Family Business:
A Secondary Brand in Corporate Brand Management

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ABSTRACT

Why do firms allude to family involvement in their marketing efforts? How can such references influence marketing outcomes? In view of these questions, the current paper argues that the business format "family business" holds a brand of its own; a brand that can offer distinctiveness to brands on corporate as well as product level. Revisiting theory on secondary brand associations and image transfer, the paper interprets the function of references to family in corporate communications and clarifies their relationship to corporate branding. Potential difficulties involved in the referral to family business are identified. Propositions for further research are proposed.[2]

Key words: family business, brand, brand management, image transfer, corporate communications

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INTRODUCTION

Gunnar Dafgård Ltd. is the name of a Swedish company that manufactures, sells and distributes frozen foods to restaurant and consumer markets. In Swedish, Gunnar Dafgård is recognized as a given name plus a surname. The introductory page of the company's website reads "Welcome to Dafgård's! Our food philosophy is very simple: Only the best suffice, or, "As good as homemade"! We use our many years of tradition and knowledge about cookery to meet present-day needs for easily prepared and good food. […]" (www.Dafgard.se, author's translation):

Another page on the website reads: "Gunnar Dafgård AB is Sweden's largest family business in the food sector. Gunnar Dafgård established Dafgård's in 1937. The youngest son Ulf is the President of the company and the grandson Magnus is Vice-President. […]"

Most of the company's products are sold under the corporate brand "Familjen Dafgård" (The Dafgård family). The company's logotype, which includes the family name, is clearly visible on all packages. Some packages also include the slogan: "As good as homemade – from the Dafgård family". Some products are named according to the logic: given name and product name (e.g. Karin's Lasagna). In contrast to these continuous references to family, the company offers a range of products referred to as fast-food. This range includes pirogues, pizzas and hamburgers of different flavor, sold under the brands "Billy" and "Gorby". For these products, The Dafgård family is not exposed.

The above vignette exemplifies how family-owned and/or managed firms apply the phrase family business and direct or indirect references alluding to family when presenting the company and its products. From a marketing or corporate brand perspective, the choice to include such references can be interpreted as an attempt to clarify the character of and distinguish the firm and/or its offers. Likewise, the choice not to include references to family (e.g. the fast-food range in the Dafgård example), can be interpreted as a means to not be recognized as, or tie offers to, family business.

A number of authors relate to communications as they explore family business (e.g. Ibrahim, Soufani and Lam, 2001; Isaacs, 1991; Lundberg, 1994; Tagiuro and Davis, 1996; Ward, 1988). Their focus is primarily on the importance or kind of communications taking place between family members in the intersection family and family business. Elaborations recurrently touch on communication related to business planning, general management, and succession. Little attention, though, has been paid to the intersections between family, family business, and corporate communications; including the nature and impact of references to family business in various forms of planned communications with internal and external stakeholders. A few articles touching on the matter can be identified. Following a study on US undergraduate and graduate students preferences for working in a family business owned by another family, Covin (1994) concludes that family firms need to reflect on how they communicate when looking for personnel. She calls for more research to understand why students appear negative towards working in such firms. Craig, Dibrell and Davis (2008) suggest that maintaining a family-based brand identity (operationalized by references to family involvement in planned communications) can render positive effects in terms of financial performance. Their article approaches a neglected area of research and clarifies why it is of interest to further explore the meaning and impact of family business from a marketing and, specifically, brand management perspective. Leaning on the resource-based view of the firm, they propose that "family brand identity can be regarded as a rare, valuable, imperfectly imitable, nonsubstitutable resource"

(Craig et al., 2008, p. 354). Research about the origin, nature, impact of this resource, and the conditions for its being of value, is of interest to improve our understanding of family businesses' competitiveness and performance. Moreover, such research will call attention to marketing management and investigate idiosyncratic opportunities therein for family business.

While Craig et al. (2008) introduce the notion of family-based brand identity, they do not focus specifically on the nature of the brand involved, or the family component's position relative to other brand elements. Employing theories of brand management, the current paper addresses such issues; claiming that the explicit references in communications can be interpreted as the promotion of a corporate category brand. That is, the family business brand. The paper aspires to trigger a debate concerning how references are made to the notion of family business in planned communications and how these are important for marketing objectives. The paper has two purposes. First, to underline that family firm can in itself be considered a brand and that, consequently, expressions referring to family should not be overlooked as possibly important keys for corporate brand management. Second, to elaborate on difficulties of using the corporate description family business as a secondary brand, i.e. element in corporate brand management. With regards to these purposes, the paper ends by outlining propositions to guide further research on the subject. Family business, family firm and family company are used interchangeably throughout the text.

RECOGNISING FAMILY BUSINES AS A BRAND

The meaning of brand

Brands are here described as sets of meanings and beliefs that relate to an entity of some sort. They are seen as existing in a "discursive space of meaning rather than the physical space of objects" (Leitch & Motion, 2007, p. 72). Accordingly, the essence of brand value and brand management is commonly described as being the brand's image. That is, the sum of associations a branded entity conjures among its audiences upon the display of one or several brand elements (e.g. De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998, Duncan, 2002, Garrity, 2001, Grace & O'Cass, 2002, Riezeobs, 2003, Simões & Dibb, 2001). An actor that holds a positive image is more likely to favor a brand and the entity that it represents. Connections between attitude and behavior are thus important for the values ascribed to brand management, although the competition and information flow on current markets also stress its importance in terms of distinction. In line with this description of brands, the discourse since long has abandoned its focus on fast-moving consumer goods in favour of a comprehensive brand debate that ties the notion of brands to all sorts of offers; including goods, services, experiences, destinations, people, corporations and even ideas.

Corporate brands and branding

Brand management, or branding, comprises the effort to translate core characteristics of an entity (the thing being branded) into various forms of communication. The aim is to transfer brand identity into a favorable brand image, which clarifies the entity's value proposition and distinguishes it from similar others. As summarized by Pickton and Broderick (2001, p. 23): "branding is about the values generated in the minds of people as a consequence of the sum total of marketing communications effort". In the process of branding, brand owners make use of a number of brand elements. These include things that surround or connect to the entity indicated by the brand; like brand name,

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logotype or other symbols, product design, website, web-address, characters and spokespersons, slogans, jingles, and packaging (Keller et al., 2008). Brand elements are important as they can establish and conjure recognition for a branded entity. Furthermore, they add to the meaning of the brand in audiences' minds. Decisions regarding brand elements are therefore essential in branding. Depending on what sort of entity is considered, the range and nature of significant elements vary. Research on industrial and service markets, for example, add advertising themes, employee behavior and appearance, and plant orderliness to the list of possibly critical brand elements (e.g. Berry, 2000; Blombäck & Axelsson, 2007).

Since the 1990s, special attention has been paid to corporate brands (e.g. Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Kitchen and Schultz, 2001; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Schultz et al., 2005; Hatch and Schultz, 2008). Increasing homogenization and shorter lifecycles of products, increasing visibility of corporations due to new market structures and information streams, increasing focus on consumerism and ethics, and the recognition of brands in service and industrial markets all take part in explaining the accentuation of corporate branding. In all, current markets support Hatch and Schultz (2003, p. 1041) suggestion that: "Differentiation requires positioning, not products, but the whole corporation. Accordingly, the values and emotions symbolised by the organisation become key elements of differentiation strategies, and the corporation itself moves center stage." Corporate level brand management concerns the management of all associations related to a specific company and, thus, the sum total of corporate communications (e.g. Balmer & Gray, 2003; Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Graham, 2001; Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). Owing to this complexity, to make corporate brand management possible in practice, companies must focus on a limited set of features or corporate brand elements.

Categories as brands
Through brand extensions, companies aspire to capitalize on the values that customers relate to the original product and brand. One form of brand extension involves the application of one brand to several products, which, although different in kind relate to the same category of products (e.g. electronic equipment, clothes, drinks or baking mixes). This means that a company establishes a brand for its products within a distinct product category. Such brands can be called category brands (Aaker, 1996, p. 298). Another interpretation of this phrase is viewing the category itself as a brand. On a general level, a category is primarily a generic term that explains to an audience what type of product is being marketed. However, a service or product category can also represent a set of associations that go beyond the simple explanation of what a word means in practice (Keller et al., 2008; Ward & Loken, 1986). Consider for example differences between the basic meaning of the category "fast food" and your associations with it. When evaluating and making decisions about market offers, customers focus simply on the product offered, but rely on its perceived relationship to categories and the typicality ascribed to these (Cohen & Basu, 1987). In a fiercely competitive climate, being able to show connection to the right category can be of the essence for a product's ability to succeed. In consequence of increasingly complex competitive patterns, Keller et al. (2008, p. 55) suggest that "branding principles are now being used to market a number of different categories as a whole […]".

The category-as-brands idea exemplifies how the basic idea of brand is applied to entities lacking one apparent owner. Drawing on the same general

brand logic and the interest in corporate brands, this paper maintains that category associations can also be recognized on a corporate level; generating what might be referred to as corporate category brands. Similarly, Wilkinson and Balmer (1996) refer to generic identities of industries; discussing how individual banks try to break free from the common bank image by establishing salient, firm-specific identities. Their elaborations implying that the category "bank" holds strong associations, which need to be considered in corporate branding. Although general in kind, a corporate category can serve the purpose of distinguishing a company or corporate brand; perchance adding to its value proposition. In light of increasing competition and focus on marketing on the corporate level, the existence, use and impact of corporate category brands are worth further exploration.

Family business – a corporate category brand in use

Family firms exist in all types of industries, are structured and operated in various ways. Literature within the field of family business management reveals that there is no common understanding concerning the definition of this concept (Astrachan, Klein and Smyrnios, 2002; Carey-Shanker and Astrachan, 1996; Chua, Chrisman, and Chang, 2004; Smyrnios, Tanewski, and Romano, 1998). Neither is there an agreement on whether and in that case how, family businesses are different from non-family businesses (e.g. Gallo, Tápies, and Cappuyns, 2004; Kotey, 2005; Steier, 2001). As Sharma (2004, p. 5) concludes "no set of distinct variables separating family and nonfamily firms has yet been revealed". This statement mainly reflects research that looks into companies' patterns of profit, growth, organization design and governance. In addition to the confusion concerning distinctive features and definitions, few studies that map associations to the family business as an entity are available.

A simple Internet search and review of advertisements in daily press renders numerous examples of companies that use the phrase family business as a main descriptor for their company. Similarly, firms allude to their being a family business by including or referring to, for example, family name, specific family members, the number of generations in business, family traditions, anecdotes about the family in business, and/or photographs of the family. How these family business indicators are applied differs, though. Companies varyingly include one or several signs of family, for example, in company or product names, on product packages, in advertisements, in formal presentations, on homepages and in printed marketing material. In corporate presentations, the signal of being family business is sometimes positioned ahead of descriptions concerning the focus of business operations. Notably, firms that make reference to the family business feature are quite diverse, being small and large, active in various industries, and focused on B2B as well as B2C markets.

The explicit choice to present family involvement as a business feature can be compared to other signals about the firm. Comparisons can be made to geographical origin ("we are a Swedish company"), references to company philosophy ("we are a socially responsible company"), age ("we are an 80-year old company") or, indeed, indications of the firm's primary operations ("we are a furniture manufacturer"). From a marketing communications or brand management perspective, the choice to add references to family in planned communications suggests that they are thought to reveal important information about the business to its audiences. In essence, the references indicate that family firms are viewed as being different from non-family firms and that this difference is thought to be valuable. That is, an attempt to affect the associations held

towards the company and its offers. The references also imply that those planning communications perceives that the notion of family business holds a general image. In all, the communication practices of family firms (and indeed journalists and researchers) suggest that family business in itself is a corporate category brand.

IMAGE TRANSFER – A SHURTCUT TO BRANDING
An important aspect of brand management is the theory on image transfer (Gwinner, 1997, Riezebos, 2003), or use of secondary brand associations (Keller et al. 2008). The basic idea of image transfer is that "an entity with a strong image and high level of added value can contribute to the forming of the image of another entity" (Riezebos, 2003, p. 77). By bringing the entities together somehow, the associations attached to the former, the source, can be transferred to the latter, the target. Through this process, the target's image can be altered, strengthened or clarified. As portrayed in figure 1, we might say that one brand (S) is used as an element in the management of another brand (T). An important condition for image transfer is, thus, that the source has a distinct image among the targeted audiences. That is, brand managers can take a shortcut to branding by employing or collaborating with other brands, if these hold established meaning in the market.

- Insert figure 1 here -

Given that the source possesses clear and shared associations among its audiences it can function as an endorser for the brand representing the target (cf. Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, Riezebos, 2003). The strategy is commonly recognized in product branding, for example through qualification marks, co-branding on a product level, marks of origin, and celebrity endorsement. A case in point is the tendency of Swiss watch-makers to label their products "Swiss made" (the source). The idea of Switzerland's tradition and excellence relating to watch-making supposedly makes the watch and the brand related to it (the target) more credible in terms of quality.

The strategy and discussion of image transfer can, however, also be applied on a corporate level. Uggla's (2006) description of "the corporate brand association base" sheds light on this. He posits that the corporate brand image is derived from an association base. This is fueled, on the one hand, by the corporate identity and associations to the corporate brand and, on the other hand, by images held of associated partner entities, including related institutions (see figure 2). Strategic alliances or co-branding, indications of geographical origin or certificates on a corporate level, and reference to product categories are all examples of sources. In another wording, these sources exemplify the employment of secondary brands to clarify or establish abilities and characteristics of a primary (corporate) brand. Working examples are so-called collective marks. These appear when an association of firms establishes a trademark to distinguish a certain competence or quality (WIPO, 2004). While collective marks do not distinguish firms' exclusivity, they can communicate specific features held by a certain group of firms. That is, clarifying and adding to the promise of each firm that exhibits the mark. Similarly, formal certificates (e.g. ISO 14000) are common in various industries.

- Insert figure 2 here -

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The basic argument of this paper is that corporate category brands or generic corporate descriptions are increasingly important in establishing the corporate brand association base. In line with the model of image transfer, the corporate category brand represents the source, or secondary brand, while the corporate brand represents the target. One interpretation is that corporate categories in fact can be perceived as representing institutions, bearing "deep societal and cultural meaning" (Uggla, 2006, p. 793). If so, the corporate description holds assumed meanings among audiences; associations that can add to the corporate brand association base and, subsequently, rub off on the corporate image of the company adhering to the description.

THE VALUE OF FAMILY BUSINESS AS A SECONDARY BRAND
In some contrast to the elaborations on a family-based brand identity (Craig et al., 2008), approaching family business as a stand-alone, category brand clarifies that it is an option and, hence, an addition to corporate brands whose identities include more than references to family involvement. The argument is that family business, rather than being the identity, as a secondary brand should be thought of as one of several elements; one that is used to attract a specific audience or create distinction in certain situations. We might consider here how companies remove or add references to family business on account of current ownership or market situations. While such changes potentially shift the corporate brand image, the company will still have a comprehensive corporate identity. As corporate identity corresponds to questions such as "what are we?", "who are we?", and "what do we want to be?" (e.g. Balmer & Greyser, 2003), it most likely includes more than one salient feature. Moreover, a firm will most likely have a hard time reaching its audiences and, thus, success if the only communicated and distinguishing characteristic is that it is a family business. To reach and gain the attention of suitable target audiences, companies need primarily to communicate their line of business and their market offer. In contrast, references to family business concerns what kind of organization the company is. That is, while all business within a certain industry can refer to, for example, the product offer, only those that happen to be, or perceive of themselves as family firms have the opportunity to add this epithet to their corporate communications. Family business as a secondary brand therefore partly relates to a different level of competition than the corporate brand in general. Consequently, table 1 portrays how the value of family business as a secondary brand primarily takes effect in a competitive situation when the basics of company offer have already been clarified. The family business brand works as a second gear. It can establish a fuller picture of a company in the market and augment the value proposition perceived among audiences.

- Insert table 1 here -

The thought of family business as a standalone brand also clarifies how family involvement might be but one of several elements used to build brand promise. As implied by figure 3, it explains how family involvement can be part of communication for product as well as corporate level marketing, although not being the sole basis for brand communication. Depending on the target group and aim of communications, a firm might gain or decide to focus more or less on the references to family business, other corporate features or secondary brands. Likewise, communications for a product brand might draw on the corporate brand (e.g. previous product range can affect credibility of the product under

consideration, general quality reputation and visual identity can affect attitude) and/or on the family business brand (e.g. family businesses are trustworthy, small and informal; worthy of my support). In case of the former, a product can be endorsed by displaying the corporate name or logotype on packaging. In case of the latter, the product name can include references to family members or photographs of family on packaging.

- Insert figure 3 here -

The slippery image of category brands
Any description or mark connected to a brand represents a potential threat or a source for competitive advantage to the company. Depending on its perceived content, a secondary brand used with the intention of image transfer can prove beneficial, damaging or even neutral. The choice of using a secondary brand should depend on whether it is well recognized and which connotations, positive or negative, are attributed to it. Accordingly, corporate descriptions should primarily be advantageous if they are consistently recognized as signifying particular and positive company features. A major constraint in the use of category brands for managing corporate image is that there are no straightforward, unanimous explanations for what they represent. Brand images by definition reside with the beholders and a company can therefore never completely manage it. However, in the case of an exclusive brand comprising a set of registered trademarks, organizations can to large extents control brand communications. The image or common understanding of a category brand, however, should be especially hard to manage from one firm's point of view. This because the complexity of a corporate description means that it is not easily defined in a clear-cut way (e.g. family firm, subcontracting firm, international firm). In the case of family business, although the expression might communicate potentially important and distinguishing company characteristics, to date, there is no common understanding for which firms are considered or a set of common associations to this business type.

Moreover, a person's corporate image can be multifaceted as it is formed through interaction with various sources, organizational, personal and social in kind (Moffitt, 1994; Kazoleas, Kim & Moffitt, 2001; Williams and Moffitt, 1997). One part of the image might be based on the firm's sponsorship of local sports while another comes from the knowledge of a friend being mistreated as a customer. Due to these different elements, a persons' image of a certain company can either shift depending on situation or simply be blurred. The challenge for organizations is to acknowledge the multidirectional nature of corporate image and plan its communications accordingly. Williams and Moffitt (1997) suggest that one solution is to vary the message. Their discussion relates to another potential hazard involved in using family business as a corporate trademark. The marketing manager or CEO of one firm cannot know or manage the experiences people have with other companies referring to themselves or being perceived as family businesses. This means that it is very difficult to attempt to manage the perceived meaning of family business and, thus, to know what it will communicate to various individuals. Valid comparisons can be made with country of origin effects. Firms include their geographical origin in attempts to present special features of the company or its products although they cannot single-handedly manage the identity of the country trademark. furthermore, like the image of a country of origin label can vary, depending on who is asked and in what situation it is used (see further, Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998), so should the

image of family firm. For example, given the focus of excellence in German manufacturing primarily relating to technologies and automotive industries, the benefits of associations to Germany might be less apparent in the case of a chocolate bar than in the case of a car. Likewise, family business might conjure different sets of associations and images depending on whether an individual is considering an interaction with the company as an employee, an investor or a customer. Accordingly, we might assume that it is difficult to predict the effects of referring to family business as a secondary brand in planned communications.

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSITIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
A baseline argument for family business research is the aim to inform and assist practitioners (Zahra and Sharma, 2004; Sharma, 2004). This ambition is mirrored in researchers' choice to target topics where family businesses either experience a special situation, or demonstrate particular behavior. The exploring of succession, governance and strategic management issues are working examples. Despite this ambition, research has mainly overlooked the fact that numerous companies use the phrase or make references to family business as a seemingly important descriptor in their corporate communications. Also the media and academia, uses the description family firm to signify particular corporate features although it is not completely clear which these features are. All in all, though, our knowledge is scarce relating to the attitudes and associations toward the expression and notion of family business. Consequently, there is little understanding of whether the ability to make such references is a unique resource and potential source of competitive edge for family business. Previous research has introduced a number of resources, seemingly unique to family businesses (e.g. Sirmon and Hitt; 2003). They mainly reflect intra-organizational features resulting from the interaction of family and business, that is the firm's familiness (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). Employing a brand perspective to the above described phenomenon, the current paper portrays family business as a corporate category brand, implying that merely being family business could represent an additional type of resource (c.f. Craig et al., 2008).

The theory of image transfer explains the logic of using references to family involvement and business in corporate communications. Then again, critical questions concerning the value of such references appear in terms of multifaceted images and management of associations to corporate descriptions and category brands. In light of the current conclusions, propositions are suggested as a foundation for upcoming research.

In a market where distinction becomes tougher by the day, any corporate feature that separates a firm from the whole population is valuable. This is true not only in regards to customers and other external actors, but also in regards to the internal stakeholders. Although a corporate category brand runs the risk of having ambiguous meaning it might still be valuable in that sense. Moreover, if the thought of family business conjures generally positive and unambiguous associations, using such references in planned communications can be valuable for the company in terms of brand awareness and building, employee recruitment, market positioning, and management of corporate culture or identity. If, on the other hand, there are strong negative or ambiguous associations to the notion of family business, including it in communications might hurt the corporate brand. Similarly, if the notion of family business carries very weak images among most audiences, alluding to it in corporate communications might be counteractive, serving to reduce the clarity and strength of the corporate brand association base. The fact that companies make a choice to include references to being a family

company in light of this, leads to the following propositions:

> **P1:** Family business is perceived as a corporate category brand among family business owners and managers.

> **P2:** Family businesses that apply family business as a secondary brand do so because they believe it will affect their corporate brand image and/or support the formation of corporate identity or culture.

> **P3:** Family firms that do not apply family business as a secondary brand do so because they believe it will affect their corporate brand image and/or support the formation of corporate identity or culture.

Scholars have spent much effort on defining what type of organizations family business represents, whether and in that case how family businesses per definition are special. Yet, there is no agreement on the matter (Astrachan et al., 2002). The basic idea of adding secondary brands to planned communications is that they contribute to the platform of associations distinguishing an entity's uniqueness. In the case of family business, which has no clear-cut definition, it is difficult to know what associations are in fact added to the platform when alluding to family involvement in business. Contrary to corporate or product brands involving registered trademarks, a single firm can never be in sole possession of a corporate description or category brand. Individuals' associations to, or image of, family business is formed by all occurrences that reflect or relate to this business format. Hence, while being part of the family business community, it will be difficult for a single firm to form a preferred set of associations related to family business. Bearing in mind that descriptions of successful brand management frequently refer to consistency and clarity of communications (e.g. De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Keller et al., 2008; Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005), a valid question is whether alluding to family business can benefit corporate brand image. Still, references to companies as being family firms are common; among practitioners as well as academics and the media. While it is possible to identify some features that are repeatedly coupled with family business (e.g. small, unprofessional, flexible), the phrase is neither applied in a consistent manner nor defined in use. In light of this, the following propositions are suggested:

> **P4:** Family business is perceived as a corporate category brand among audiences external to the family business.

> **P5:** There is no general image of the family business brand in the market.

The current paper has no intention of claiming that one should or should not use the family business description in communication. Based on the characteristics of corporate category brands, the conclusions are, though, that organizations should carefully consider why, how and when they are applied. It is necessary to further consider how references to family business are significant in corporate branding. Basic theory proposes that attitudes, though mediated by values and norms, predict behavior (c.f. Ajzen and Fishbein (1975;1980)). Covin's (1994) research indicates that the attitudes towards family business affect individuals' willingness to work in family firms. For complex entities, however, individuals are likely to maintain a range of associations that apply differently depending on situation (c.f. destination brands, e.g. Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998). In conclusion, the following

propositions are suggested:

> **P6:** The image of family business affects individuals' attitudes and behavior towards companies that use family business as a secondary brand in corporate communications.

> **P7:** Individuals' attitude towards the family business brand vary depending on the type of interaction considered (e.g. as customer, potential employee, supplier, financer).

At the very root of brand strategy lies the parameters differentiation and added value (Riezebos, 2003). They reflect the underlying motives of branding to gain competitive advantages by bringing forth that which distinguishes a branded entity from its competitors and promoting value to customers beyond the core offer. Also at the basis of corporate brand theory is the importance of recognizing corporate cultures and identities and aligning brand management with these. Given the inherent connections between the organization and a corporate brand, and the importance of maintaining total communications that support brand consistency (e.g. Balmer, 2001), the planning of brand elements to communicate is of the essence. The basic argument of this paper is that we might see family business as a corporate category brand and, therefore, it is necessary to consider why, how, where and when references to family business are used. It does not imply, though, that the family business brand is suitable for all companies' identities, or valuable regardless of the market situation. What if all firms in a certain industry are family businesses, or what if no one in the company ever perceives it as a family business? The following proposition is suggested:

> **P8:** To assess the feasibility and potential of family business as secondary brand one should consider both the status of family business among competitors and the presence of family business in the firm's corporate identity.

Zahra and Sharma (2004, p. 331) suggest that the family business field has "had a tendency to borrow heavily from other disciplines without giving back to these fields". Consequently, they encourage researchers to use insights in the family business milieu to contribute to general theory. Likewise, requests are made for improving the theoretical width in family business research. By outlining family business as a corporate category brand the current paper responds to both appeals. Firstly, corporate-level marketing continuously gains in importance as the battle for attention and preference among publics escalates. Thus, the recognition of corporate descriptions as secondary brands is by no means bounded to family businesses. Rather, it is a general phenomenon where family business serves as a lucid example. Secondly, the paper adds to the establishment of marketing in the family business field; a subject which is largely missing. Available studies relate to the particularities of marketing *in* family businesses (e.g. Craig et al, 2008; Lyman, 1991; Post, 1993; Teal, Upton and Seaman, 2003) and marketing *to* family businesses (File, Mack & Prince, 1994). Little, though, is said about the specific marketing *of* family businesses.

      The current paper has apparent limitations both in terms of empirical depth and theoretical scope. Using the straightforward propositions laid out above as direction, additional research should apply both empirical data and specific theory to identify further complexities and nuances of the matter. Research

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should primarily investigate the nature of family business brand associations (c.f. Craig et al. 2008) and whether the use of family business as a secondary brand affects corporate image and audiences' behavior. The proposition that companies, when making claims to be family businesses, simultaneously make the claim of not being something else, adds another dimension to this question. Could it be the case that we cannot understand fully the meaning and nature of the family business brand unless we investigate the meanings attributed to non-family businesses? That is, researchers need not necessarily focus simply on family firms when investigating this issue. Mirroring the family business in what is perceived to be non-family business could prove to be as useful. Empirical research with focus on the questions why as well as why not and how companies make reference to family business in marketing is also of interest. While the current paper takes a rather functional approach to the phenomenon at hand, drawing on brand management as a deliberate process to clearly make the point of family business as a secondary brand (c.f. Balmer, 2001), such research could extend the topic by revealing, for example, the complexity of communication practices and dynamics of organizational identity

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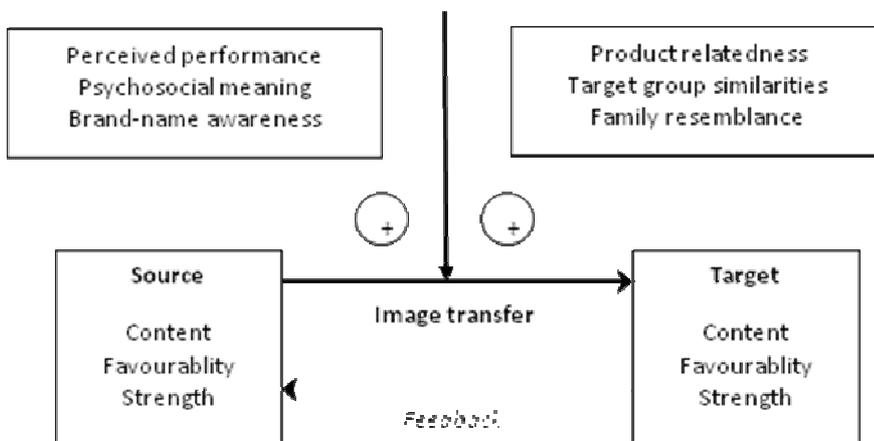
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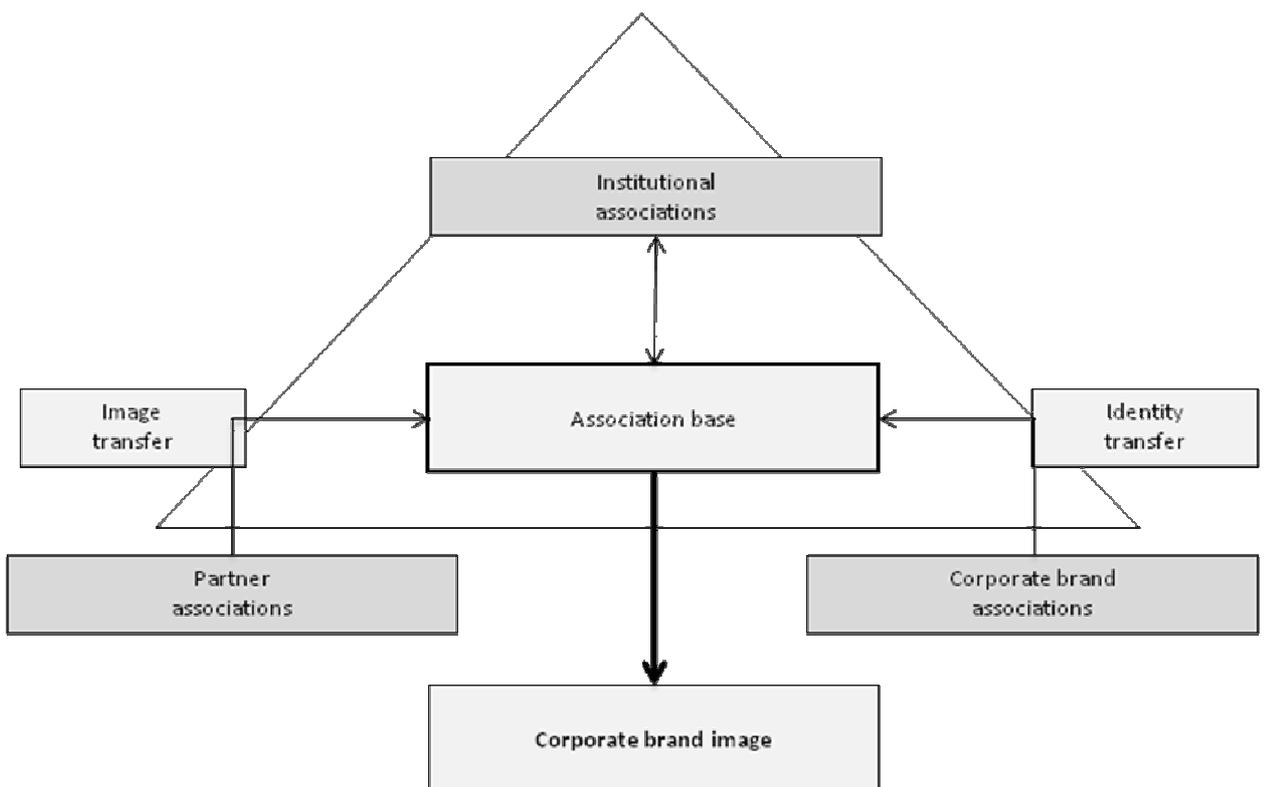**Figure 1: The model for image transfer (Riezebos, 2003, p. 74)**

Figure 2: Corporate brand association base (Uggla, 2006, p. 790), slightly altered

Brand (name)	Type of brand	Primary value/focus of brand	Revealed through brand elements
Corporate name, e.g. AllBread	**Corporate brand (primary brand).**	**Make visible and distinguish firm among all other firms and market offers. Create awareness and image among target audiences in the bread industry.**	**Corporate name, logotype, visual identity, product mix, other proprietary symbols (e.g. color, buildings, cars, outfits, design).**
Family business	**Corporate category brand (secondary brand).**	**Distinguish firm from firms in the same line of business. Clarify and add to value proposition in target audiences' minds.**	**Using the phrase family business related to company description, references to family members and/or family name, reference to family tradition, stories about generations in business, pictures of family.**

Table 1: Competitive level for family business, example of fictive bread producer
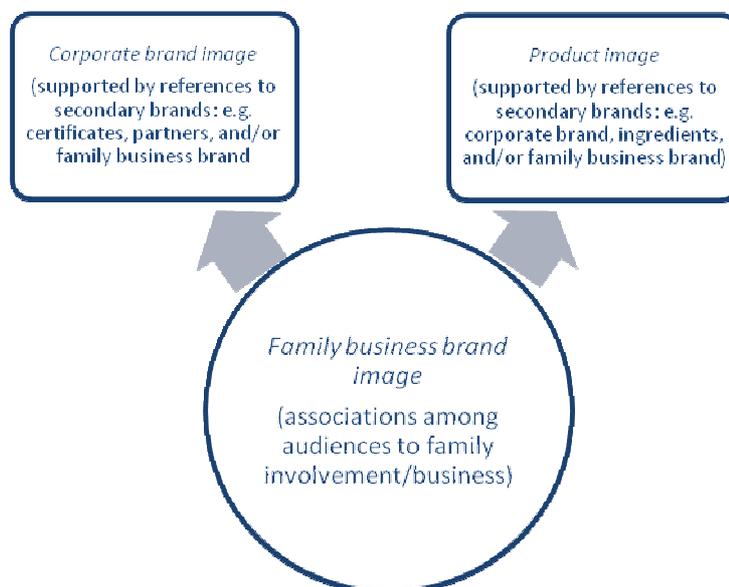
Figure 3: How family business can be one of several secondary brands on product or corporate level

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