to the interviewee how I understand the answers.

The sequences of the questions are not important, but it is important to cover the issues in the guide. If the interviewee suddenly jumps and anticipates issues in my other questions, then I will continue or return to the order of question later.

### **Semi structured interview guide explained (continued)**

*1. Could you please introduce yourself, your job and area of responsibility?*

The question focuses on the interviewee and his/her background, job, responsibility and situation in the organisation. The purpose of the question is to open up the interviewee and let him/her talk about the situation that interviewee knows very well. It not all the information that an interviewee may say that are relevant for further analysis, as the analysis primarily focuses on significant

statement as reaction to corporate branding. I may eventually probe about how long the interviewee has been with Novo Nordisk and in the present job situation.

### **Semi structured interview guide explained (continued)**

#### *2. How have you heard of the new corporate branding strategy/initiative?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of how internal communications and activities have integrated the brand among its members. The first question about corporate branding should let interviewee tell about how he/she has taken notice of the brand. If the interviewee does not mention the used channels, such as managements meetings, the intranet or the launch, then probe about these. The question should also indicate whether the interviewee by own accord and interest became informed about the brand or by obligatory management communication. If necessary, I will probe about this additional aspect by posing questions like: *Did you hear about corporate branding as a part of mandatory management information?; Did you hear about corporate branding as a part of your own interest in new matters on the company agenda?*

#### *3. How would you describe the Novo Nordisk corporate brand?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of the central characteristics of the brand. If the answer is very concrete, then probe about the abstract sides of the brand and vice versa.

#### *4. What is corporate branding to you?*

The purpose of the questions is get an indication of what the interviewee understands as the corporate brand more generally. An indication of an understanding may also indicate the possible perspective and assumptions held by the interviewee. I may probe about positive and negative sides of corporate branding as well as examples of other brands than the Novo Nordisk brand to get some indications of what corporate branding is. The answers may also give an indication about which validity claims that are important to the interviewee.

### **Semi structured interview guide explained (continued)**

*5. How does corporate branding at Novo Nordisk make a difference for the organisation and your daily activities?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of how corporate branding matters and possibly contributes with meaning and value at the individual and organisational level. If the answer is abstract, I will probe for concrete examples and vice versa. If the interviewee finds the question hard to answer, then I will give some examples about how other brands, for instance Virgin, makes a difference for the members of an organisation.

*6. Do you use the corporate branding in your job activities? If so, why and how? If not, why?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of how integrated the brand is among members of the organisation and the arguments for using or not using it. The answers may illustrate the degree of relevance of the corporate brand to the member of the organisation.

*7. What do you think about the way that the corporate brand is developed, introduced and implemented to the organisation?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of how the members of the organisation consider corporate brand management and the related processes in the organisation. If necessary, I will probe about the specific phases in corporate branding process to get an indication of what the interviewee sees as critical. If the interviewee finds it difficult to answer the question, I may supply some information about the corporate branding processes.

*8. Is the corporate branding effort based on facts about Novo Nordisk?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of the agreement or disagreement concerning the facts underpinning the corporate branding effort. I may additionally probe about the difference in product portfolio and the single

minded focus on diabetes, to get an indication of the interviewee's perspective on NovoSeven as excluded from the branding effort.

**Semi structured interview guide explained (continued)**

*9. Is the corporate branding effort based on a values and norms that stands for a well-known picture of Novo Nordisk?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of whether the interviewee recognises that the brand reflects the norms and values of the company. If not, then I will probe about what is missing to get an indication of such aspects. Depending on these aspects, I will ask for clarification and elaboration. If yes, then probe about what values and norms the brand especially expresses.

*10. Is the corporate branding effort sincere and truthful according to your perception of Novo Nordisk?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of whether the interviewee finds the brand in accordance with the interviewee's perception of the company. If so, probe about the three most important aspects about the brand that underpins such a belief. If not, probe about the three most important aspects that cause such a disagreement.

*11. Who is responsible for the Novo Nordisk corporate brand?*

The purpose of the questions is to get an indication of where the responsibility of the brand resides according the interviewee. The question may indicate the role and responsibility between management and employees in a corporate branding process. If the responsibility is predominantly located to one of the parties, the probe about the responsibility of the other?

*12. Do you fully understand the brand terminology and what a corporate brand is at Novo Nordisk?*

The purpose of the question is to get an indication of the intelligibility of the corporate branding terminology used at Novo Nordisk. If the respondent fully

understands the meaning of branding terminology, then probe about some of the terms.

**Semi structured interview guide explained (continued)**

*13.Thank you for your time and willingness to answer my question! Could you possibly identify any other interviewees that might have some interesting point about corporate branding that may either supplement or contrast your descriptions and explanations? If you have anything to add after the interview in the next couple of days, please feel free to contact me.*

These questions end the interview by asking about other interviewees that could be relevant to interview in what is called the snowball method of finding interviewees.

After the interview: make a note based on the answers concerning the organisational, ethical and political aspects that may have influence the answers (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz 2000:132).





## 13.6 Summary of survey: Selected reactions to Type Zero at IM 2005



### Comments on overall

#### General comment: IM2005

C1 Very much one way communications from ExecMann [executive management]

C2 Not much news: Disappointing section re. corporate branding  
But well organised and executed

C3 The branding initiative is energizing - shows that we start 'believing' that we're leaders. The type-zero concept is questionable, but look forward to the results of the pilots.

C4 Very nice IM, excellent planning and flow. The branding went over board, I did not like the scary interferences in my room, and other hotel guests must have been bothered by the huge banner, elevator floor mat, etc.



### Comments on Organisation and services

#### Comments: Organisation and services

C5 Brand : The Type Zero concept does not work, the many hints on type were confusing and not integrated in the rationale for the type Zero concept

C6 Brand launch activities were quite unclear, and I guess that many were left wondering what to do now. The issue is highly relevant to the IM audience, but the optimal outcome would have required a more worked through approach. This was too much of a "media bureau" presentation..

### Comments: Sessions

C7 The session on Corporate Brand was somewhat premature (?). The presentation gave me the perception that it was ready to use and only needed some fine tuning, but my conclusion is that it needs to be developed further. My feeling is that the test markets hadn't have a critical mindset, but merely accepted the name, Type Zero.

C8 In the session on Diabetes comments and questions from the audience could have been better received.

C9 The branding session had many good elements to it, but was not sufficiently crisp. The platform seems right and was well thought out - however it also seemed like old wine on new bottles, which were not quite ready yet.

C 10 Do not sell type zero. If you do not know why, what, when, I think the underlying idea is good but you do not seem to be ready to present it yet!

Otherwise the best IM I have attended

C 11 I found the corporate branding excellent, but doubt the idea of "type zero". That went too far.

C 12 Re. corporate branding, we need to have much more discussion to meet a mutual agreement.

C 13 The strategic intent of the Corporate Brand is very good. The notion of Type Zero, however, will be difficult to communicate.

C 14 Try not to be defensive when you get feed back (you asked for it), suggestions or are challenged on the strategic position. You might have thought every step over, but omnipotency is a ability only a few given.

C 15 New corporate branding using Type Zero should have been thoroughly researched before IM, and the results from this research should have been presented - positives and negatives.

C 16 - interaction with audience was very good.

- Corporate brand: "Type Zero" needs to be re-evaluated taking into consideration the cultural differences and interpretation of the Zero statement.

C 17 Corporate brand was interesting but "early days".

C 18 Corporate branding should only be launched when ready - this was not the case, LKi was not sure about the Name of the campagne "Type 0" and indicated that this can be changed if a better name comes up. !!!!

C 18 Concerning the corporate branding I was am in strong disagreement with the Type Zero concept. I do not think that it solves the problem and it could potentially send the wrong message. I discussed it a lot with my affiliate colleagues afterwards and did not find any who believe in the approach. The rest of the Corporate brand presentation fine but please do not waste a lot of money on Type zero!

C 19 Type Zero needs further research, negative term and another type for more stereotyping!!

Not to mention the medical confusion, introducing a new medically not proven type, may create.

C 20 LKi's brand presentation and argumentation was excellent

C 21 The Type Zero presentation was disastrous. The idea of taking the stigmatization out of diabetes is totally OK and very relevant, but the the Type Zero concept as presented by LKi only portrayed the usual incredibility from her organisation: totally useless and directly harmful to the business of NN. The opening remarks from LRS in this session was as usual well balanced and carried high credibility.

C 22 - When you have an important project like corporate branding launched, you should have used people better. The workshop after "corporate brand" session did not even ask the question of peoples ideas or perception of the new platform....andthe workshop was INCREDIBLY poorly facilitated.

C 23 Branding and Type Zero the only real hiccup

Otherwise good dialogue and very energized interaction

C 24 Type Zero is a non-starter, but "brand house" is a real winner, good work!

C 25 Regarding corporate brand, this is very good and relevant. However please do not

get tangled up in the type zero concept and don't throw a lot of money into that, it might simply cause us lack of focus and confusion.

I figure diabetics simply wants to go on with their lives with as little hassle as possible, and that we can help with by offering good products and treatment.

So please don't invent a stereotype.

C 26 Sorry, folks: The branding initiative did not live up to the usual Novo Nordisk professional standard. Compared to the process when the Apis bull

was updated, the Type Zero initiative seems insufficiently thought out. The negative connotations of "zero" are obvious and must be avoided - it also seems impudent of NN to impose such a label on our diabetic patients. Finally, the wrist-band is a poor imitation of an original grand idea.

C 27 I find the ideas behind the branding campaign to be absolutely correct - spot on! However if at all possible I strongly suggest that you do a bottom up process in terms of getting the positioning tight and not a top-down.

C 28 The type zero concept did not seem to be well prepared. Still, quite mysterious what exactly to do in line of business. LRS did not seem to support to type zero concept.

C 29 The type Zero mindset must be thoroughly evaluated before being rolled-out. A concept of lateral thinking in diabetes is extremely relevant but the linguistic issue related to the concept should be further tested with specialists in languages

C 30 It is not smart to launch a new corporate brand with a campaign that will annoy many doctors and patients (type Zero)

C 31 Regarding to Type Zero it is very important how to communicate with customer.

C 32 In diabetes we have one major activity during 2005 and 2006, launch of Levemir. Very limited information on how we have launched the product so far and no useful information on expected roll-out

The proposed corporate branding is a great concept. However, either the concept should have been presented in a more finalized form or the opportunity should have been taken to let participants work more on how the concept fits different cultures and how actually to implement the concept in our promotion of Novo Nordisk and products. This would also have been an opportunity to develop ideas to substitute "Type Zero".

Source: Novo Nordisk internal survey Relation Monitor (2005)

### 13.7 Speech 5, manuscript from the launch in the USA

Speech five:

*Employees return from breakouts to general session for employee-specific program debut and takeaways. May want to make reference to lunch (“food is coming shortly!”) – to follow up the first speaker’s joking reference to people who came just for the free lunch. Pull out goodie bag items and demonstrate them while describing (put on hat, toss plane).*

Welcome back! I hope everybody picked up a goodie bag ... and actually, it looks like a lot of you are already snooping around in there, so let’s take a look inside. We wanted to give you a few things to remind you of this day – the start of our new corporate branding program in the U.S. You should find a hat, complete with our new campaign line ... a Novo Nordisk compass key chain – to help chart our way as we change the course ... and a brochure called *Taking Flight*, to recap some of the things we’ve been talking about today ... and make sure you look inside that brochure—there’s an airplane to help us prepare for takeoff!

That’s really what this day is all about. The corporate branding program can’t take off without you aboard. I hope you got a taste of how extensive the program is in your breakouts. And I hope you were inspired to see all the things we’re doing to take the lead in changing the course ... and all the different areas this program is going to touch.

In fact, I can only think of one significant area this program will touch that we haven’t really talked about yet – you and me. Personally.

We’re doing a lot as a company to let the world know what we stand for. The breakouts covered the major initiatives that support the brand message ... that we’re leading the fight to change the course of diabetes for good. And we’ve cranked up the volume a notch or two so that now we’re starting to shout about it a bit. And that’s all wonderful. We want the world to know that Novo Nordisk is committed to changing the course of diabetes. And that our commitment extends to everything we do.

But words like *commitment* and *leadership* and *passion* suggest action; they imply that there’s something personal about this fight against diabetes. And I know many of you well enough to know that that’s true. Passion isn’t a corporate thing; it’s something each one of us lives and breathes every day. It comes out in the things we say and do ... with our friends ... with our families ... right where we live.

That's why you're the most important part of this entire branding program. You bring our brand to life.

You're the ultimate brand champions because you live out what the brand means ... through the little things you do ... or the big things you do ... to help change the way diabetes is treated in our schools ... in our churches ... and in our communities. You are the brand in action.

And, of course, that's why the TakeAction! Program is such a perfect fit with our branding initiative. It's an easy way to get involved in activities that help educate people about the disease and improve diabetes care where you live. Raising funds ... volunteering at a clinic ... sponsoring an informational program ... it's not so much what you do, but that you're doing *something*. Something voluntary. That says a lot about who you are ... and what's important to you. And it shows your family, friends and neighbors that you're living out what Novo Nordisk stands for ... helping people with diabetes live healthier lives.

Well, today I'd like to announce a new TakeAction! initiative that we're introducing just for the United States. It's called the TakeAction! Native American Project. It's completely voluntary, and it's designed to help a group right here at home ... one that's probably the hardest hit by diabetes and possibly the least equipped to manage it. Diabetes has reached truly epidemic proportions in Native American populations. More than 1 in 10 Native Americans has this disease. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found a nearly 30% increase in diabetes diagnoses among Native Americans and Alaskan natives between 1990 and 1997 alone. And serious complications are much higher for Native Americans than for other Americans with diabetes—being 6 times more likely to develop end stage renal disease and 3 to 4 times more likely to undergo amputation. Clearly, there's a significant opportunity for us to help

This idea is still in the development stage ... but it's modeled after our global TakeAction! partnership with the diabetes clinic in Tanzania. As you probably know, Novo Nordisk employees have the opportunity to spend time at the clinic helping the local population with detection, treatment and management of diabetes. They also learn a lot while they're there ... and they make a lot of friends – including people on their own team they didn't know very well before.

Well, that's our model, but there's a reason we haven't filled in all the details yet. We want to leave some of those up to you. We want your input ... your thoughts ... your suggestions ... and especially your creative ideas on how we might structure a program right here in the US to support the Native American population ... a program that can start small and build ... and a program that's meaningful and practical for you. For example, we might support one Native

American tribe or pick a single reservation. It might be as simple as providing educational materials or as involved as running diabetes clinics. We want to brainstorm as a team and see how we could build this initiative into one that's uniquely ours here in the U.S.

In your bags, you'll find a TakeAction! questionnaire. It describes the Native American project and asks a few questions that are designed to get your feedback ... on how you might want to be part of the program ... on other ideas you have to expand it ... on how to make it more effective ... or how to make it more practical, so it's easier for you to participate. We want whatever ideas you have about how we can change the course of this disease right here at home, especially in this critical population.

And not that you need any incentive, of course, but if you submit feedback by the end of the day today, you'll have your name entered in a raffle for this dream catcher. It's the same one that's featured in the brochure. I don't know how many of you are familiar with a dream catcher or the legend behind it, but there's a lot of symbolism that ties into our celebration today. Many Native American Indians hang the dream catcher in their homes to sift their dreams and visions. The good parts are captured in the web of life, but the bad ones escape through the hole in the center of the web. We thought it would be a fitting symbol to represent our dream to change the course ... and to one day defeat diabetes.

So I encourage you to take a few minutes today and fill out the questionnaire. You can put it in a drop box we've placed outside the HR offices. Just make sure to fill out your questionnaire today by 5 p.m. and include your name if you want to be included in the raffle.

Sharing your ideas is just the beginning of how you can make a difference. But you might just find that by sharing some ideas, you get inspired. Or you inspire someone else. That's my hope. Because you'll be making a tangible, personal contribution to changing the course of diabetes. And that's what living our brand is all about.

Source: Internal manuscript 2004 Novo Nordisk, prepared by DeLor Brand Identity Consultants.





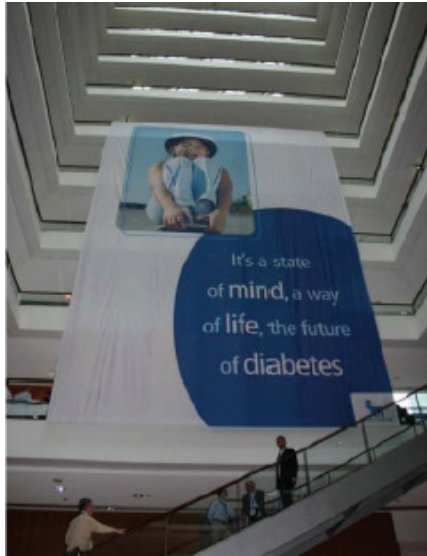
### 13.8 Pictures from the launch of Type Zero



The meeting room with walls decorated as well as the chairs



Coaster in the bar with Type Zero questions



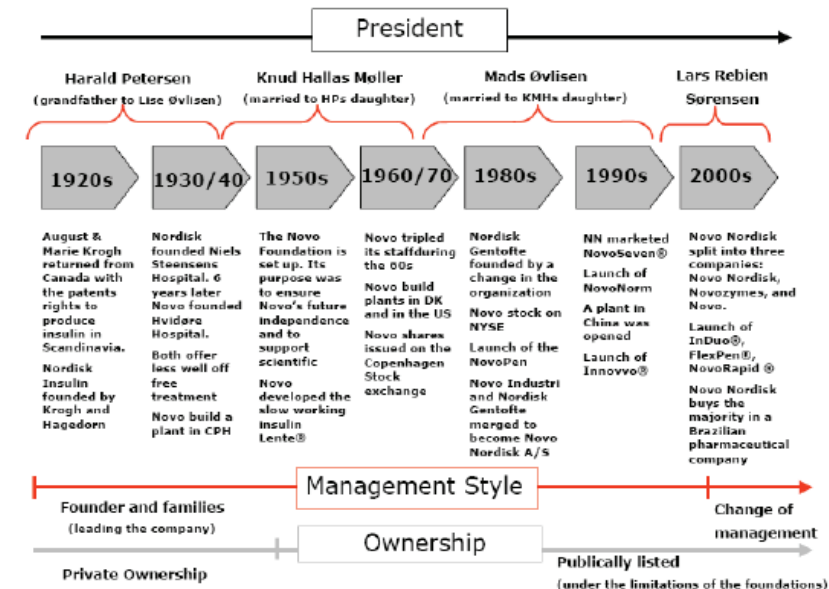
A big banner in the atrium at Hilton Copenhagen



The floor in the elevator

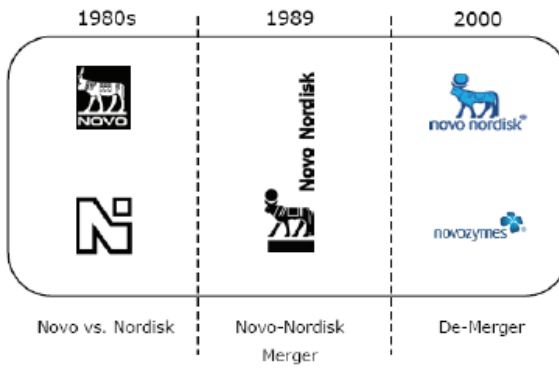
Source: Internal presentation with pictures taken by Vangsgaard (2005)

# 13.9 Novo Nordisk History in brief



Source: novonordisk historie

### Recent Logo History



Source: [www.novonordisk.com](http://www.novonordisk.com)

Source: Shultz et al. (2004:18)

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A product development strategy that is based on online communities and allows some firms to benefit from a distributed process of innovation by consumers*
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Et socialkonstruktivistisk casestudie af partnerskabsaktørers virkelighedsopfattelse mellem identitet og legitimitet*
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*Om organisering af den kreative gøren i den kunstneriske arbejdspraksis*
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