Corporate search and avoidance of the spotlight: The influence of branding strategies after corporate issues

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Thesis

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Abstract

The last few decades, several scholars have found that companies that establish and maintain a strong brand are successful in their businesses. One component of creating a strong brand is to have strong customer-based brand equity. To put it another way, that consumers can recognize a company's brand and think of the brand when given an indicative prompt, making it more likely for consumers to choose the brand when shopping. This thesis seeks to investigate whether the two companies Nike and Nestlé have created brand equity among its American consumers, which will be examined in a qualitative study.

At many large corporations, there is malpractice to be found. As consumers have gained more power of influence with the Internet and are becoming more critical towards corporate actions, consumers are engaging more in activism and calling out corporations on their malpractice. The increased attention of corporate issues in the media might make corporations more aware of its actions in societies. This thesis further seeks to examine whether the American consumer perception of the brands Nike and Nestlé have changed after the companies have faced corporate issues and how these issues have been handled by the corporations.

There are many ways for companies to face and manage issues in public. Companies such as Nike and Nestlé have used Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, respectively. Moreover, this thesis seeks to close a gap in research, since there is a lack of knowledge on how the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management can contribute when companies wish to create customer-based brand equity.

The results show that both brands have created strong brand equity but in various ways, since Nike uses a monolithic branding strategy, i.e. the corporate and product brands are similar, while Nestlé uses an endorsed branding strategy, i.e. the corporate brand may or may not be endorsed on the product. The overall American consumer perception is good of both brands, although the perception of Nike is better than the perception of Nestlé, since its previous issues have had a larger impact on the Nestlé brand than the previous issues have had on Nike's brand. Lastly, the examination has found that both Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management can in various ways add value to companies when creating customer-based brand equity.

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1.0 Introduction

Corporate brands are essential to get noticed by stakeholders, raise the profile of the company, stand out from the competing crowd, and increase profits (Johnson 2011). By building customer-based brand equity and maintaining it, a company can make sure that its products are chosen by consumers over a competitor's products (Keller 1993). But maintaining the brand can be challenging when external forces can have an influence on the brand. Such external forces can be issues that are salient to company stakeholders. Similar to other companies, Nike and Nestlé have been involved in issues over the years. Recently, Nike found itself in the middle of a consumer boycott due to Nike choosing the American football player Colin Kaepernick as front figure of its 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" campaign in September 2018 (Kelner 2018). Many Americans found this controversial as Kaepernick in August 2016, as an activist toward racial equality in America, kneeled during the national anthem at an NFL game instead of standing (Oluo 2016). Consequently, many Americans joined together against Nike by using the hashtags #BoycottNike and #JustBurnIt, posting pictures and videos of them burning Nike products (Kelner 2018).

As a 250-year-old company, Nestlé has faced several issues over the past decades. Among others are the issues of unethical marketing of milk formula in third world countries; child labor in its cocoa farms; forcing famine stricken Ethiopia to pay back its debt to the multimillion corporation; use of palm oil from deforested areas – and these are just to mention a few. However, it seems as if Nestlé has always been able to stay under the radar of the issues and has avoided major damage as the company is still the largest food and beverage company in the world. On the one hand, there is Nestlé, which seemingly has avoided attracting too much attention, and thus avoided damage. On the other hand, there is Nike, which purposely chose Kaepernick as its front figure of its campaign, knowing that the choice was risky and controversial for some, thus seeking attention from stakeholders.

During my Master's degree, I have, among other things, learned about different marketing strategies and theories for corporations to deal with issues. A company's chosen branding and marketing strategy is obviously well thought out and planned and creating brand equity is vital for companies. However, it is interesting to examine what happens to the brand equity created by companies when stakeholders and publics are opposed to corporate actions, thus leading to corporate issues. The two companies Nike and Nestlé have used different strategies when facing these issues, where the former has used the theory of Cause Related Marketing and the latter has used the theory Issues Management. Cause Related Marketing is, as its name reveals, a marketing strategy used by companies to improve and maintain a good image to its stakeholders by partnering with a charity or cause (Adkins 2005, 9-10). Issues Management is a strategy used by companies to manage issues when these are faced by the company, e.g. stakeholders who are unappreciative of corporate actions (Cornelissen 2017, 194). How the company chooses to handle an issue and the communication with media, stakeholders, and publics have an impact on the company. Nonetheless, there are not any research showing whether these theories can contribute in companies' creation of Customer-Based Brand Equity. Based on that, this thesis seeks to investigate:

How can Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management contribute to building Customer-Based Brand Equity?

To examine the above, cases involving Nike and Nestlé will build the foundation. In order to examine whether the theories can contribute to building Customer-Based Brand Equity, it is vital to first investigate the perceptions of the brands among consumers. Therefore, the first research question is:

RQ1: What is the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestle?

Second, there is a need of identifying why the two corporations have chosen these methods when facing and managing issues. Thus, the second research question is:

RQ2: Why do the two large corporations Nike and Nestlé use such different approaches when facing and managing issues?

The first research question will be examined and answered in the first part of the analysis, while the second research question will be the focus of the second part of the analysis. The thesis is organized as follows. It opens with a literature review on previous research on the concept of branding and brand equity. The theories used are next established followed by the methodological considerations. The thesis then outlines the analysis and results and ends with a conclusion.

2.0 Literature review

Much literature has previously been written on the concept of branding. Therefore, this section will give the reader an overview of some of this literature, starting with the different waves of corporate branding, followed by literature on product branding, and finally, various research on brand equity.

2.1 Branding

Many types of branding exist. Since the two chosen companies Nike and Nestlé use corporate and product branding, previous research on these types will be elaborated here. First, the different waves of corporate branding will be specified, followed by literature on product branding. This will further clarify the similarities and distinctions between corporate and product branding.

2.1.1 First wave of corporate branding

Corporate branding is made up by contributions from many researchers (Aaker 1991; Balmer 1995; Keller 1997; de Chernatony 1999; Hatch and Schultz 2000; as cited by Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba 2005). Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba (2005) also call this first wave of corporate branding *classical branding* (10). Within this concept, several terms exist. One of these is brand identity, which is described as the associations the brand evokes in a consumer's mind, thus differentiating it from other brands (Karmark 2013, 447). This is closely related to brand equity, which is how well-known the brand is among consumers, the quality of brand perceived by consumers, how broad the set of associations the brand evokes among consumers, and how loyal consumers are towards the brand (ibid).

Schultz et al. (2005, as cited by Karmark 2013, 447) suggest that this view on branding "implies that the brand is primarily associated with the organization's products and is characterized by having a marketing-oriented and visual identity approach to branding" (Karmark 2013, 447). Thus, it is implied that this view mainly establishes brand identity in consumer minds rather than to a broader range of stakeholders. They further describe how the scholars' view of the first wave of corporate branding varied. Some authors believed that "the idea of an organization as a brand was an extension of the product branding approach", whereas other authors viewed it as a way for an organization to have a continuing identity that was relevant to its stakeholders (Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba 2005, 10). This divided the field of corporate branding into two: the product driven tactical and visual focus as one and corporate branding emphasizing the strategic and integrated field as another. The foundation of the first wave of corporate branding, literature, and practice is formed by the tactical and visual approach (Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba 2005, 10).

2.1.2 Second wave of corporate branding

The first wave of corporate branding created many questions for corporations to ask itself when creating a successful corporate brand: *Who are we? What do we stand for?* and *What do we want to become?* These questions are still important in the second wave of corporate branding, but they have a slightly different meaning at this point. Whereas in the first wave, brand managers believed that corporations should find the definite answers to these questions, Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba (2005) now suggest that corporations find "a path in a changeable and dynamic age that paradoxically requires that the organization develops, while also being able to hold on to its identity" (10). Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba (2005) believe that corporate branding is a dynamic concept, and thus they suggest corporations continuously ask the abovementioned questions within the company in order to establish a successful corporate brand among stakeholders (10). The purpose of their book *Corporate branding: Purpose/people/process* (2005) is to examine corporate branding theoretically and practically from various angles to rethink the concept (ibid).

In the second wave of corporate branding, Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba (2005) argue that the focus has shifted from stand-alone products to the branding of the entire organization (24). They further describe how product brands individually relate to consumers, whereas "a corporate brand is founded on an integrated and cross-disciplinary mindset based in the central ideas of who the organization is" (Schultz, Antorini, Csaba 2005, 24). The second wave of corporate branding focuses on establishing relationships with internal and external corporate stakeholders as well as engaging stakeholders in the process of defining who the organization is. Hatch and Schulz (2001, 2003) describe corporate branding as: aligning organizational origin and everyday practices, also called organizational culture; the aspirations of the organization, i.e. strategic vision; external stakeholders perception of the organization, called images; and who the organization is, i.e. identity (as cited by Schultz, Antorini, and Csaba 2005, 24). All managerial and organizational processes are meant to express differentiation from competitors as well as for the company to express who they are to stakeholders (ibid). Over the next few years, the Internet and social media platforms created an opportunity for stakeholders to have more influence on corporations. This created the next step and third wave of corporate branding.

2.1.3 Third wave of corporate branding

Hatch and Schultz (2008) argue that a third wave of corporate branding has evolved because stakeholders are getting more influence on corporate business (206). In the first wave, the mindsets of brand managers were focused on marketing and in the second wave, brand managers had a corporate mindset. In the third wave, the corporate brand has changed and become the voice of the entire enterprise, i.e. with an enterprise mindset. The focus has shifted towards the full range of stakeholders, while also creating more importance for top management, corporate boards, and CEOs. Thus, it is vital to listen and talk to stakeholders, while also engaging them through the corporate brand (Hatch and Schultz 2008, 206). It is further argued that many voices will shape the corporate brand through traditional and digital media, to use other words, interaction from the company to its stakeholders is now a two-way communication process (ibid, 207). Brand managers involved with the third wave of corporate branding aspire to understand the views of stakeholders as well as using some of their ideas in internal corporate activities (ibid, 208). Having outlined the three waves of corporate branding, it is natural to move on to a different type of branding, namely product branding.

2.1.4 Product branding

Corporate and product branding are similar in the sense that the aims of both are to build recognition among stakeholders with the use of tagline, slogan, logo, etc. Some of the differences between the two types of branding are that corporate branding is aimed at all stakeholders, while product branding focuses on consumers; the responsibility of the product brand lies on brand managers and marketing, whereas the responsibility of the corporate brand is of the chief executive; a third difference is that corporate branding requires alignment of more dimensions within a company in order to be successful, such as brand value, identity, vision, etc. (Balmer and Gray 2003, 978).

Other research shows that 69 percent of consumers find brand names playing a significant role in their online buying decision. On the basis of that, Ward and Lee (2000) examined whether brand names are able to convey product information in stead of consumers having to gather information by using search engines on the World Wide Web. They argue that when consumers search for information on products, they are met by challenges, such as lack of information and uncertainty about product quality. Another argument is that if the quality of products cannot be determined before purchase, new sellers can enter the market with low quality products, gain profit, and leave the market before the word of low quality products has spread to other consumers. Thus, it is suggested that consumers gather information from the Web prior to purchasing products, although it can be a time consuming process (Ward and Lee 2000). Do note that at the time of this research, the Internet was still emerging. Hence, while Ward and Lee (2000) found that product brands do convey product information, they further hypothesize that the increase of consumer experience and the Internet will decrease reliance on brands.

A third research concerns whether developed-country companies should choose a corporate branding strategy or a product branding strategy when entering an emerging market. By combining two research streams, market entry and branding strategy, Xie and Boggs (2006) lay out a framework encompassing factors that affect the branding decision (347-348). They differentiate the two strategies by categorizing corporate branding as the strategy where brand and corporate have the same name, while "product branding builds separate brand identities for different products" (Xie and Boggs 2006, 347). Some of the differences between corporate and product brands are argued to be: product brands usually target a consumer group, while corporate brands are targeted towards all stakeholders; product branding can be conducted in the marketing department, whereas corporate branding needs cross-functional coordination with other departments; and product brands are relatively short-term compared to corporate brands, and thus the latter are usually also more strategic (ibid, 350). To briefly sum up Xie and Boggs' (2006) framework, five initial factors affect a company's choice of branding strategy in an emerging market: stakeholder interests, corporate image and reputation, market complexity, marketing costs, and product characteristics (ibid, 352). Furthermore, these are moderated by three intervening variables: the size of the company, the length of experience of the company, and the extent of a company's international experience (ibid, 358-359). Conclusively, Xie and Boggs (2006) argue that there is not one strategy that works for all companies but this framework can aid companies in identifying the best branding strategy for them when entering an emerging market (ibid, 360).

2.2 Brand equity

In 1965, Marquardt, Makens, and Larzelere tested how many consumers are brand conscious and how many of these were willing to pay more for known brands than unknown brands (45). The product tested was frozen whole turkeys in the week preceding Easter, when the demand for frozen turkeys is large in the studied country. The hypothesis was that people "are willing to pay more for a well-known brand than for an unknown brand" (Marquardt, Makens, and Larzelere 1965, 45). In 11 different scenarios, 124 respondents were tested to see whether they would choose the well-known brand over the unknown brand or wait and see if they could get a better price on the well-known brand, possibly ending up with the unknown brand. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to choose between a turkey of a well-known brand, two dollars, or a turkey of an unknown brand in all scenarios (ibid, 47). Conclusively, the study showed that most respondents are brand conscious and prefer the well-known brand even if they have to pay more (ibid, 49).

Other research shows that in order to fight the frequency of short-term price competition, companies have to turn to long-term strategies, namely building strong brands. Briefly put, Aaker and Biel (1993) describe brand equity as "the value added to the functional product or service [associated] with the brand" (2) and includes the variables brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations attached to a brand name or symbol. They further argue that brand equity is driven by brand image. The figure laid out describes how brand equity is build according to Aaker and Biel (1993, 70). The parts playing a role on the brand equity are *brand image* and *all non-image factors contributing to brand equity*, where the outcome is the market value of the brand (ibid). They acknowledge that the through behavioral measures, the figure can describe that equity exists but it can not explain the reasons in consumer minds that drives equity (Aaker and Biel 1993, 71).

Due to lack of research, Buil, Martinez, and de Chernatony (2013) examine the role of brand equity in international marketing (62). By focusing on data from two European countries the UK and Spain, they propose and test a model to better understand brand equity and the effects it has on consumers' responses. They found that three factors play a role when creating brand associations: perceived value, brand personality, and organizational associations (Buil, Martinez, and de Chernatony 2013, 66). Furthermore, the results show that perceived value, perceived quality, and organizational associations have a positive effect on brand equity and that the results of brand equity is that consumers are willing to pay more for the brand, whereas brand personality does not play a role in building equity (ibid, 67). They argue that special attention should be paid to the brand association, perceived value. Similar to previous studies, Buil, Martinez, and de Chernatorny (2013) found that brand equity has diagnostic value and can explain future sales performance (67).

The outline of previous research on the areas of corporate branding, product branding, and brand equity leads a natural way of continuing to the definition of terms used in this thesis.

3.0 Definition of terms

This section will clarify definitions of various terms used in this thesis in order to avoid confusion. The terms defined are *branding*; *customer-based brand equity vs. brand equity*; *case, issue, or scandal*; and *milk formula*.

3.1 Branding

Branding has been defined by many scholars over the year (Aaker 1996; Coomber 2002; Balmer and Gray 2003). This thesis will use the definition of Philip Kotler (1991, as cited by Keller 1993, 2). Kotler (1991) determines a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (as cited by Keller 1993, 2). As this thesis uses the theoretical knowledge of Kevin Keller, who uses the brand definition of Kotler, it seems natural to also apply the definition by Kotler in this thesis.

3.2 Customer-based brand equity vs. brand equity

Brand equity can relate to all stakeholders (Aaker 1996). However, as this thesis focuses on customer-based brand equity, the two terms will be used interchangeably. Customer-based brand equity will be explained in subsection *4.1 Customer-Based Brand Equity*.

3.3 Case, issue, or scandal

This thesis revolves around corporate issues and scandals. However, there is a clear distinction between an issue and a scandal (Cornelissen 2017, 192). As it will be further explained in subsection *4.3 Issues Management*, a scandal is more urgent than an issue when it comes to how and when a company should act towards it (Cornelissen 2017, 192). Since a scandal is a theoretical term and a stage developed from an issue, it is more adequate for a thesis student to refer to all of these as *case* or *issue* rather than *scandal*, seeing that not all cases mentioned in this thesis are scandals. Thus, the term *scandal* will not be used, unless a reliable source defines a certain case as a scandal. This is important to clarify because of the theoretical distinction between an *issue* and a *scandal*.

3.4 Milk formula

One of the chosen cases is Nestlé's unethical marketing of milk formula. The term 'milk formula' covers marketing of all substitutes of breast milk for feeding infants and young children. Milk formula is used by mothers after giving birth instead of or as a substitute to breastfeeding.

4.0 Theories

This section will explain the chosen theories, more specifically, Customer-Based Brand Equity, Cause Related Marketing, as well as Issues Management. These will build the foundation of the analyses later in the thesis.

4.1 Customer-Based Brand Equity

Keller (1993) explains brand equity as unique attributes of a brand that generate association within the consumer, giving the example: "when certain outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand name that would not occur if the same product or service did not have that name" (1). When consumers are familiar with the brand and can recall favorable, strong, and unique associations from memory to the brand, it is called customer-based brand equity (Keller 1993, 2).

Brand knowledge consists of two components, brand awareness and brand image. It is important for marketing managers to understand their consumers' brand knowledge, as this influences what comes to mind when a consumer thinks of the brand (ibid). Previous scholars have explained this as nodes (Collins and Loftus 1975; Raaijmakers and Shiffrin 1981; Ratcliff and McKoon 1988, as cited by Keller 1993, 2), which are stored information in the memory. Brand equity is based on these nodes being recalled when a consumer thinks of a known product. The nodes can recall taste, ingredients, images from recent advertising campaigns, or past product experiences (Keller 1993, 2).

4.1.1 Brand awareness

The first component of brand knowledge is brand awareness. This relates to the strength of brand nodes – the stronger the brand node is, the greater is the possibility for the consumer to identify the brand under different conditions (Keller 1993, 3). Keller (1993) explains that "brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance" (3). Brand recognition requires that the consumer has previously been exposed to the brand. Brand recall concerns the consumer's ability to bring back the brand from memory "when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue" (Keller 1993, 3). Brand awareness is significant for consumers' decision-making process for several reasons. First of all, by creating brand awareness, the brand becomes part of the consumers' consideration set when shopping. Second of all, the former results in the brand coming to consumers' minds when thinking of the product category, increasing the likelihood of the consumer choosing the brand in the store. Lastly, brand awareness influences the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image, affecting consumers' decision-making process. In order to create brand image, a vital component is to create brand nodes in the memory of the consumer. This brand node should then affect how easily information gets attached to the brand in memory (ibid).

4.1.2 Brand image

Brand image has previously been explained in various ways. Keller (1993) defines brand image as: "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (3). Similar to brand nodes, brand associations are also informational nodes held in consumer memory and are linked to brand nodes in memory. The brand associations in a consumer's memory reflect the brand perception and meaning for the consumer. This is also called brand image (Keller 1993, 3). Different types of brand associations exist and may be present in consumer memory. These will briefly be presented below.

4.1.2.1 Brand associations

Brand associations differ in how much information is summarized and included in the association stored in memory of the consumer. The three major categorizations of associations are attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes relate to the consumer's thoughts on the product or service and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. Benefits relate to what consumers imagine the product can do for them, and thus the personal value the consumer gives to the product. Brand attitudes relate to the consumer's overall view of the brand. Brand attitudes build on associated attributes and benefits and are the basis in what brand is chosen by the consumer (Keller 1993, 4).

Consumers favor associations of various brands differently. A marketing program has been successful if it has created favorable brand associations, to put it differently, the consumer thinks the product or service has attributes and benefits that satisfy his or her needs (ibid, 5). Brand associations can further vary in strength in consumer memory. The strength is determined by encoding, i.e. how the information enters consumer memory, and storage, i.e. how the information is maintained as brand image (ibid). In order for brands to compete with other brands in the same industry, the company needs to create unique brand associations by referring to brand attributes and benefits. Ultimately, the consumer will favor the brand over competing brands (ibid, 6).

Conclusively, Keller (1993) defines Customer-Based Brand Equity as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (8). Moreover, Keller argues that a brand has positive Customer-Based Brand Equity "if consumers react more (less) favorably to the product, price, promotion, or distribution of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix element when it is attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service" (Keller 1993, 8). Keller has further created a model to help brand managers create customer-based brand equity. The model and a revised version of it is presented below.

4.1.3 Brand resonance pyramid

The Brand Resonance Pyramid is a tool to brand building and brand equity, entailing steps from bottom to top. The first step is *brand salience* and concerns companies ensuring that the brand is identified in consumers' minds. That is to say, how often and how easily consumers think of the brand when purchasing products. The second step is *brand performance*, focusing on the product or service fulfilling the consumers' needs by creating tangible and intangible brand associations in consumer mind. Creating brand associations further play a role in the third step of *brand imagery*, dealing with the way the product fulfills the consumer's psychological or social needs. The fourth step is *brand judgments*, concerning the consumer's personal opinion and evaluations of the brand. The fifth step is *brand feelings*, which focus on consumers' emotional responses to the brand. The sixth and last step is *brand resonance*, referring "to the nature of the relationship customers have with the brand and the extent to which they feel they're "in sync" with it" (Kotler and Keller 2009, 284-285).

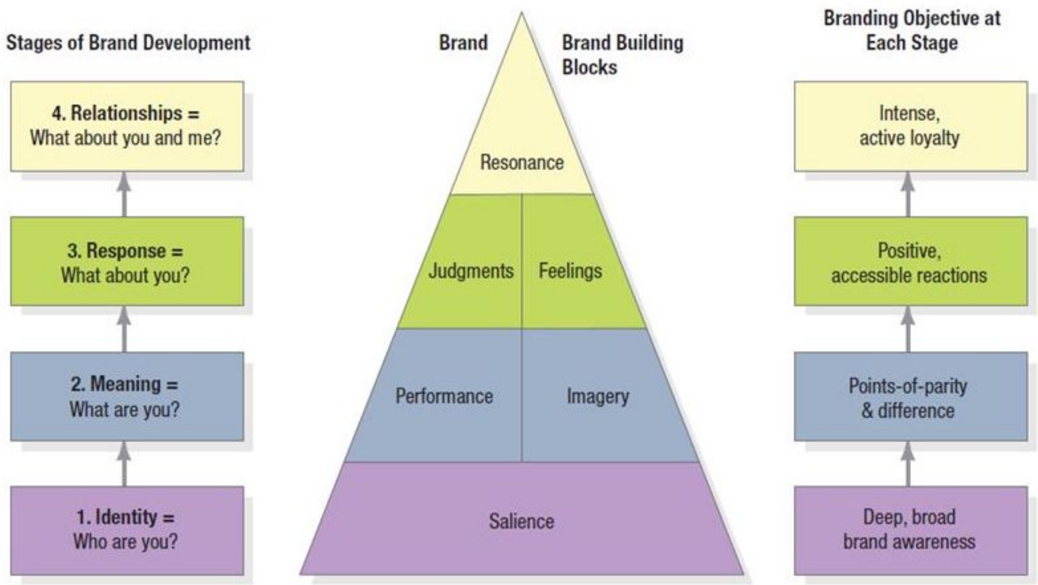

Figure 1: Brand resonance pyramid (Kotler and Keller 2009, 285).

All six steps are not investigated in this thesis, since they are not all found relevant in the relation to the aim of the thesis. The revised model contains the three steps *brand salience*, *brand judgments*, and *brand feelings* from bottom to top, similar to the original model. The first two steps are as explained above, whereas the third step has been further revised to fit this thesis. This step will look at the American consumers' feelings to the corporate cases. This will be further explained in subsection *5.3 Theoretical considerations*. The revised model is pictured below.

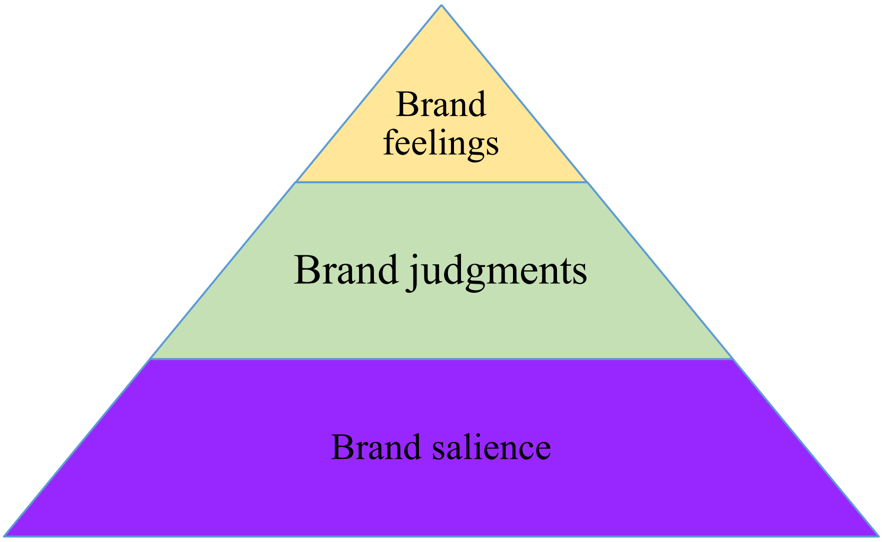

Figure 2: A revised brand resonance pyramid.

4.2 Cause Related Marketing

Cause Related Marketing has existed since the 1800s, although it was called differently (Adkins 2005, 9). Today, it still has many names, including social marketing, charity marketing, social investment, public purpose marketing, and passion branding, just to name a few (ibid, 9-10). Cause Related Marketing is described as a company marketing itself on a good cause or charity. This creates value for the company in the way of enhancing reputation and image, showing core values, making corporate social responsibility visible, increasing loyalty and building relationships with stakeholders, providing differentiation among competitors, and increasing sales (ibid, 75-76). It benefits the charity in the way that the cause gains more awareness in society and the public, ultimately increasing donations. Finally, it benefits consumers as it creates a feeling of contributing to a good cause or charity (ibid, 9-10). According to Adkins (2005), consumers care about corporations' activities in society, and using Cause Related Marketing improves the image of the company (79). Furthermore, consumers are willing to protest, boycott a product or company, and switch to other brands if the consumer believes that corporate activities are unjust or unethical (Adkins 2005, 81-83).

Cause Related Marketing includes several mediums: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, licensing, direct marketing, and sponsorship, related to a cause or charity (ibid, 10). Here, merely *advertising* and *public relations* will be accounted for, as these are relevant for the thesis.

4.2.1 Advertising

This medium includes TV, internet, and print and press campaigns. The advertising campaign can focus on a sales promotion, or it can focus on advertising the message of a good cause. For the company, this can create or reinforce brand reputation, differentiate the company from competitors, and it can establish relationship and loyalty between the product, cause, and corporation. TV commercials used for Cause Related Marketing have previously shown to add value to both the company and to the cause due to the message reaching a broad audience (Adkins 2005, 116-117).

4.2.2 Public relations

Similar to regular PR activities, the importance of getting PR coverage for Cause Related Marketing is to have newsworthy, innovative, and exciting information. However, the difference is that the public needs to know that the PR for Cause Related Marketing is sincere, open, transparent, and honest; that the relationship between corporation and cause/charity is based on mutual respect; and that both sides have balanced benefits. It is inappropriate for the corporation to spend more time on their own interests in the partnership than spend on the actual cause. As previously mentioned, there is a tendency of vigilant consumers, who will protest if the consumers feel that the cause is unjust or unethical. Therefore, the corporate communication has to be open and honest for the public and media to support the partnership and to achieve the greatest benefit of the partnership (Adkins 2005, 118).

4.3 Issues Management

As society has an increased interest in health and safety, environmental concerns, security and terrorism, and financial risk and regulation, these have also become of interest for corporations. Consequently, Issues Management has grown within corporate communication (Cornelissen 2017, 191). Cornelissen (2017) defines an issue as "(a) a public concern about the organization's decisions and operations that may or may not also involve (b) a point of conflict in opinions and judgments regarding those decisions and operations" (192). More often than not, topics are already of public concern before organizations, activists, the public, or stakeholders campaign and make it an issue to a corporate organization.

The well-known Issues Management expert, Howard Chase, describes an issue as "an unsettled matter which is ready for a decision" (as cited by Cornelissen 2017, 192). Chase emphasizes that a company needs to take action when facing an issue in order for it not to develop into a crisis. A crisis is defined by Cornelissen (2017) as "an issue that requires not just decisive but also immediate action from the organization" (192). A way of distinguishing an issue from a crisis is to think of an issue as latent, which can change to an active issue over time, ultimately becoming a crisis. The change can happen if for instance the public's opinion on a latent issue changes and becomes more important to the public (Cornelissen 2017, 193). It is not possible for companies to manage issues entirely, as issues can not be foreseen but companies can be prepared. Managing issues involves four stages: environmental scanning, issues identification and analysis, issue-specific response strategies, and evaluation. These will be further explained here.

4.3.1 Environmental scanning

All companies exist in a complex environment that can change at any time. The impact of these changes depends on how well the company understands the historical and environmental circumstances of a society. The expected and potential changes in environmental variables can positively affect a company in the way of creating opportunities and negatively affect a company in the way of creating a threat. Whether the impacts have a positive or negative influence on a company further depends on whether the organization can respond to changes, relying on strengths and weaknesses of corporate values, resources, and competences. Corporations will not be able to identify and analyze each change but can be prepared. A way for corporations to analyze changes is with the use of a DESTEP analysis, looking at Demographic, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological, and Political developments. Another way is to use the SWOT analysis, which investigates the Strengths and Weaknesses of the company as well as the Opportunities and Threats within the environment (Cornelissen 2017, 194-195).

4.3.2 Issues identification and analysis

The previous step, environmental scanning, identified issues that companies should be aware of. It is vital to be aware of whether the issue will become of governmental or public interest; if the issue will continue; if the company can impact the resolution; and be aware of the main stakeholder groups and publics involved in the issue. A way of analyzing stakeholders' or publics' opinions on issues is to use *the Position-importance matrix* (see figure below). The vertical axe shows whether the stakeholder or public is supportive of or opposed to an issue, whilst the horizontal axe shows how important that stakeholder or public is (Cornelissen 2017, 196).

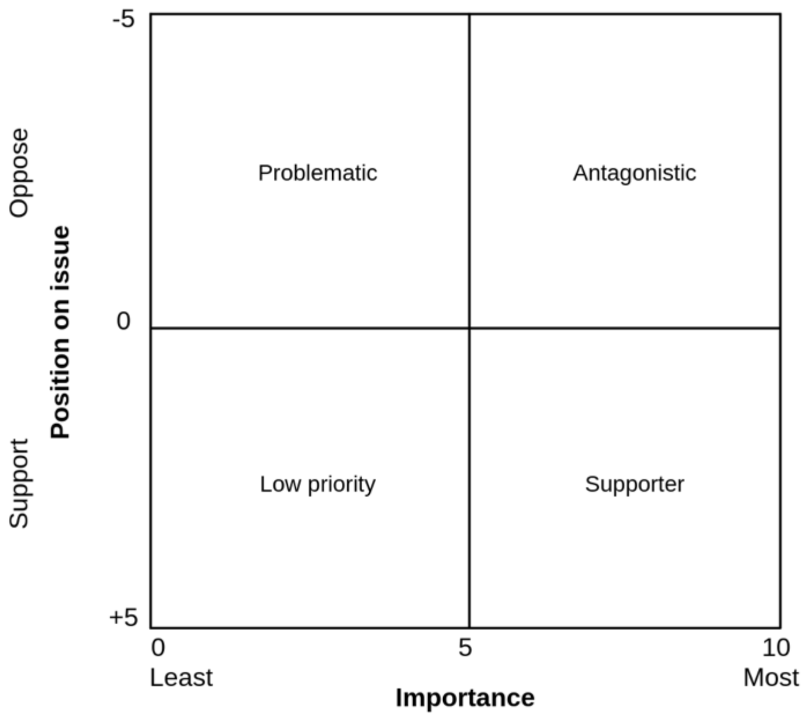

Figure 3: The position-importance matrix (Cornelissen 2017, 196).

Four groups of stakeholders/publics can be identified using the matrix:
Problematic stakeholders/publics: these are likely to be opposed to the corporation's course of action but have little power of influence.
Antagonistic stakeholders/publics: the stakeholders who are likely to oppose the corporation and have strong power of influence.
Low priority stakeholders/publics: these stakeholders are likely to support the corporation but have little power of influence.
Supporter stakeholders/publics: the stakeholders that support the corporation's course of action and have strong power of influence.

Once the stakeholders have been placed within these categories, the company can plan a communication strategy for each, for instance the company may choose to convince the *problematic* stakeholder group to become supportive of the company or prepare a defensive statement. For the *antagonistic* stakeholder group, a company commonly chooses to prepare counter-arguments and bargaining strategies to win their support. The strategy applied for the *low priority* stakeholder group consists of educational programs. Lastly, the strategies used for *supporter* stakeholders consist of providing information in order to maintain and even strengthen their support of the corporation's actions (Cornelissen 2017, 196). The next step is to identify whether the stage of an issue is *active* or *intense*. This is based on public debate about the issue and the pressure put on the company to change its actions. This can be identified by using *the 'Life circle' of an issue* that divides issues into four stages: emergence, debate, codification, and enforcement (see figure below).

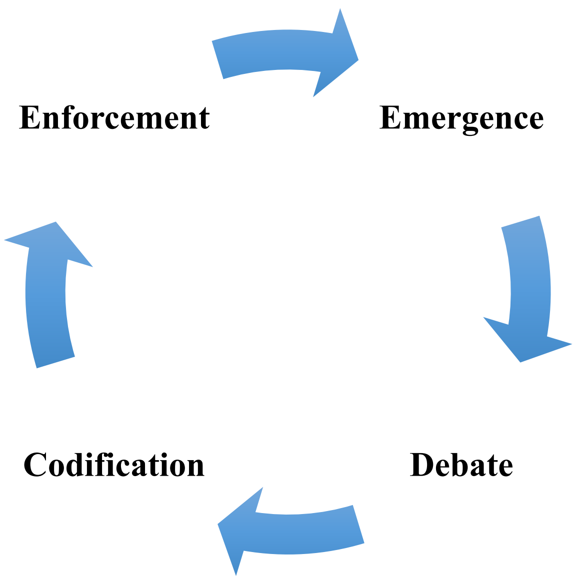

Figure 4: The 'life circle' of an issue (Cornelissen 2017, 197).

The model emphasizes the importance of companies *emerging* to an issue and engaging in the public *debate* to try to steer the issue in a positive direction for the company before the issue becomes *codified*. If a company chooses not to go into the public debate, the activists can freely set the frame of the issue. Consequently, an *enforced* issue in the public can lead to government legislation, industrial action, or consumer boycotts (Cornelissen 2017, 197). Thus, by addressing issues in the early stages (*emergence* and *debate*), companies can influence stakeholders to become supporters and stop the issue of developing into the later stages (*codification* and *enforcement*).

4.3.3 Issue-specific response strategies

According to the framework, there are four response strategies to an issue: First, *a buffering strategy* is when a company tries to stall the issue by remaining silent and continuing its behavior. This strategy involves little communication from the company but can include a few defensive remarks to the media regarding company behavior. Second, choosing *a bridging strategy* means that the company recognizes the issue and wishes to change its behavior. Bridging occurs when corporations adapt to expectations of important stakeholders and publics. This strategy involves a great deal of communication in the form of issue-led campaigns, progress reporting, and briefings to journalists. Third, by choosing *an advocacy strategy*, the company wishes to change the opinions of stakeholders and publics on the issue through campaigns and lobbyism. The aim can both be in response to stakeholder critique and as a way of anticipating future expectations. This strategy includes communication in the form of lobbying and campaigning. Finally, *a thought leading strategy* is used by companies that identify "salient, emergent issues before these issues become active or intense, and it then proactively stakes out a leadership position on the issue" (Cornelissen 2017, 198-199).

Several factors play a role when companies choose between the four strategies: How intense is the issue? How important is the issue to the stakeholders? What are the values and beliefs of the organizational managers? (ibid, 199). By closely following the issue, the societal debate, and the evolvement of the issue, a company will be able to know how intense and how important the issue is to stakeholders.

4.3.4 Evaluation

In this last step, corporations have to evaluate its chosen strategies. Here, the company needs to look at how the issue has developed and whether the opinions of stakeholders and publics have changed. The company further needs to evaluate whether its chosen buffering, bridging, advocacy, or thought leading response strategy was the correct choice and what the outcome of the chosen strategy was (Cornelissen 2017, 202).

5.0 Methodology and data

In this section, the justifications of the methodological considerations will be clarified. More specifically, this section contains the research design; case and company descriptions; theoretical considerations; primary and secondary data; sampling; coding; and data analysis.

5.1 Research design

According to Bryman (2012), a research design "represents the structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data" (45). There are several kinds of research designs. However, as this thesis uses the approach of the comparative design, only this will be explained here. A comparative design includes studying two different cases, using the same methods. The most common reason for a researcher to choose this approach is that he or she believes that a better understanding of social phenomena is acquired when two contrasting cases are compared (Bryman 2012, 72). Similar to this thesis, the distinct cases involving Nike and Nestlé are compared using the same methods in order to understand what the approaches applied when solving the cases can contribute with when creating customer-based brand equity. The research design is also called multiple-case study (Bryman and Bell 2015, 74). In a multiple-case study, the researcher seeks to examine whether a theory will or will not hold in a certain case (ibid). In this thesis, the two theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management are examined in relation to their separate contribution when establishing customer-based brand equity. The multiple-case study has also been criticized by Dyer and Wilkins (1991), who describe how the researcher tends to pay less attention to the context and more attention to the contradicting factors when a multiple-case study is applied (as cited by Bryman and Bell 2015, 75). While this might be the case in some research, the intentions of this thesis are to both examine how corporate issues relate to Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management as well as how they differ in the sense of what they can contribute with when creating brand equity.

My epistemological view is interpretative. Bryman (2012) explains interpretivism as: "the views of writers who have been critical of the application of the scientific model to the study of the social world and who have been influenced by different intellectual traditions…" (28). This is compatible with this thesis because I use traditional theories, such as Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, but I am critical towards the outcome of using these theories and their relevance when creating brand equity. Furthermore, this thesis seeks, among other things, to understand the American consumer perception of brands and whether the perception changes after corporate issues. Thus, this is a study of the social world of American consumers.

This epistemological view naturally leads to taking an ontological view of constructionism. With a constructionist view, I see culture as socially constructed, which can be reconstructed (Bryman 2012, 34). Becker (1982) suggests that "people create culture continuously.… No set of cultural understandings… provides a perfectly applicable solution to any problem people have to solve in the course of their day, and they therefore must remake those solutions, adapt their understandings to the new situation in the light of what is different about it" (as cited by Bryman 2012, 34). The two corporations Nike and Nestlé are multinational, i.e. they need to find appropriate solutions to issues occurring in cultures that are not necessarily their own cultures. The constructivist view is shown in this thesis in the way that the two companies need to adapt to the situation from issue to issue in order to find the proper solution and they need to adapt to the specific stakeholder or public's expectations.

This constructivist view matches the view of this thesis, since this thesis seeks to examine how the companies have adapted to situations and found solutions to corporate issues individually. Especially in the case of Nestlé, this thesis will review how the company has treated three distinct cases. In addition to that, this thesis aims to study what perception American consumers have of the corporate brands Nike and Nestlé and whether these perceptions changes after learning about the corporate issues. According to Bryman (2012) constructivism states that social phenomena and their meanings are continuously changing by social actors and their interactions (33). This is congruent with this thesis, since the American consumer perception of the corporate brands have assumingly changed after the issues and after interactions with others, whether the interaction is on social media, traditional media, or with family and friends. The epistemological and ontological views further contribute to the nature of this thesis taking a qualitative approach.

As explained earlier, this thesis will focus on cases involving the two companies Nike and Nestlé, which will be further described in subsection *5.2 Case and company descriptions*. Taking a look at research methods, the most common for this type of thesis is quantitative and qualitative research methods. Briefly described, the nature of qualitative research method is for the research to have an inductive approach with an interpretative epistemological orientation and a constructivist ontological orientation, whereas the quantitative research takes a deductive approach with a positivistic epistemological orientation as well as an objectivist ontological orientation (Bryman 2012, 36).

Taking a quick glance at this thesis, it might seem as there is a use of mixed methods due to the epistemological and ontological orientations and to the use of questionnaire. Although this is not recognized by all researchers, this has been implemented since the early 1980s (Bryman 2012, 628). However, this is not the case with this thesis, since merely one component of the qualitative research method will be used. Due to this thesis taking an interpretative epistemological orientation and a constructivist ontological orientation, it is natural to use the qualitative research method for the overall thesis. The choice of using parts of quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire is in order to get a broader picture of the American consumers' perceptions of the two brands Nike and Nestlé. Nonetheless, because questionnaire is quantitative and the overall approach is qualitative, I have chosen to add open ended questions to the questionnaire in order to get more thorough answers from the respondents. It is also possible for this thesis to implement semi-structured interviews instead of questionnaires, which will give the opportunity of asking follow-up questions to the respondents, making the answers more thorough. The choice of using a questionnaire can result in some respondents giving short answers to the open ended questions, as well as some respondents can answer thoroughly but still leave the researcher with unanswered questions. However, as mentioned above, the questionnaire is chosen in order to get a more representative view of the American consumer perception of the brands. As such, there will always be advantages and disadvantages to both methods in relation to the research. Although quantitative research methods are used, this thesis will fundamentally take a qualitative approach in the way of coding the data from the quantitative research and the approach of the analysis.

The primary data will be collected by using a quantitative research method, while for secondary data, desk research will be used. While parts of a quantitative method are used, the epistemological and ontological views of this thesis, as explained above, lead to taking an overall qualitative approach. Furthermore, the analysis of all the empirical data is treated with a qualitative approach. This will be further explained in subsection *5.3 Data collection*. The theories Customer-Based Brand Equity, Cause Related Marketing, and Issues Management will build the analysis, which will be divided into two parts. First, by using Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity, the analysis will focus on American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestlé and whether the issues have affected their perceptions of the brands. Second, the analysis will focus on how the two companies have handled the issues with the use of the two theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management. Lastly, the two analyses will be tied together by discussing what Issues Management and Cause Related Marketing respectively can contribute with when creating brand equity. The research design is pictured as a model in *Figure 5*.

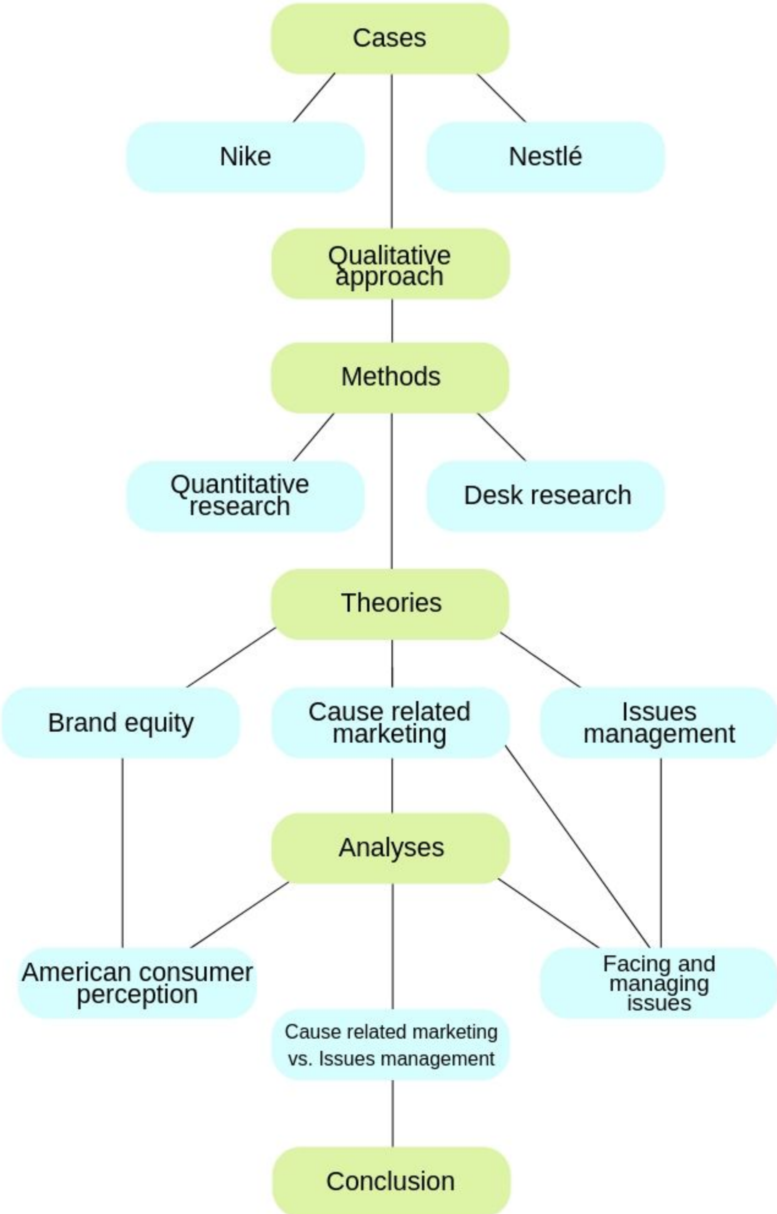

Figure 5: Research design

5.2 Company and case descriptions

This subsection will include descriptions of the two companies Nike and Nestlé, respectively. Moreover, a detailed specification of the chosen cases will be provided.

5.2.1 Nike

Nike is an American corporation founded in 1964 (Nike, Inc. 2015) with world headquarters located in Oregon, USA (Nike, Inc. 2019a). The mission statement of Nike is to "Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. *If you have a body, you are an athlete" (Nike, Inc. 2019b). In 1980, the company went public with its first "Just Do It!" campaign and today, the company has distributors in more than 170 countries. Nike is the world's largest supplier and manufacturer of athletic shoes, apparel, and equipment (Statista n.d.). Nike has expanded with three other brands, namely Converse Inc., Jordan Brand, and Hurley International LLC (Nike, Inc. 2019a). In 2018, Nike's worldwide sales was USD 36,397 million (Nike, Inc. 2018).

5.2.2 Nike and Kaepernick

The activist movement, Black Lives Matter, is "an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter n.d.). The movement started using the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media in 2014 (Day 2015), which went on for a long time. Two years later in August 2016, during an American football game, the NFL player Colin Kaepernick kneeled on one knee during the national anthem. He explained the reason for his actions in an interview afterwards: "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color (…)" (Oluo 2016). Customarily, in America, civilians should stand, facing the flag with right hand over heart during the national anthem to show respect to the American flag, people in the armed services, and veterans (BBC 2017). This created controversy among many Americans who believe that kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful (Kelner 2018). Consequently, no NFL team offered Kaepernick a contract and he was without a job in 2017. In September 2018, Nike released its 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" advertisement campaign with Kaepernick as the front figure and with the quote "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" (Kelner 2018). This made some people turn against Nike on social media, using the hashtags #JustBurnIt and

#BoycottNike, where people posted videos and photos of them burning Nike products (Kelner 2018).

5.2.3 Nestlé

Nestlé was founded in 1905 (Nestlé 2019a) with its headquarters located in Vevey, Switzerland (Nestlé 2019b). Today, Nestlé is the world's largest food and beverage company and present in 190 countries. Throughout the years, Nestlé has acquired and started several brands, and thus the corporation now owns more than 2,000 local and global brands (Nestlé 2019c). Nestlé states its purpose to be "Enhancing quality of life and contributing to a healthier future. Driven by our purpose we want to help shape a better world and inspire people to live healthier lives. This is how we contribute to society and ensure our long-term success" (ibid). The worldwide sales of Nestlé in 2018 was USD 94.41 million (Nestlé 2018).

5.2.4 Nestlé and corporate issues

Since Nestlé have been facing several public issues, three of these are chosen for the analysis of this thesis. Why these cases are chosen will be further clarified in subsection *5.2.5 Case justification*. The variation of issues involving Nestlé will show how the company has handled each of them. The issues concern unethical marketing of milk formula in third world countries, the use of unsustainable palm oil, and bottling of water. These will be presented here in the order the issues occurred in public.

5.2.4.1 Nestlé and milk formula

In 1867, Henri Nestlé, the founder of Nestlé, invented the breast milk substitute. In the early 1970s, the demand for the substitute grew because of women entering the labor market and because of the influence by advertising campaigns (Save the Children 2018, 1). Milk formula manufacturers, including Nestlé, would dress their saleswomen in nurses' costumes and give free samples of the formula to mothers in third world countries. The saleswomen did not guide the mothers in how to properly use the formula. Unaware, since most of the women in the third world countries were illiterate and had low knowledge on hygiene and sanitation, the mothers mixed the formula with unhygienic water, resulting in an increase in infant mortality from malnutrition, diarrhea, and pneumonia. While the formula became popular in both industrialized and poor countries, many organizations, senators, and doctors started to talk poorly about the product. In 1979, International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) was formed in order to fight against corporations using unethical marketing for their milk formula (IBFAN 2018). In 1981, the World Health Organization (WHO) made an International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, where 118 member states of WHO voted for the code. The code was a non-binding measure addressing nations and companies, which encouraged nations to enact laws and regulations according to the code (Save the Children 2018, 8).

5.2.4.2 Nestlé and palm oil

For years, companies, among others Nestlé, have used palm oil in products, such as chocolate, soap, shampoo, and several foods. In March 2010, Greenpeace started an online campaign to stop Nestlé from buying palm oil from suppliers that destroy the rainforest, ultimately destroying orangutan habitat. The campaign was launched with a video called "Have a break?". Due to orders from Nestlé, the video was removed from YouTube because of copyright claims (the video uses Nestlé's KitKat chocolate bar; Skar 2010a). Greenpeace reposted the video on Vimeo, resulting in 100,000 views within 24 hours and 1.5 million views within weeks. Due to large support of the Greenpeace campaign, consumers' outrage on Nestlé's social media pages, and Greenpeace activists campaigning at the Nestlé 2010 annual shareholder meeting, the campaign resulted in success for the activists. A couple of months later, Nestlé announced that it will "cut forest destruction out of its products and out of its supply chain" (Skar 2010b).

But this was not the end for Greenpeace, who sees this as just a starting point for Nestlé and will keep a close eye on the company in its future business activities (Skar 2010b). The pressure from Greenpeace made other large companies, such as Unilever and Kraft to cut out the destructive palm oil from their supply chains. Although Nestlé clarified that it would cut "dirty" palm oil out of its supply chain, in July 2010, Greenpeace found evidence that the company was still getting its palm oil from the same supplier in Indonesia (Greenpeace 2010). Nestlé has announced that by 2020, the company will no longer have unsustainable palm oil in its supply chains (Nestlé 2019d). But a Greenpeace report called *The Final Countdown* from 2018 shows that at that time, Nestlé was still linked to 23 out of 26 "dirty producer groups" of palm oil (Greenpeace International 2018, 3).

5.2.4.3 Nestlé and water

According to the US governmental drought portal, there have been droughts in California since the beginning of the 1900s. The latest California drought lasted from December 27, 2011 to March 5, 2019 (U.S. drought portal 2019). In spite of that, Nestlé Waters North America (NWNA) has been piping spring water from the mountains near San Bernardino National Forest, California, for 122 years and the piping is ongoing (Nestlé Waters North America n.d. a). Nestlé Waters bottles millions of liters of water from the springs in California with a license that costs the company USD 524 a year (Morris 2016). In 2014, NWNA bottled 28 million gallons (106 million liters) of water from California, and in 2015, the number was 36 million gallons (136 million liters) of water (Morris 2016). Nestlé's current permit to pipe the water near San Bernardino National Forest was last reviewed and issued in 1978 (James 2016). Nestlé claims to only collect the water that naturally comes to surface and that the amount is regulated according to the year and rainfall, thus claiming that the collection of water is not damaging to the environment. However, according to a retired US Forest Service hydrologist from the San Bernardino area, Nestlé cannot know how much water can be removed without damaging nature as this has never been studied (Morris 2016). Several Californians are concerned for the area near Nestlé's piping due to the Californian drought. The US Forest Service has arranged meetings regarding this matter where several Californians have aired its concerns for the area as well as the issues with sustainability and drought (James 2016). Nevertheless, Nestlé continues its actions of bottling water from the drought stricken area.

5.2.5 Case justification

First of all, Nestlé has been chosen for this thesis as the company has faced numerous issues, but is impressively still the world's largest food and beverage company. Out of the many issues, the three cases clarified above have been selected because they take place in different times, revolve around different topics, and it is possible to find information on the specific cases. By choosing several cases, it is possible to examine how Nestlé has used Issues Management in each case. Moreover, by looking at more than one case, it gives a reasonable understanding of how Nestlé is still the largest food and beverage company. Second of all, the case involving Nike and Kaepernick has been selected, since it is a current issue that is a hot topic in US media as well as mentioned in several other countries. Furthermore, for this campaign, Nike used Cause Related Marketing, making it compatible with the second part of the analysis presented later in this thesis. There could also have been a representation of more than one case involving Nike, since the company has used Cause Related Marketing several times. However, merely this case was chosen due to the backlash it created at Nike by consumers. Lastly, the two companies, Nike and Nestlé, and the four cases are comparable, since they can give a view of what Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management can contribute with individually when creating brand equity.

5.3 Theoretical considerations

The theories used in this thesis has a deductive role. This means that the implications are deduced from the theories and the findings derives from the theories (Bryman 2012, 24). The theory Customer-Based Brand Equity is selected as it explains what brand equity is, what it can be used for, and how it is build. This is vital for this thesis in order to analyze whether Nike and Nestlé have build customer-based brand equity. Furthermore, the theory Cause Related Marketing is chosen, since it is anticipated that the Nike/Kaepernick campaign is build on these theoretical grounds. Lastly, the theory Issues Management is chosen in order to examine how Nestlé has been able to face several issues while still maintaining its title as the world's largest food and beverage company. These three theories build the foundation of the analysis along with the additional data.

As shown in the theoretical subsection *4.1.3 Brand resonance pyramid*, some modifications have been made to Keller's model, belonging to the theory Customer-Based Brand Equity. Keller's pyramid contains of six steps but in the revised pyramid, three of these steps have been removed, leaving merely three steps. These remaining steps are *Brand salience*, *Brand judgments*, and *Brand feelings*. This thesis seeks to investigate whether there is a relation between the cases described in subsection *5.2 Company and case description* and the American consumer perception of the brands in relation to creating customer-based brand equity. Thus, I find it vital to merely look at the three abovementioned steps, and the three remaining steps have been removed, since they are not relevant in relation to what this thesis seeks to investigate.

During the analysis, some limitations occurred with one theory. Cause Related Marketing is used on the case with Nike and Kaepernick, which was received with mixed feelings by the Americans, i.e. some were positive while others were negative towards the advertising campaign. Since the theory do not address the negative sides of using Cause Related Marketing, it was complicated to handle this part. The lack in the theory might be because usually, companies partnering with a charity or a cause is viewed positively. However, since the matter of Kaepernick concerns racial inequality and since his protests were viewed as disrespectful by some Americans, the same feelings might have been projected onto Nike's advertising campaign with Kaepernick.

Lastly, this thesis includes a theoretical contribution. As mentioned in the introduction, creating customer-based brand equity is important for companies' overall sales. On the other hand, it can be harmful for companies if and when they face issues that has a stakeholder on the other side of the table. Today, many large corporations have faced and managed issues but the interesting part is to know whether consumers are affected of how companies handle the issues. As a theoretical contribution, this thesis seeks to investigate whether the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, separately, can add value to companies when creating brand equity. This will be analyzed by looking at cases involving Nike and Nestlé where the theories have been implemented.

5.4 Data collection

This subsection will entail the process and considerations of primary and secondary data, respectively. The term *primary* data indicate that the data has been collected first hand, i.e. the questionnaire. The term *secondary* data represent the data that is collected second hand, covering scholarly articles, newspaper articles, and the corporate websites of Nike and Nestlé.

5.4.1 Primary data

The primary data for this thesis is built on a quantitative research questionnaire that will be answered by American consumers currently residing in the US (see the questionnaire in appendices 6-26). The survey concerns the American consumer perceptions of the two brands Nike and Nestlé, respectively. Bryman (2012) explains a self-completion questionnaire as a survey where respondents read and answer the questions themselves (232). The self-completion questionnaire will be sent out through the two social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn. As I am living in Denmark and the questionnaire needs American respondents, the social media platforms will be used in order to reach as many respondents as possible who are located in various American states. The questionnaire starts with some personal questions about the respondent, followed by two general questions about the respondent's perception on *sustainability* and *the right to protest*. Subsequently, the questionnaire is divided into two parts, where in the first part, the questions are revolved around the brand of Nike and the second part about the brand of Nestlé. Due to the lack of an interviewer when using self-completion questionnaires, the questionnaire cannot be too long, as well as it needs to be easy to follow with questions that are easy to answer (Bryman 2012, 233).

As a result, a questionnaire of 22 questions is formed, which takes a maximum of ten minutes to complete. The number of questions is chosen, since the questionnaire will not take much time for the respondent to complete, while the amount of questions will give a thorough understanding of the respondents' perceptions of the two brands. The questions will be based on Keller's theory of Customer-Based Brand Equity and the revised model of Brand Resonance Pyramid in order to examine whether Nike and Nestlé have created brand equity and what the American consumer perception of the brands are. Furthermore, the questionnaire seeks to investigate whether the American consumer perceptions of the brands have changed after the cases mentioned earlier in subsection *4.2 Case and company descriptions.* Prior to starting the questionnaire, the respondents solely know the duration of the survey, that they need to be living in the US, and that the survey concerns American consumer perception of corporate brands. The respondent will only be able to view one question at a time and will not be able to go back in order for the respondent not being able to change the answers once they are given. By not giving the respondents too much information and not giving them the opportunity to go back and change their answers, it gives the respondents' answers more reliability because they will not be able to search for information on the cases and companies prior to starting the survey. Thus, the answers collected are less influenced by other's opinions and the media, especially if the respondents do not know of the cases prior to answering the questionnaire.

Reliability concerns whether the findings of a research can be repeated with the same results and is closely related to replication (Bryman 2012, 46-47). Although replication is not common in social research, it can be argued that some of the findings in this thesis are replicable. These are the findings of the second part of the analysis. While the arguments are based on specific cases involving specific companies, the findings also give an overview of whether the theories Cause Related Management and Issues Management can contribute to creating brand equity. Thus, these results are to some extent replicable. Validity deals with "whether a measure of a concept really measures that concept" (ibid, 170). This study fulfils the criteria of ecological validity, since it measures opinions, values, attitudes, and knowledge base of the American consumers towards the brands Nike and Nestlé and towards the cases involving the companies (ibid, 48). Since this study merely uses a part of the quantitative research method in the sense of a questionnaire and the results and overall approach of the thesis are rooted in the qualitative method, it is not possible to generalize the results from the questionnaire. Thus, I will not be going further in depth of this part.

The questions for the survey are formed as both open and closed questions. The answers will build the foundation of the first part of the analysis, thus answering the first research question, *"What is the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestle?"*. The questions in the two parts of the questionnaire are the same overall. However, a few questions are added to one part and left out of the other. The two questions: *"How many of these brands do you know?"* and *"How many of these brands do you know are owned by Nestlé?"* are added to the second part of the questionnaire in order to discover whether respondents know of Nestlé's multiple product brands. As Nike does not have several sub-brands, these questions have been left out of the first part.

Some limitations occurred during the formation of the questionnaire. Although the questionnaire had been checked several times prior to publishing, I did not realize until shortly after that the questionnaire had two errors. My intentions were to show the images of each brand logo and ask the respondents: *"Do you know this logo?"*. However, after the questionnaire had been published and received two answers, it came to my attention that the images of the logos did not show with the question. Hence, the questions were removed permanently from the questionnaire. The removal of the questions was not solely on the basis of technical issues but also because I did not wish to discard the two answers that I had already received. The intention of asking whether the respondents know the logo is to test the brand recognition of the respondents, i.e. whether the consumer can recognize the logo in a random context (see subsection *3.1.1 Brand awareness*). Another mistake made was the lack of information gathering prior to posting the questionnaire. After the questionnaire had been published, research showed that the KitKat chocolate bar is produced by Hershey's (an American chocolate company) in the United States, while produced by Nestlé in Canada and Europe (Zielinski 2011). Thus, in question 18 in the questionnaire *"How many of these* *brands do you know are owned by Nestlé?"* (Appendix 24), "KitKat" should not had been an option in the list of sub-brands.

5.4.2 Secondary data

The secondary data of this thesis are newspaper articles about the cases, webpages from NGOs and international institutions about the cases, and the corporate websites of Nike and Nestlé. In a combination with the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, this data will be applied in the second part of the analysis. Furthermore, the secondary data will give an overview of how the companies have faced and managed the issues and what the outcome of the chosen solutions to the issues have been. Since the case of Nike and Kaepernick received much attention from the media, newspaper articles have been chosen to give another representation of the American consumers' perception of the case. The webpages from NGOs and international institutions have become part of the secondary data, since some organizations, such as Greenpeace and Save the Children, have protested and started campaigns against Nestlé's actions. Thus, these will give a different perspective on the cases. Lastly, it is vital to have the corporate websites of the companies that are involved in the cases to also represent their points of view on the cases. The majority of the secondary data will be presented and analyzed in the second part of the analysis. This approach has been chosen in order to give the reader a better understanding of the excessive amount of information from various parties in the cases, since it gives a better overview to have all the information of one case gathered.

5.5 Sampling

The questionnaire seeks to find respondents that are American residents between 20-69 years old. The minimum age is set to 20 years in order to, hopefully, achieve a high level of maturity from respondents. As the questionnaire will be sent out on the social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn, it is assumed that the questionnaire will not reach many potential respondents that are over the age of 69. As the case of Nike/Kaepernick is based in the US, I find it appropriate to examine the consumer perception of Americans, since I assume that the case has had the most influence there. Furthermore, respondents need to be current residents in America, since it is presumed that the case has been discussed in media and between family and friends, giving the best results for the questionnaire. Respondents need to disclose their age as well as the state that they are currently living in to, hopefully, get as divergent a palette of respondents as possible. Apart from that, all respondents are anonymous as further personal details are not important for the results of the questionnaire. The number of required respondents is between 25 and 30 people. This is based on Hogg, Tanis, and Zimmerman's (2015) statistical calculations where they found that the error difference between a sample size of 25-30 people and a sample size of 100 people is little (393-397). Furthermore, as argued in subsection *5.1 Research design*, this thesis takes a qualitative approach, i.e. the results from the questionnaire will not be used to make a generalization but rather the results are used to get an impression of the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestlé. Arguably, a smaller sample size is acceptable.

5.6 Coding

The coding of the questionnaire responses will entail both diagrams of the closed questions and thematically coding of the open questions. Furthermore, the results from the questionnaire will be coded in order to give a better overview for the analysis as well as for the reader. The themes for the coding are once again based on the revised model of Brand Resonance Pyramid, where the three steps *Brand salience*, *Brand judgments*, and *Brand feelings* are represented. The questions concerning *Brand salience* are: *"What brand do you first recall when you think of "sportswear"?"* (Nike);*"What brand do you first recall when you think of "food and beverage"?"* (Nestlé); *"How many of these brands do you know?"* (Nestlé); and *"How many of these brands do you know are owned by Nestlé?"* (Nestlé). These questions will be asked in order to see whether respondents can recall the brands Nike and Nestlé by solely getting the prompts "sportswear" and "food and beverage". Moreover, it is to see whether respondents know of the sub-brands owned by Nestlé. The questions asked regarding *Brand judgments* are: *"What associations/feelings do you recall when thinking of the Nike brand?"* (Nike); *"How do you perceive the image of Nike?"* (Nike); *"What associations/feelings do you recall when thinking of the Nestlé brand?"* (Nestlé); *"How do you perceive the image of Nestlé?"* (Nestlé). These questions will give an indication of respondents' brand associations and their feelings towards the brands. Lastly, the questions concerning *Brand feelings* are: *"In August 2016, Kaepernick refused to stand during the national anthem because he is a #BlackLivesMatter activist. How does it make you feel?"* (Nike); *"2 years later, Nike made Kaepernick the face of its 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" campaign. How does it make you feel that Nike chose Kaepernick?"* (Nike); *"How many of these cases have you heard of before?"* (Nestlé); and *"All of the previous mentioned cases* *are incidents involving Nestlé. Knowing this, does this affect your perception of the Nestlé brand?"* (Nestlé). These questions will be asked in order to get knowledge on how familiar respondents are with the cases and whether their perception of the brands have changed after hearing about the cases.

5.7 Data analysis

The analysis will be divided into two sections. Firstly, the responses from the questionnaire will be analyzed in relation to the theory Customer-Based Brand Equity in order to examine how the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestlé are. However, it is vital to mention that Keller's model the Brand Resonance Pyramid has been modified in order to fit the results this thesis is looking for. Originally, the model has six steps but because three of these steps are irrelevant to this thesis, they have been removed. Thus, the model has been revised, resulting in a new pyramid with three of the original steps, which is used in the analysis of the first part. Thus, the first part of the analysis will be divided into three sections, namely *brand salience*, *brand judgments*, and *brand feelings*. In addition to that, the last step of the pyramid *brand feelings* has been further modified. Originally, this step concerns the consumers' feelings towards the brand. In this thesis, this step concerns the consumers' feelings towards the incidents involving Nike and Nestlé. Moreover, it is vital to mention that this part of the analysis will answer the first research question. This part of the analysis intends to find out what the American consumer perceptions of the two brand are, how well the American consumers know the cases explained in subsection *5.2 Company and case description*, as well as whether the cases have an impact on their perceptions of the brands.

Secondly, the analysis will examine how Nike and Nestlé have managed and faced the cases explained earlier. Here, the theory Cause Related Marketing will be used in order to examine the case involving Nike, while the theory Issues Management will be implemented on the three cases involving Nestlé. The part focusing on the Nike/Kaepernick case will be further divided into sections related to the theory to make it easier to follow. This part will thus be divided into the sections *Reputation, image, and values*; *Relationship and sales*; and *Benefits for the cause*. Similarly, the section on Nestlé's cases is divided into the steps of the theory, where each case is analyzed under each step. The steps of this section include *Nestlé's* *environmental scanning*; *Nestlé's issues identification and analysis*; *Nestlé's issue-specific response strategies*; and *Nestlé's evaluation*.

Since the intention of the questionnaire was to get an impression of the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestlé, the thesis results should not merely be build on the grounds of the questionnaire. Therefore, the final results of the analysis will be backed up by newspaper articles, webpages of NGOs and international institutions, and the corporate websites to get a broader picture of the cases analyzed. The second part of the analysis combines the findings from the questionnaire as well as the findings from the secondary data with the chosen theories. Since various angles are included in this part of the analysis, it may seem disorganized at first. However, this approach is chosen, since it can be easier for the reader to have all important points gathered in the analysis when arguments are made. Moreover, this part of the analysis will answer the second research question and intends to find out whether the two theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management can positively contribute when companies aim at creating customer-based brand equity.

6.0 Analysis of Nike and Nestlé

In this section, the theories as well as the data collected will be combined into a two-part analysis. Firstly, based on the responses from the questionnaire and the theory Customer-Based Brand Equity, this thesis will seek to examine how the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestlé are in order to find out whether the two companies have created brand equity among its consumers. Secondly, by using the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, the analysis will study how Nike and Nestlé have handled facing the previously mentioned cases. Lastly, the analyses will be combined when discussing what Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management separately can contribute with when creating brand equity.

6.1 Part I: American consumer perception of Nike and Nestlé

This section will answer the first research question *"What is the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestle?"* as a result of the responses collected from the questionnaire. The section will be divided into three parts characterized by *Brand salience*, *Brand judgments*, and *Brand feelings*. A quick glance at the questionnaire responses makes it seem as if Nike has established greater brand equity than Nestlé. However, a detailed look into the answers might give other results.

6.1.1 Brand salience

The first question regarding brand salience is for the respondents to mention the brand they first recall when given the prompt “sportswear”. Here, 19 of 28 respondents answer “Nike” (Appendix 10), followed by “Adidas” with seven responses. When the same question is asked with the prompt “food and beverage” regarding Nestlé, the most frequent answer is “Coca-Cola” with ten responses and “McDonald’s” with seven responses, while merely two of 28 respondents answer “Nestlé” (Appendix 19). On the one hand, it seems as Nike has created stronger brand salience. On the other hand, Nike and Nestlé are distinct companies that have chosen contrasting branding strategies. Nike uses a monolithic branding strategy (Cornelissen 2018, 93), i.e. the corporate communication, symbolism, and behavior are all connected, and thus the corporate and product brands are the same. Nestlé uses an endorsed branding strategy (ibid), in other words, products are endorsed or marked with the name of the parent company. However, there is not necessarily a connection between corporate activities and the products, and thus the corporate and product brands are dissimilar.

This is in line with Nestlé’s 2,000 different product brands (Nestle 2019c). As a result, many consumers may know the parent company behind the products but they do not instantly think of the parent company because consumers are not exposed to the corporate brand as much as to the product brands. This is further demonstrated when 11 different Nestlé brands are listed and the respondents are asked to mark all the brands that they know. All respondents recognize the Nestlé sub-brands “KitKat” and “Nesquick”, followed by “Nescafé” (26), “Nespresso” and “Hot Pockets” (23), and “Nestea” (22), while no respondents answer that they did not know any of the listed sub-brands (Appendix 22). However, when the respondents are given a list of the same sub-brands and asked to mark all the brands that they know are owned by Nestlé, no sub-brand gets a total score of 28 responses. The sub-brand that gets the most recognition as a Nestlé brand is “Nesquick” with 21 responses, followed by “Nescafé” with 20 responses. No respondents know that “Quality Street” and “Mövenpick” are owned by Nestlé and four respondents do not recognize any of the sub-brands as owned by Nestlé (Appendix 23). As previously mentioned in subsection *5.3.1 Primary data*, KitKat is not a Nestlé sub-brand in the United States, and therefore surprisingly many respondents recognize it as a Nestlé sub-brand (13).

The consumers' recognition of the Nestlé sub-brands shows that Nestlé's and Nike's brand saliences are different because of their different choices of branding strategies. There are several advantages and challenges of both branding strategies. In relation to creating brand salience, the Nike branding strategy can on the one hand be argued to be a successful strategy due to the brand being exposed to consumers more frequently as all the products carry the same brand. In addition to that, it can be easier to create a story and tagline around the brand, similar to Nike's "Just Do It!" campaign, which celebrated its 30th anniversary with the Kaepernick campaign in 2018. The respondents' answers show that people are familiar with the "swoosh" (the logo), "Just Do It!" (the tagline), and the products (see Appendix 11). These are results of Nike using the monolithic branding strategy and the story created around the brand. On the other hand, it can be harmful for the brand to have chosen this branding strategy. Since it all revolves around one brand, the backlash can be more harmful if Nike runs into a corporate issue and if the consequence of the issue turns out to be a consumer boycott. As all the products are marked with the same brand, the company has nothing to hide behind, and ultimately the consequences can be greater.

Nestlé branding strategy is slightly different. By choosing to have Nestlé as the parent company with a corporate brand and several sub-brands, it can be challenging for Nestlé to create brand salience towards the corporate brand. Nonetheless, this is not necessarily a challenge because this means that Nestlé can create brand salience in all its product brands, which might be more important when dealing with a company such as Nestlé. 2,000 local and global brands can be challenging to market under the same brand. Thus, the choice of having this branding strategy makes it easier for Nestlé to create a story for each product, and ultimately makes it easier to market different products in various countries and to various consumer groups. Furthermore, facing corporate issues can be less harmful for a company such as Nestlé, present in several countries and owning thousands of brands. If Nestlé faces a corporate issue in one part of the world or regarding one product, it might lead to a consumer boycott. However, due to Nestlé's extensive product portfolio and presence in several countries, the boycott might merely be harmful to that one product and not to the entire company, since, as the respondents' answers show (Appendix 23), Nestlé owns products that the consumer may not know are Nestlé products. Lastly, Nestlé is a company, which has acquired other companies and products, and this branding strategy prepares the ground for continuing the existing marketing strategy and product brand of the acquired product. Thus, the brand salience created around that specific brand is maintained.

6.1.2 Brand judgments

When the questionnaire respondents are asked how they perceive the image of Nike on a scale ranging from "great, good, neutral, bad, to terrible", the majority of the answers are positive. Five respondents answer "great", ten answer "good", two say "bad", and one says "terrible", while eight perceive the image of Nike as "neutral" (Appendix 12). Similarly, when respondents are asked *"What associations/feelings do you recall when thinking of the Nike brand?"*, the majority of the answers are positive (Appendix 11). As explained in subsection *4.1.2.1 Brand associations*, these answers are the brand associations respondents get when thinking of the Nike brand. As mentioned above, some of the answers involve brand salience as the respondents mention Nike's logo and tagline, and one respondent even calls Nike a "brand leader". This association is demonstrated by most respondents in the brand salience of Nike, where 19 of 28 respondents mention the brand when given the prompt "sportswear" (Appendix 10). Although it is too early to conclude at this stage of the analysis, it can be argued that when a consumer associates a company with the term "brand leader", the company is doing well in creating brand equity amongst its consumers. Moreover, since some respondents associate the brand with its tagline, this can be an indication of Nike being a brand leader and that the company has created a strong brand association in its tagline.

Other positive brand associations include "freedom", "victory", "aspiration", "confidence", "elite", and "determination" (Appendix 11). These brand associations can on one side be seen as values of the company from the consumer's point of view, i.e. consumers believe that the company is *determined* and has experienced *victory*. This relates to the mission statement of Nike, which is to "Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. *If you have a body, you are an athlete" (Nike, Inc. 2019b). Arguably, Nike is *confident* and *determined* to inspire people and to be innovative with its development of products, which consumers may think has been a *victory* for Nike. On the other side, it can also be understood as these brand associations are related to the consumers' feelings when wearing Nike products. In other words, the consumer feels *determined* and part of the *elite* when doing sports wearing Nike merchandise. Arguably, this is the case, since Nike has put energy into sponsorships and celebrity endorsements.

Nike has previously and is still sponsoring both individual athletes and teams within different sports (Nike, Inc. 2012a; Nike, Inc. 2012b; Nike, Inc. 2016; Nike, Inc. 2017). Several celebrity athletes such as American tennis player Serena Williams, American basketball player LeBron James, American basketball player Charles Barkley, and American gymnast Gabby Douglas have been featured in Nike TV commercials (Tyler 2018). For the consumer, this can create several brand associations, and if the consumer is fond of the athlete, it is also likely that the consumer will be fond of the Nike brand. Furthermore, if a professional athlete wants to wear Nike products and be associated with the brand, it gives an impression of it being a good brand and that the products are of high quality because the products are used by professionals. Lastly, celebrity endorsement can also create a feeling in the consumer of being a good athlete similar to the professional athlete because they are using similar equipment. This can both relate to the consumer wishing to be a better athlete but also the consumer's wish to portray a certain image of him/herself as a good athlete to others. Lastly, some of the respondents' answers relate to the design of the products, which include "nice clothes", "very fond", "popular", and "fashionable". Thus, if consumers wish to portray a positive image of themselves to others through the clothes that they are wearing, these brand associations are vital to the consumer. Moreover, people arguably tend to buy the clothes and shoes they think look the best and thus are more appealing to them. Arguably, in the case of the consumer wishing to portray an image of being *fashionable* to others, this brand association can be enough for consumers to continuously buy products from the brand.

Although the majority of the brand associations are positive, there are also some negative in between. Some of these include "child labor", "slavery", and "unethical company". From the 1970s to the 1990s, Nike was accused by activists of using factories with poor work conditions in third world countries (McDonnell, King, and Soule 2015, 657). In spite of that, Nike did not change its actions until 1999 when the company adopted a code of conduct to ensure that the working conditions in its factories are upheld (ibid). These negative brand associations are most likely rooted in these activists' practices against Nike and remain attached to the Nike brand. However, Nike is not the only corporation within the clothing industry, which has had poor working conditions in its factories. Many others include H&M, Gap Inc., Puma, and Adidas (Ferrie 2018).

The emerging focus of poor work conditions in clothing factories is not solely because of the extensive demonstrations by activists but also because of the emergence of the Internet. Here, NGOs, activists, and consumers can call out corporations on their unethical practices, inform other consumers, and come together with activists in order to put larger pressure on corporations to change their practices. In the questionnaire, respondents are given a list of both Nike and Nestlé incidents of malpractice and respondents are asked to mark the incidents that they have heard of before (Appendix 13; Appendix 24). There is not one case that all respondents have heard of and 13 respondents have not heard of any of the cases. Moreover, respondents are asked where they have heard of the Nike/Kaepernick campaign (Appendix 14) and here, 20 respondents answer "social media", 14 respondents answer "TV, newspapers, or magazines", six say "family, friends, or acquaintances", 12 say "Nike advertisement", one answers "Nike website", and five say that they have not heard of the incident before. When respondents are asked to where they have heard of the incidents concerning Nestlé malpractice, 12 respondents answer "social media", eight answer "TV, newspapers, or magazines", five say "family, friends, or acquaintances", while 13 have never heard of the Nestlé incidents (Appendix 25).

Many respondents further relate Nike and Nestlé to other large corporations who the respondents think are also engaging in malpractices. Respondents say "Nike, like all corporations, co-opts real social issues…" (Appendix 18), "(…) just another company" (Appendix 20), and "(…) The majority of large companies are involved in some type of incidents similar to those Nestlé has been involved in" (Appendix 25). Thus, some respondents are aware that it is not just Nike and Nestlé but many large companies that are engaging in malpractices. This might further be due to the large engagement by consumers, activists, and NGOs on the Internet and social media and the strong impact the Internet can have on consumers. Nonetheless, five respondents have not heard of any of the four listed Nike incidents, while 13 respondents have never heard of the five listed Nestlé incidents. This might be an indication that traditional media do not cover these incidents enough as it can be argued that many people still get the majority of news from tradition media. The reason behind this interpretation is also from the fact that the majority of respondents have heard of these incidents on social media. Since "fake news" has become the subject of focus the last couple of years (Lundgren et al. 2017, 29), one can argue that it is important for traditional media to address these incidents because "fake news" tend to spread on the

Internet and social media. Arguably, if traditional media reported on corporate malpractices, more consumers would have an increased knowledge on these incidents and hopefully, there would be a larger group of people putting pressure on corporations to change actions.

Respondents are asked the same questions regarding *brand judgments* towards Nestlé. One question is how they perceive the image of Nestlé on a scale ranging from “great, good, neutral, bad, to terrible”. Here, only one respondent answers “great”, seven answer “good”, five say “bad”, and one says “terrible”, while nine answer “neutral” (Appendix 21). Respondents are also asked to mention what associations and feelings they recall when thinking of the Nestlé brand. Here, the answers are mixed between positive and negative answers (Appendix 20). Some of the positive brand associations concern Nestlé’s products. Many respondents remember the products of Nestlé, such as “chocolate”, “chocolate milk”, “coffee”, “water”, and “candy”. Although Nestlé uses an endorsed branding strategy as previously explained, this shows that there is a connection between the corporate and product brands, since some products can be recognized by consumers by merely giving them the name of the company. By contrast, most of the respondents who mentioned products as brand associations merely mentioned one product category, meaning that they might not know of the extensive product line of Nestlé. The mentioning of products as a brand association can be due to Nestlé having created strong brand equity as this can positively result in consumers choosing the brand when shopping or when thinking of a product category. Other positive brand associations include “fond memory”, “childhood, nostalgia”, “tasty”, and “cozy, sweet, warm”. The brand association “tasty” is created based on experience and can indicate that the consumer is likely to continue consuming the product. It can even mean that the consumer is likely to try other Nestlé products, since he or she has had a good experience with one product.

A nostalgic childhood memory is a strong and positive brand association for the consumer because the company needs to do much harm in order for some consumers to change their perception of the memory and the company. In some cases, one can argue that this memory will not be damaged merely because of unethical corporate practices. This will be further discussed in the next subsection *6.1.3 Brand feelings*.

A brand association as a fond memory can also be the result of celebrity endorsement of a brand. One of Nestlé’s many sub-brands is the coffee brand Nespresso that has engaged in celebrity endorsement. This Nestlé sub-brand has become popular since in 2000, the brand had one boutique, whereas this increased to 700 worldwide boutiques in 2017 (Nestlé Nespresso 2015). Nespresso is a coffee machine for home use where the consumer buys capsules with coffee that brews one cup at a time and the brand has been marketed as good quality coffee. Since 2006, the American actor George Clooney has been a Nespresso ambassador (Nestlé Nespresso n.d.). As argued above, if the consumer is fond of the celebrity, they are likely to be fond of the brand that the celebrity is the face of. When consumers watch Nespresso TV commercials starring Clooney, consumers might want to buy the product, since many people enjoy a good cup of coffee. Furthermore, it can be argued that some consumers believe that celebrities solely consume quality products because they can afford it. Since Clooney is endorsing Nespresso coffee, it must be of good quality and some consumers arguably get the urge to buy the coffee machine. Nestlé states that the company's purpose is to be sustainable and give back to communities that it is present in (Nestlé 2019e). Thus, Nestlé Nespresso has put up 100,000 worldwide Nespresso recycling points for the coffee capsules and established home collection in 18 countries (Nestlé Nespresso 2015). Although this is a start, it is difficult to know how many of the consumed coffee capsules are handed in for recycling. Since the Nespresso coffee machine brews cups of coffee independently, it is suitable for people that desire convenience and who have a busy everyday life, and hence these are the consumers. If consumers wish convenience, it can be argued whether they have time and desire to go out of their way to gather and hand in the coffee capsules for recycling. The consumers would need to value sustainability in order to do so. When respondents are asked how much they value sustainability on a scale ranging from "highly valued, valued, somewhat values, highly unvalued, unvalued, to somewhat unvalued", 16 respondents answer "valued", eight answer "highly valued", while four say it is "somewhat valued" (Appendix 8). Although it seems as if sustainability is valued by the respondents, it does not seem as if it is of highest priority and the question is whether convenience or sustainability is valued the most in a busy everyday life.

Moving on with brand associations, the respondents' brand associations of Nestlé are mainly negative (Appendix 20). Some of these revolve around Nestlé products, which are "Unhealthy, bad quality" and "I don't like their chocolate". These brand associations are based on experience and are important because consumers are unlikely to try other sub-brands from the same parent company if they have had a bad experience with some products. Furthermore, Nestlé are behind the sub-brands Lean Cuisine and Hot Pockets, which are both frozen foods. Arguably, most people will not associate frozen foods with good quality but rather with unhealthy food, which is concurrent with the brand associations of some respondents. Other negative brand associations concern the corporate activities of Nestlé and include “Scum”, “corporate, exploitive, greed”, “slave labor”, “environmental damage, unethical”, and “formula, babies dying, WHO health code violations” (Appendix 20). These brand associations indicate that the respondents are aware of the unethical practices of Nestlé and can further indicate that respondents value sustainability. These can be put in relation to the consumer perception that the majority of large corporations are exploitive, self-centered, and solely think of profit.

As previously discussed, the Internet and social media have a large impact on consumers’ knowledge of malpractices and whether consumers choose to boycott certain brands. NGOs can further have a large impact on this. Arguably, NGOs bear responsibility in enlightening consumers because NGOs have the power, time, and (some have) resources to enlighten consumers and to put pressure on corporations. In 2010, Greenpeace started an online campaign against Nestlé’s use of unsustainable palm oil (Greenpeace 2010). This campaign enlightened consumers of Nestlé’s malpractice and gathered consumers to put pressure on the company. One can argue that a campaign led by an NGO has a faster and larger impact on Nestlé than if a small group of consumers protesting against corporate malpractice, since the NGO can gather people and urge more consumers to put pressure on the company. Hence, the Greenpeace campaign resulted in Nestlé taking action and changing its practices and source of palm oil. This shows the power of NGOs, and thus there is a need for more engagement from NGOs in order to make a larger and faster impact on corporations to change their malpractices.

It is unexpected that 13 of the respondents have not heard of the five Nestlé incidents (Appendix 13), especially the cases concerning unethical marketing of milk formula and the use of unsustainable palm oil since these incidents have got large attention from NGOs, activists, and the media. Seeing that one respondent mentions the incident of the milk formula and violations of the WHO health code before the incidents are listed and respondents are asked to identify them, this case must have generated a negative feeling, creating an impact on this respondent and maybe also on other consumers. Due to the fact that the incident of unethical marketing of milk formula also was one of the first negative cases involving Nestlé and the severe consequences of the malpractice (hence, many infants in third world countries died), it can have created a strong and negative brand association that is remembered by consumers up to the present time.

Lastly, two negative brand associations mentioned by respondents also include “nothing” and “Quaker”. First of all, for a consumer not being able to associate anything with a company means that the company has failed in creating brand equity or that some components are lacking. In this case, it might be the fact that Nestlé is the parent company owning several sub-brands, as previously argued. However, Nestlé also owns several sub-brands where the Nestlé brand is endorsed and there is a connection between the parent and sub-brand. Thus, if Nestlé had been successful in creating brand equity, there should be at least one brand association when the parent company is mentioned. Second of all, the brand association “Quaker” is viewed as a negative brand association in this context, since Quaker is not a Nestlé sub-brand but is owned by PepsiCo (PepsiCo 2019). This is further indication of unsuccessful brand equity created by Nestlé. By contrast, one can also argue that it is difficult for consumers to keep track of the excessive sub-brands owned many different companies, i.e. there are many companies that produce several products and use an endorsed branding strategy and there is not necessarily a clear connection between the parent and sub-brand. Hence, this results in some consumers confusing sub-brands from one parent company with another parent company as well as in some consumers not having created any brand associations with the parent company.

After all the negative cases involving Nestlé and the negative brand associations created in consumer minds, how can the company still be the world’s largest food and beverage company? Again, it might be too early to conclude at this point in the analysis but one supposition can be withdrawn from the above. The Nestlé tagline is “Good food, good life” (Nestlé 2019c), ultimately meaning that the company’s desire is to create and sell good food, which further results in creating a good life for the consumer. Nestlé states its purpose to be “Enhancing quality of life and contributing to a healthier future. Driven by our purpose we want to help shape a better world and inspire people to live healthier lives. This is how we contribute to society and ensure our long-term success” (ibid). As previously mentioned, “health” is not in line with the product portfolio of Nestlé, since it contains frozen foods, chocolate, coffee, and sugary breakfast cereals (Nestlé 2019f). By contrast, one can argue that the Nestlé sub-brands are compatible with most people’s busy everyday lives. Additionally, one respondent says: “Products that are ethical are much more expensive because they were made with respect to the workers' conditions which then creates, in the end, much more time which increase the price. Nestle is not in that category" (Appendix 26). Since Nestlé owns several sub-brands, there is an extensive assortment of products to consume. These products also include convenient and average products, which are not too expensive. Thus, Nestlé products are compatible with many people's busy lives and economies, increasing the sales of Nestlé. This is one part of how the company has maintained its title as the world's largest food and beverage company.

6.1.3 Brand feelings

Respondents are asked whether they have heard of Colin Kaepernick becoming the face of Nike's 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" campaign. Thereafter, Kaepernick's actions of kneeling during the national anthem are explained and respondents are asked how it makes them feel that Kaepernick refused to stand during the anthem. The lists of both positive and negative answers are long and the respondents are thus split in their opinions of Kaepernick's actions (Appendix 16). The positive responses to taking the knee during the anthem include that it is his right to protest, that it was done in a non-violent manner, that it was courageous of him to risk his career and reputation, and that respondents are surprised that there was a backlash against his protests. Several respondents mention the right to protest, i.e. it is highly valued for them. This is further demonstrated when respondents are asked how much they value the right to protest prior to knowing that the questionnaire concerns the Kaepernick incident. Here, 14 respondents answer that it is highly valued, ten say "valued", four respondents say "somewhat valued", while no respondents answer "highly unvalued", "unvalued", or "somewhat valued" (Appendix 9), showing that the right to protest is of great importance to the respondents. Arguably, this is of great importance to most people living in democratic countries because this is part of the free right to speech, to demonstrate one's thoughts, and to show disagreement with others' actions. Furthermore, the peaceful and non-violent way Kaepernick chose to protest should be appreciated, which many respondents do.

Nonetheless, while the respondents that demonstrate a negative attitude towards Kaepernick's actions think that it is within his right to protest, they do not appreciate the venue Kaepernick used to do so. Here, the negativity concerns that it is unacceptable to not stand during the anthem, that Kaepernick's actions divides the country instead of uniting them, that he as part of a football team and as a paid professional should not promote himself, and that he should not intertwine professional actions and personal beliefs. This shows that most respondents, even the one's airing a negative opinion, support Kaepernick's beliefs but some are frustrated that he used the NFL venue to protest and promote his personal beliefs. While some would agree that it is wrong to intertwine personal beliefs and professional actions, one can also argue that Kaepernick thought that this was a powerful venue to show his disapproval of racial inequality in the US, since the NFL is broadcast live on national TV in the US and shown in several other countries. Therefore, this may have been a great way for Kaepernick to give the cause a silent and indirect voice. Arguably, since the protest was peaceful and nobody was harmed by it, this was a good way for Kaepernick to show that the maltreatment of blacks and colored people in America is unacceptable.

Respondents are further told that two years after Kaepernick's actions on the football field, he became the face of Nike's 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" campaign with the tagline "Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything". Respondents are further asked: "How does it make you feel that Nike chose Kaepernick?". Here, ten respondents say "happy", ten say "proud of Nike", four say it is "disrespectful of Nike", one answers "angry", one answers "sad", nine say "I don't care", while two answer "I don't know" (Appendix 17). Following, respondents are asked whether the Nike/Kaepernick campaign affect their perception of the Nike brand. Similar to the respondents' opinions of Kaepernick's protests, the respondents are split between whether they got a positive or negative change of perception of the Nike brand after the campaign (Appendix 18). Some of the positive perceptions include respondents saying that it does not affect their perception because they are interested in the Nike brand and not the company's political beliefs. This can be a result of Nike creating strong brand associations among its consumers, since the brand might still be perceived as professional and of high quality. Furthermore, some respondents mention that the appearance and convenience of the products are valued to them, as one respondent puts it: "I still buy Nike sneakers if they are the ones that are the most comfortable" (Appendix 18). Other respondents say that their perception of the brand has changed to the better because they appreciate that the brand is supporting social causes and takes a stand in the campaign. Lastly, some respondents are positive towards the campaign and the fact that Nike supports Kaepernick's actions and the social cause but they also realize that it is a "brilliant marketing move" by Nike, that "(…) it was calculated. They knew their customer base would mostly agree with their position", that it "feels like they are capitalizing on an important movement", and that "it was a calculated financial move and not just a noble action" (Appendix 18).

Although this created a positive perception of Nike in some of the respondents' minds, it is good that consumers also consider whether the corporate actions are due to profit or due to making a statement in the world. Arguably, corporations do not engage in anything that does not drive profit, and therefore it is important that consumers are skeptic towards corporate actions in order to not get manipulated by corporations. As in many other cases, consumers need to be critical towards corporate actions and claim their demands towards corporations.

Some respondents say that the campaign has not changed their perception of Nike's image, since he or she did not consume Nike products before. Although this is negative, it can be argued that it is almost impossible for a company to win over all consumers, and these are some of them. Other negative perceptions focus on the fact that the Kaepernick campaign made the respondents dislike Nike even more than they did prior to the campaign. This may be because these respondents did not appreciate the actions of Kaepernick, and thus they are not fond of him being associated with the Nike brand. Moreover, some responses concern other negative incidents involving Nike, such as the child labor in the clothing factories, which might have started the negative perception of Nike to these consumers. Some of the most critical negative respondents call Nike a profit machine and accuse the company of exploiting the social cause and the consumers that will support Nike in this. They further accuse other consumers of not being too critical towards Nike's actions in this case. For a company to intertwine business and social causes can be risky, which is proven by the answers of the respondents. However, Nike was probably aware that the campaign would be received with mixed feelings, equivalent to the feelings and opinions expressed when Kaepernick protested, which are further equivalent to the answers of the respondents.

Obviously, to some respondents, it seems as Nike chose Kaepernick as the face of its campaign as a marketing move to sell more products. It is difficult to say whether this was the intentions of Nike. However, this is not the first time that Nike has engaged in social justice causes. The first "Just Do It!" campaign was launched in 1988 and featured the 80-year-old American runner Walter Stack. Ever since, Nike has featured and advocated for people with disabilities, gays and HIV-positive athletes, young girls fighting gender issues within the sports world, and now, equality in the campaign with Kaepernick (Tyler 2018). These might all be marketing moves for Nike to drive sales but when the company has been promoting these causes over a span of 30 years, one can argue that these are actually causes that the company believes in and wants to spread awareness about. Again, some would argue that corporations should not spread awareness of social causes but the important thing for Nike is that people continue to buy its products due to the brand associations the company previously have created in consumer minds. From the looks of most respondents' answers, they are willing to continue to buy Nike products even though they might be aware that the Kaepernick campaign might have been a marketing move.

Now that the brand feelings concerning Nike have been established, it is natural to move on to the Nestlé brand feelings. As previously mentioned, respondents are given a list of five incidents involving Nestlé and asked whether they have previously heard of these. Here, nine respondents have heard of the child labor in Nestlé's cocoa farms, ten say that they know of Nestlé bottling spring water in California, eight have heard of the Greenpeace campaign against Nestlé's use of unsustainable palm oil, eight have heard of the unethical promotion of milk formula in Africa, four know that Nestlé has forced Ethiopia to pay back its debt, while 13 did not know of any of the five cases (Appendix 24). In addition to that, respondents are asked whether these cases change their perceptions of the Nestlé brand to know about these incidents. Among the positive perceptions are that Nestlé is acting similar to many other large corporations, which might be unethical but these respondents seem to think that is how corporations act. One positive perception of Nestlé that stands out from the others is the respondent who had the nostalgic brand association of the company. The respondent says that these incidents do not change his or her perception of the brand, since "nostalgia is a powerful thing" (Appendix 25). As previously argued, this brand association that has been build by Nestlé in this consumer's mind is so powerful that unethical actions by the company does not change the association. While this might be the case for many Nestlé consumers, it is arguably still important for consumers to be critical towards corporate actions in order to avoid creating a world where corporations can act unethically without facing consequences.

By contrast, the negative perceptions of the Nestlé brand show that there are in fact consequences of corporate malpractices. Here, respondents have different reasons for having negative perceptions. Some include that respondents did not and still do not purchase Nestlé products, that they were unaware of these incidents, that they act accordingly to many other large corporations, that they dislike the brand, are aware of the incidents, and will pay closer attention not to buy Nestlé products in the future (Appendix 25). Although there is a majority of negative perceptions of Nestlé, it can be argued how much this will have an influence on the company. This is not the first time some of the respondents are made aware of these incidents and the company is still the world's largest food and beverage company. Furthermore, when a respondent says that he or she will try not to buy Nestlé products in the future, it may have an influence. However, the difficulty lays in keeping track of the extensive product portfolio Nestlé has. The Nestlé corporation is large to such an extent and spread out in a range of countries that for a few consumers to stop buying its products will not make a noticeable impact on the company. This is another part of how Nestlé is still world's largest food and beverage company.

6.1.4 Brand equity: Nike vs. Nestlé

To sum up some of the points made this far, Nestlé and Nike have both created brand salience but are focusing on different elements as the two companies have implemented different branding strategies. Nestlé uses an endorsed branding strategy, i.e. the company has to some extent created brand salience between consumers and its individual sub-brands. This can further be an indication of why some respondents did not have any brand associations with the company and why some respondents solely recognize a few of the Nestle sub-brands. On the other side, Nike uses a monolithic branding strategy, in other words, the corporate and product brands are the same, creating a connection between the two and making it easier for consumers to recognize the brand. When it comes to the respondents' brand associations and perceptions of the two corporate brands, both brands are linked to positive and negative brand associations. Respondents' positive brand associations of Nike are equivalent with the image that Nike wishes to portray. The negative brand associations concern corporate activities, where Nike is put in relation to other large companies, which respondents believe engage in unethical activities similar to Nike.

The positive brand associations of Nestlé mostly relate to its products. Especially one respondent mentions that he or she associates nostalgia with the brand, which the respondent also calls a "powerful thing". Indeed, it is, especially in this case, since after the respondents have been informed of Nestlé's malpractices, this respondent still has a positive perception of the brand because this brand association has deep roots within the respondent. Nevertheless, respondents overall have negative or gotten a negative perception of the Nestlé brand after being confronted with the malpractice of the corporation. In the case of Nike, the Kaepernick campaign bring up diverse feelings in the respondents. The answers concern respondents supporting Kaepernick, respondents supporting his choice of protesting but not the way he chose to do it, and respondents who oppose his protests. Respondents are further asked whether the Kaepernick campaign has affected their perception of the Nike brand and similarly, the answers are diverse here. Some respondents say that while they realize that Nike chose Kaepernick and the social cause for its campaign as a marketing move, they still appreciate Nike for taking a stand in the cause and supporting it. By contrast, some respondents see Nike solely as a profit machine and they believe that the company took advantage of Kaepernick and the cause in order to drive sales.

When it comes to the questions regarding brand feelings, where respondents are asked whether the negative incidents involving Nike and Nestlé separately affect the respondents' perception of the brands, one part was found surprising. The respondents are negative towards both companies about being "exploitive", "greedy", "profit-driven", etc. However, in the case with Nike these are mostly associated with negative things. While these are also negative in Nestlé's case, it seems as if the respondents realize that this is how many large companies are today and that is just how it is, almost assuming that this cannot be changed. It is speculative whether these answers are indirectly caused by the cases with Nike and Nestlé. To put it another way, the fact that the case with Kaepernick concerns racial inequality and his refusal of standing during the national anthem, which for some is disrespectful to the American flag, nation, and people, might have triggered the negative emotions that are being projected onto Nike. However, while the incidents concerning Nestlé are severe, they also concern sustainability and people in other nations. Thus, these issues might not be as important to some of the respondents and the issues can also easily be distanced since most of the cases concern other countries.

6.2 Part II: Facing and managing corporate issues

In this part, new empirical data in the form of newspaper articles and corporate websites will be put in relation to the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, as well as the findings from the first part of the analysis. Furthermore, the second research question, "Why do the two large corporations Nike and Nestlé use such different approaches when facing and managing issues?", will be answered here. In order to answer the research question, it is vital to analyze the chosen cases by using the mentioned theories. Thus, first, the Nike case will be analyzed by using Cause Related Marketing, followed by the cases involving Nestlé analyzed with Issues Management. Both parts will be further divided into sections related to the theories. Lastly, a discussion will be provided of what the two theories can contribute with when companies wish to create customer-based brand equity.

6.2.1 Nike's use of Cause Related Marketing

As previously mentioned, Kaepernick's protests at the NFL football field were received differently by American citizens, which the respondents' answers also show. Thus, when Nike chose the football player to be the face of its 30th anniversary "Just Do It!" campaign, it was naturally received with the same mixture of opinions.

Nike uses Cause Related Marketing in the sense that the company is mixing the social justice cause of racial inequality with its marketing approaches. As previously stated in the theory subsection *4.2 Cause Related Marketing*, the advantages for a company to use this theory are to enhance reputation and image, show core values, differentiate the company from competitors, make CSR visible, increase loyalty and build relationships with stakeholders, and increase sales. Moreover, it benefits the cause, since the cause gains awareness in society and increases donations. Based on the theory, this section will be divided into parts, namely *Reputation, image, and values*; *Relationship and sales*, and *Benefits for the cause*.

6.2.1.1 Reputation, image, and values

In August 2016, Kaepernick started his protests of police violations against blacks and people of color in the US by kneeling during the national anthem at an NFL football game. This sparked clashes among the American population. Some supported his peaceful way of protesting and said that it was a good way of highlighting the issue of inequality. Others argued that his protests were disrespectful to the flag, the anthem, and veterans (Dubenko 2017). Among the latter was, at that time, presidential candidate Donald Trump, who commented on Kaepernick's protests and said that if athletes do not want to stand and show respect to the flag and to the country, they are fired (Fritze 2018).

For Nike to choose this social cause shows that the company takes a stand in the discussion, ultimately increasing its reputation and image, at least among one part of the American population. Surprisingly, the questionnaire responses show a third reaction to Kaepernick's protests that the newspaper articles did not show. The two positions of Americans mentioned above are also presented among the respondents. Nonetheless, the third position is the group of people who understand Kaepernick's actions and protests but found it inappropriate to use the NFL venue to spread his message.

When it comes to Nike choosing Kaepernick as the face of its campaign, the respondents are split once again. However, Nike was probably aware of this prior to choosing him for the campaign and since the company knows that the majority of its consumers are supportive of the social cause, it was calculated to be a positive decision. Although some respondents are negative towards large corporations engaging in social causes and their true intentions with it, it seems as if it turned out positively for Nike. However, the challenge lies in Nike choosing a cause, which Americans have mixed feelings about, thus making the cause ineffective towards a large group of Americans. Due to the fact that the cause concerns equality, which is a topic many have an opinion about, it has caused a reaction of some people turning against Nike. Hypothetically, it can be argued whether it would had created as large of a backlash if Nike's chosen cause had, for instance, been supportive of ALS (Amyotrofisk lateral scleroses). If Nike had chosen to cause of ALS, some people might question whether Nike's intentions are to increase awareness about the cause or whether it is to increase its sales but it can be argued that it would not upset as many people if Nike had chosen the cause supporting ALS. Additionally, according to the respondents' answers, what made people upset about Kaepernick's actions was not the fact that he protested but rather the venue he chose and his refusal of standing during the national anthem, which to some Americans is disrespectful. Hence, some Americans may project these feelings on Nike and portray the company's choice as similarly disrespectful to the American traditions because critics perceive Nike as supportive of Kaepernick's actions. The choice of using Kaepernick further shows the core values of Nike and where the company stands in this discussion.

6.2.1.2 Relationship and sales

Another outcome of using Cause Related Marketing is that Nike's choice of using Kaepernick has created a strong relationship to at least one of its stakeholders – the consumers. This is not merely shown in the respondents' answers, where many of them say that they now have a better perception of the brand after the campaign but it is also shown in the fact that Nike increased its sales. The ad campaign was released on the American Labor Day weekend (Labor Day is the first Monday in September), resulting in Nike sales increasing with 31% compared with 17% the similar weekend the previous year (Edison Trends 2018). This shows that Nike's use of Cause Related Marketing has been positive to the corporation but there might also be another reason for the increase in sales. After Nike published its Kaepernick campaign, the critics towards Kaepernick's protests started turning against Nike and its choice of using the football player in its campaign. In September 2018, critics started posting videos of them burning Nike shoes and clothes as a protest to Nike's new campaign with Kaepernick. The videos were posted on social media platforms with the hashtag #JustBurnIt, which started trending along with the hashtag #BoycottNike (BBC 2018). Although their intentions were negative, this might also have had an impact on the increased sales numbers of Nike.

Seeing that the ad campaign was released on Labor Day weekend, it might have had a hidden message to it. Kaepernick's contract was not extended with the San Francisco 49ers and he did not get another contract with other football teams, although he is a good quarterback. Allegedly, this was due to the teams not wanting Kaepernick because of him kneeling during the national anthem. Releasing the campaign on the weekend with a national holiday, which celebrates workers for their hard work might be Nike's way of celebrating Kaepernick for his work in the NFL and his protests. Furthermore, the tagline of the Nike/Kaepernick advertisement was "Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything". Indeed, Kaepernick sacrificed his career because he believed in the cause and continued his protests until he was without an NFL contract. Thus, the release of the campaign in this specific weekend may indicate that Nike wants to celebrate his actions because it caused him his career.

6.2.1.3 Benefits for the cause

As previously mentioned, it is important that when corporations choose to use Cause Related Marketing, it benefits both the company and the cause (Adkins 2005, 118). Having established how this relationship has benefitted Nike, it is now vital to look at how it has benefitted the cause. The partnership between Nike and Kaepernick is different than the common use of Cause Related Marketing, since Nike has not partnered up with a specific cause but a person supporting a specific cause. Therefore, this may not have direct implications on the cause in the sense of creating more donations to the charity. However, a positive implication that the partnership has had is the fact that the campaign has spread awareness of the social cause of racial inequality. Whether people are for or against the cause, the word has spread and become a topic of conversation in traditional media, in social media, in politics, and in general around the dinner table. This is important for the public relations of the cause, since it creates attention to the cause and establishes the relevance of it.

The question is then: has the partnership created any benefits for Kaepernick? The benefits for the cause are also a benefit for Kaepernick, since he also wishes to spread the word of the importance of the cause. Moreover, Kaepernick filed a "grievance [against the NFL] asserting that the league's owners had conspired to keep him out because of his protests" (Belson 2018) after his contract was no longer extended. Kaepernick asked for the same amount of money than what he would have earned had he continued as an NFL player. Since there has been excessive discussion of the topic in several media, it might have influenced the court. The New York Times journalist Belson says: "The case has attracted so much attention, experts said, that it would have been difficult for [the arbitrator] to dismiss it" (ibid). This further might have helped Kaepernick in his case, since he came to a settlement with the league back in February this year (D'Andrea 2019). The excessive discussion of the topic might also be due to the partnership between Nike and Kaepernick. Hence, this has helped Kaepernick in achieving the settlement. Additionally, the benefits the partnership have created for Kaepernick is in the sense of creating awareness among people and initiated conversation on the topic of racial inequality in a range of forums.

As mentioned in the theory section *4.2.2 Public relations*, it is vital for consumers that the partnership is transparent and that there are balanced benefits for both parties of the partnership. Having established the benefits for the company and the cause, it seems as if Nike gets the most benefits from the partnership. This can also be seen in the questionnaire responses, where some respondents question the intentions of Nike and whether the partnership, from Nike's point of view, was merely to increase its sales and portray an image of the corporation caring about the cause. It is difficult to say what the intentions of Nike are but since it seems as if the benefits are less for the cause than for the corporation, one might get the first impression of Nike having selfish intentions with the partnership. Nevertheless, as previously stated, the amount of discussion the cause has received can be argued to be a valuable benefit, since publicity of the cause is important whether it is positive or negative. Although some respondents are questioning the intentions of Nike, some are still positive towards the corporation supporting the cause. At the end of the day, it has increased the company’s sales, which must show that a large portion of the population is supportive of the partnership. Lastly, Nike’s engagement in Cause Related Marketing for several decades must show that the company is interested in influencing the topics of discussion in various forums and that these causes are in fact part of corporate values and not merely part of increasing sales. It can thus be argued that since Nike has engaged in Cause Related Marketing for such a long period of time, it has become part of its image and brand building as well as it may have had an impact on Nike’s creation of building brand equity to its consumers.

6.2.2 Nestlé’s use of Issues Management

For decades now, Nestlé has been faced with activists, NGOs, and consumers calling the company out on its unethical practices. The three cases that will be analyzed in this section are Nestlé and milk formula, Nestlé and palm oil, as well as Nestlé and water. The company has used Issues Management to manage and prevent large damages of the cases. To recapitulate from theory subsection *4.3 Issues Management*, an issue is defined by Cornelissen (2017) as “(a) a public concern about the organization’s decisions and operations that may or may not also involve (b) a point of conflict in opinions and judgments regarding those decisions and operations” (192).

As previously explained, Issues Management includes four stages: environmental scanning, issue identification and analysis, issue-specific response strategies, as well as evaluation. This section will thus be divided into four parts, each focusing on one step. The sections will further be divided into each case, and thus each step will include parts of each case. The cases will be included in the same order as mentioned above (Cornelissen 2017, 194-202).

6.2.2.1 Nestlé’s environmental scanning

The most vital and interesting part of this step in relation to the thesis is to look at the strengths and weaknesses of corporate values, resources, and competences of Nestlé, which all have an effect on how the company is impacted by an issue (Cornelissen 2017, 194-195).

Environmental scanning: Nestlé and milk formula

Overall, Nestlé’s values are stated as: “Guided by our values rooted in respect, we want to shape a better and healthier world” (Nestlé 2019c). To fulfill these values, Nestlé has created three areas of ambitions to accomplish by 2030, where the first area is to “help 50 million children lead healthier lives" (Nestlé 2019g). However, according to Save the Children's report *Don't Push It* from 2018, it is claimed that Nestlé is one of six companies producing and marketing milk formula in an unethical manner (Save the Children 2018, vi). Nestlé has formed a report called *Nestlé in Society: Creating shared value and meeting our commitments 2017* (Nestlé 2017a), where the company addresses salient human rights issue. According to Save the Children, there is a rhetoric and reality gap in Nestlé's practices, since Nestlé's report does not mention the issue of breastfeeding, even though the UN in 2016 stated that "breastfeeding is a human rights issue for both babies and mothers and should be protected and promoted for the benefit of both" (as cited by Save the Children 2018, 39). Furthermore, since breastfeeding brings with it several advantages for infants, e.g. decreasing chronic diseases (WHO 2019a), it would not make sense to choose milk formula if the mother is producing milk. On its website, Nestlé claims that the company is one of the first to adopt the WHO health code on ethical marketing of milk formula (Nestlé 2019a). However, the abovementioned report shows differently. As a response to the allegations, Nestlé writes on its website that in order for the company to act on these allegations, the organizations allegations need to specify where Nestlé is violating the WHO health code of milk formula marketing in order for Nestlé to change its practices (Nestlé 2019h). Arguably, Nestlé's values are not equivalent with its practices of marketing milk formula in third world countries.

Environmental scanning: Nestlé and palm oil

Moving on to another of Nestlé's areas of ambition to fulfill its values: the planet. Here, the company's ambition is to strive for zero environmental waste in its operations by 2030. Nestlé states that among its work is to "[eliminate] deforestation from [its] supply chain" (Nestlé 2019i). Nestlé may have started to do so but in the report *The Final Countdown* (2018), Greenpeace has proven and stated that the company is still doing business with so called "dirty" suppliers of palm oil. It is vital to mention that the use of palm oil is not unsustainable. However, the problem lies in companies purchasing their palm oil from suppliers who source palm oil in unsustainable ways, creating deforestation and damaging the habitats of orangutans. On its website, Nestlé addresses the issue and the Greenpeace report with a response to the report (Nestlé 2019d). Here, Nestlé states that the company has an ambition of merely using palm oil from sustainable sources by 2020 and that the company has already cut its partnership to suppliers who do not meet the company's criteria of sustainable sourcing of palm oil (ibid). However, as the Greenpeace report shows, there is especially one “dirty” supplier that Nestlé is still in business with. Thus, this can indicate that Nestlé does not see this case as an issue and that the case is not salient enough at this point of time, since the company has not had an urgent reaction to the case yet. Now moving on to the last case involving Nestlé: water.

Environmental scanning: Nestlé and water

This last case relating to Nestlé also involve the company value mentioned above: the planet. On its website, Nestlé states that: “To grow sustainably, we must consume the planet’s resources wisely…” (Nestlé 2019i). Although this might be in line with what Nestlé believes it is doing, other people prove this to be wrong. Referring back to Nestlé’s Arrowhead Spring Water from the San Bernardino National Forest in California, it can be argued whether this is to “consume the planet’s resources wisely” (ibid) when the bottled water is from a drought stricken area. Despite of several activists and experts on the area having aired their concerns of Nestlé’s actions in the area, the bottling of water continues and has for decades. Although the company is responsible for its own actions, it can also be argued that the Californian state should have stopped Nestlé’s license and permission to bottle water a long time ago. Thus, there are two parties to take responsibility for the bottling of water from the drought stricken area.

It can further be argued that there are several issues here. Firstly, the bottling of water from a drought stricken area. Secondly, the fact that Nestlé is a Swiss company, i.e. not an American company, who is using American resources for a small fee to increase profits. Lastly, the issue is also that activists believes that the water should not be bottled but should be a natural resource of common rights. According to the WHO, the minimum requirement of water is 7.5 liters per day for most people in most conditions. In addition to that, humans need a minimum of 20 liters of water per day to maintain a minimum level of hygiene (WHO 2019b). Arguably, California is not a poor area, since the state is located in the United States, which is indicated as a first world country. Nevertheless, since the state has suffered from drought for decades, one can also argue that the bottling of water from this area can create a further scarcity of water for people living in California.

On its website, Nestlé states that the company is complying to Californian laws and that the company holds a pre-1914 surface water rights and groundwater rights in San Bernardino National Forest, where the Arrowhead Spring Water is collected (Nestlé Waters North

America n.d. b). Hence, Nestlé's actions are not illegal. However, the question may not be whether the corporate actions are legal but rather whether they are ethical. Since the area has suffered from drought for decades, it is arguable whether Nestlé's actions in this area are ethical and whether it is to source responsibly, which again is part of Nestlé's values. Conclusively, in spite of the fact that Nestlé has received several complaints for its bottling of water in this area from concerned activists and experts, it can be argued that Nestlé does not believe that this case is urgent, since there has not been any change of practice from Nestlé's side. This conclusion leads a natural way of moving onto the next step: issues identification and analysis.

6.2.2.2 Nestlé's issues identification and analysis

In subsection *4.3.2 Issues identification and analysis*, it is outlined that this step concerns where the company positions a stakeholder in the *Position-importance matrix*. In the matrix, the vertical axe shows whether the stakeholder or public is supportive of or opposed to an issue, whilst the horizontal axe shows how important that stakeholder or public is. Thus, by using the matrix, the company can identify four groups of stakeholder/publics: problematic, antagonistic, low priority, and supporter stakeholders/publics. The stakeholders identified in this step will be similar to the stakeholders mentioned in the previous step.

Issues identification and analysis: Nestlé and milk formula

In the case of Nestlé and milk formula, the identified stakeholders from the previous step are consumers/activists and the organization Save the Children. Starting with the consumers/activists, this stakeholder group is opposing to the issue of Nestlé's marketing of milk formula. The question of whether the issue has little or much importance is a subjective question, and thus this will be determined from Nestlé's point of view, since the company places the stakeholders in the matrix. In spite of the fact that the company has acted on the accusations but not to an extent where the company has decided to stop the unethical marketing of milk formula, since Save the Children has found evidence of this in 2018, it can be argued that Nestlé find this to be of least importance. Thus, the consumers/activists are identified as a problematic stakeholder group. The stakeholder group Save the Children is also oppose to the issue, since the organization is writing reports on Nestlé's malpractices. Again, since Nestlé has not changed its actions of unethical marketing of milk formula, the issue is not seen as of great importance to Nestlé. Hence, Save the Children is also identified as a problematic stakeholder group. Furthermore, it is vital to mention that the problematic stakeholder group is not seen as of having power of influence, and thus this might indicate a reason for why Nestlé has yet not changed its practices of unethical marketing of milk formula.

The next part of this second step of Issues Management is to prepare a communication strategy for each stakeholder group. For the problematic stakeholder, it is common for the company to prepare a defensive statement as well as to try to convince the stakeholder group to become a supportive stakeholder. As mentioned in the previous step, it is noticeable that Nestlé has used both of these tactics in this case. This can be seen in the fact that Nestlé has a page on its website where the company answers some questions on the company's position on marketing of milk formula (Nestlé 2019j). This webpage can both be seen as a defensive statement because Nestlé is explaining how the company is complying with the WHO Health Code of marketing of milk formula. It can also be seen as a way of trying to convince the problematic stakeholder that the actions of Nestlé are not unethical, and thus convincing the stakeholder to become supportive of Nestlé's actions.

Now that the stakeholders have been identified as well as the mechanisms of Nestlé's response has been pinpointed, one can look at the 'Life circle' of an Issue. This circle can help to understand whether a company views the stage of an issue as 'active' or 'intense'. The circle identifies four stages that an issue can have: emergence, debate, codified, and enforcement (Cornelissen 2017, 197). Looking back at the beginning of the case, Nestlé chose not to go into the public debate of the case. Thus, the issue escalated to the point of enforcement, ultimately leading to the WHO Health Code of marketing of milk formula. Ever since, the case has received smaller attention by the media but respondents' answers show that the case is not forgotten and is still to be found in consumers' minds. Furthermore, the case has not been forgotten by Save the Children either who published its report *Don't Push It* (2018) about companies continuing to market milk formula in an unethical manner. Since the case is still a topic of discussion today, it has made Nestlé tackle the situation differently, ultimately going into the debate on its corporate website, addressing the company's actions and how these actions are in compliance with the WHO Health Code. This indicates that Nestlé merely sees the issue as 'active' and not 'intense' enough to further act on the reports by several organizations.

Issues identification and analysis: Nestlé and palm oil

Here, the stakeholder groups that need to be identified and analyzed are the consumers/activists and the NGO Greenpeace. In this case, these two stakeholder groups can be analyzed as one, since they have joined forces in their fight of putting pressure on Nestlé to change its actions in the purchase of unsustainable palm oil. In the Position-importance matrix, the consumers and Greenpeace are opposing to the issue. In addition to that, it can be argued that since Nestlé took immediate actions in declaring that the company will change its suppliers, Nestlé views this stakeholder group as of having most importance. Thus, this stakeholder group is viewed as an antagonistic stakeholder by Nestlé.

The most common strategies taken on by a corporation against an antagonistic stakeholder are to prepare counter arguments and bargaining strategies to win the stakeholders' support. However, this has not been entirely part of Nestlé's actions. One the one hand, Nestlé has arguably prepared counter arguments in the sense that the company states on several corporate webpages that the company is doing all it can to cut business with suppliers who source unsustainable palm oil. On the other hand, Nestlé has chosen not to go into bargaining with the stakeholder, which might be due to the company knowing that it is not possible to win over this stakeholder before Nestlé's actions are changed and merely sustainable palm oil is to be found in corporate supply chains. Instead, Nestlé has chosen to work on the issue, cut business with so called "dirty" palm oil suppliers, which the company will proceed with, ultimately reaching the goal of using 100% sustainable palm oil by 2020. These actions by Nestlé are further indicative of the stakeholder group having power, since the company may think that if it does not act on the issue now, the stakeholder group are in the position of and has the power of evolving the issue to a worse stage of the 'Life circle'. Whether these are solely statements made by Nestlé in order to stop NGOs' investigations in corporate actions or if this is actually done by Nestlé is difficult to say and something that can only be concluded by the year 2020.

This further indicates that Nestlé sees this issue as 'intense', making the company take immediate actions. Thus, Nestlé is not solely going into the public debate of the issue but also trying to solve it. Seeing that these changes of action by Nestlé are upheld, it will result in the issue not evolving into a codified or enforced issue. Since the company has made its own "laws" on how its suppliers should comply and source sustainable palm oil, it may further result in international laws not being made. Although Greenpeace is monitoring corporate actions on this matter, Nestlé are still in the position of influencing how the sustainable palm oil should be sourced and when the palm oil is sustainable. Hence, if international laws were made on this area, they might look differently than the compliance rules of Nestlé, that is to say that the international laws might be stricter than Nestlé's rules. Having identified and analyzed this issue, it is possible to move on to the next case of Nestlé and water.

Issues identification and analysis: Nestlé and water

The next case concerning Nestlé's bottling of water in California have two stakeholders that need to be identified and analyzed. These stakeholders are the consumers/activists and the US Forest Service. Both of these stakeholder groups are opposing to the issue. Moreover, since Nestlé has not acted on the stakeholders' utterances and complaints of corporate actions, it can be argued that Nestlé sees both stakeholder groups as of least importance. Thus, both stakeholder groups are identified as low priority stakeholders. Seeing that both of these stakeholders are identified as belonging to the same stakeholder group, they will be analyzed as one thereon.

The common mechanisms used when companies deal with a low priority stakeholder group is to use an educational program. It is difficult to say whether Nestlé are using an educational program but the company does provide excessive information on its website (Nestlé Waters North America) on corporate water rights and states that its actions are in compliance with Californian law. Thus, Nestlé feels that the company is not partaking in malpractices when it comes to this case and that activists cannot protest, since Nestlé holds water rights, which the company pays a yearly fee to maintain. The protests relate to activists' concern for the environment, the lack of water in California, and the unethical practice of bottling and selling water that should be of common rights, merely for profitable reasons. However, activists' behavior and the respondents' answers indicate that consumers do care about this issue, i.e. Nestlé should also care about what its consumers think of its actions.

Although there is intense debate in the public about the issue, it does not seem as if Nestlé identifies the issue as being 'intense' or even 'active'. Hence, based on the *'Life circle' of an issue*, Nestlé sees it as an emerging issue that is being talked about in the public but not at the stage of 'debate'. According to Issues Management, companies are recommended to address issues at the early stages in order for companies to avoid the issue to escalate and evolve into an 'intense' issue at the 'codified' or 'enforcing' stage (Cornelissen 2017, 197). Nonetheless, this does not seem to be a concern of Nestlé, since the company does not consider to change its actions in this case and stop bottling the water from San Bernardino National Forest in California. Furthermore, according to the theory, if Nestlé takes action at an early stage, it will be easier for the company to convince the opposing stakeholders to become supporters. However, it can be argued that this may need more work from Nestlé than solely stating on its website that the company holds a legal license and is not partaking in illegal activities according to Californian law.

6.2.2.3 Nestlé's issue-specific response strategies

To this third stage of Issues Management, the framework presents four response strategies to an issue: the buffering, bridging, advocacy, and thought leading strategy. Furthermore, the chosen response strategy depends on the corporation's judgments of how intense the issue is, how important it is to stakeholders, and what the values and beliefs of organizational management are (Cornelissen 2017, 198-199).

Issue-specific response strategies: Nestlé and milk formula

Since the case of Nestlé's use of unethical marketing of milk formula has taken place for decades, the company has thus adopted several response strategies. As mentioned in the first step of Issues Management, the company did not act on the issue and it escalated into an enforcement issue. The chosen strategy by Nestlé was thus the buffering strategy, where the issue was being stalled by the company by remaining silent and continuing its practices. Hence, Nestlé did not at that time engage in much communication with the public about the case. The decision of adopting this response strategy as clearly not based on the intensity of the issue or the importance of the issue to stakeholders, since it seemed of great importance to activists, organizations, and international institutions. Rather, it might have been due to the fact that the organizational management of Nestlé did not find the issue of great importance and this was possible not even part of corporate or management values at that time. Seemingly, this has changed today, since Nestlé states one of its values as helping children lead healthier lives.

Later, when the issue was addressed again by stakeholders, Nestlé adopted an advocacy strategy, where the company tried to convince the opposing stakeholders to become supportive of the case. This is shown in Nestlé's acts, since the company claims to comply with the WHO Health Code, while violations are still proved to exist. Nestlé is still marketing its milk formula in several countries. In Nestlé's *Policy on transparent interactions with public authorities* (2017b) for internal use, it is stated that the policy should be read and used with a following of ten documents. Amongst the ten documents is *Nestlé Policy Instructions on the Implementation of the WHO Code* also mentioned (Nestlé 2017b, 4). Arguably, Nestlé is using the advocacy strategy and engaging in lobbyism in relation to the WHO Health Code and the case of unethical marketing of milk formula. This sub-conclusion naturally leads to the next case.

Issue-specific response strategies: Nestlé and palm oil

When it comes to Greenpeace and consumer activists pressuring Nestlé to change its actions in purchasing unsustainable palm oil, Nestlé's reactions changed throughout the case's evolvement. Along with Greenpeace's campaign to make Nestlé stop its purchasing of unsustainable palm oil came a video, where a man eats a KitKat bar that looks similar to an orangutan's finger and that sprouts blood all over. The message was that Nestlé destroys forests and the habitats of the orangutans by purchasing unsustainable palm oil. Nestlé's reaction was neither of the four response strategies. Instead, the company got the video removed from YouTube and threatened to remove hostile messages from its Facebook page (Thomasson 2012), only pouring fuel on the fire. Hence, activists were getting more upset and encouraged to pressure Nestlé, whilst Greenpeace reposted the campaign video on Vimeo.

Nestlé quickly realized that this response strategy was not successful and change the course of its actions. The change of response strategy can indicate that Nestlé's judgments on the intensity of the issue as well as the importance of the issue to stakeholders were wrong. Now, Nestlé adopted a bridging response strategy, including that the company adapted to expectations of the important stakeholders. Nestlé sat down with Greenpeace to plan how the company could cut its business with suppliers who source unsustainable palm oil. The outcome of this issue is Nestlé's Digital Acceleration Team, who is responsible of addressing all emerging issues regarding Nestlé and its brands on digital and social media (Thomasson 2012). Here, Nestlé's team can engage with consumers and activists in a way where consumers feel that they are being heard by the company, and thus the company may be in the front of emerging issues.

One may have thought that Nestlé should have learned from previous cases, since the company at this time has been involved in several cases, e.g. the case of unethical marketing of milk formula. The change of response strategy to a bridging strategy is shown in the many reports Nestlé provides its stakeholders with about its progress of removing unsustainable palm oil in its supply chains. Furthermore, this issue is addressed several times on the corporate website of Nestlé, insuring that its stakeholders know of the company's change of actions. With a sub-conclusion as such, it is natural to move on to the next case.

Issue-specific response strategies: Nestlé and water

In the case of Nestlé and its water rights in San Bernardino National Forest, the company has chosen to use a buffering response strategy. Since Nestlé has barely addressed the issue and continues its actions of bottling water in a drought stricken area, it is clear that Nestlé uses a buffering strategy. Although Nestlé states one of its corporate values to be the planet and to source sustainably, it can be argued that this is going against corporate values. Hence, this may further indicate that the organizational management does not value this case to any extent but rather praise profit more, since the company is continuing its practices. Having identified the response strategies for all three cases, it is possible to move on to the fourth and last step of Issues Management.

6.2.2.4 Nestlé's evaluation

Here, the corporate choice of response strategy is evaluated. It is vital to look at how the issue has developed, whether the stakeholders' opinions have changed, whether the chosen strategy was the correct choice, and what the outcome of the chosen strategy was (Cornelissen 2017, 202).

Nestlé's evaluation: Nestlé and milk formula

To recapitulate, in this case, the chosen response strategy was first the buffering strategy. However, this choice led to the issue evolving from an 'active' to an 'intense' issue in the 'enforcing' stage. To put it differently, this was not the correct choice of Nestlé, since choosing the response strategy did not make the issue go away but rather the issue had evolved to become worse. Moreover, the fact that the issue has lasted for several decades is an indication of the stakeholders' opinions not having changed and that the case is still existing. Because the case emerged again, Nestlé realized that its chosen buffering response strategy was not successful, leading the company to adopt the advocacy response strategy the second time around. Although Nestlé claims to have changed its actions and is complying with the WHO Health Code, there are still proves of malpractice from Nestlé's side. Thus, it is arguable whether the second chosen response strategy, the advocacy strategy, has been successful.

Nestlé's evaluation: Nestlé and palm oil

Moving on to the next case in this last step of Issues Management, it is interesting to see whether the chosen strategies have led to successful outcomes. In the case of Nestlé's use of unsustainable palm oil, the company started by not using any of the recommended response strategies laid out in Issues Management. This resulted in more intense pressure from the stakeholder for Nestlé to change its course of actions. Hence, Nestlé adopted the advocacy response strategy. This has decreased the public debate of the issue but organizations such as Greenpeace are still monitoring the corporation's actions regarding the issue. This further means that the stakeholder's opinion has not changed on the matter and is still oppose to the issue. The choice for Nestlé to use the advocacy response strategy was the right choice, since the company experienced a great deal of pressure from stakeholders. Since the company has changed actions and starting to cut its business with suppliers, sourcing unsustainable palm oil, it has made the issue turn in the right direction for the company, namely out of the media's spotlight.

Nestlé's evaluation: Nestlé and water

In this last case, Nestlé chose to use the buffering response strategy. From the corporate point of view, this has been the correct choice, since the issue has not escalated. The opinions of the stakeholders have not changed and is still oppose to the issue. However, it can be argued that since this stakeholder does not have the power to influence the company, there has not been a change in the issue or in the corporate actions of bottling water from drought stricken areas. Looking at it from an ethical point of view, it can be argued that bottling of water, which should be a common resource, is wrong and should not be a practice of Nestlé, since the company states that it values sustainable sourcing. Consequently, since the issue has not evolved, the chosen advocacy response strategy for this case is the correct choice for Nestlé.

6.2.3 Cause Related Marketing vs. Issues Management

Now that the chosen cases have been analyzed by using the theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management, it is possible to answer the second research question: "Why do the two large corporations Nike and Nestlé use such different approaches when facing and managing issues?". Moreover, this section will look at how the two theories can contribute when creating customer-based brand equity.

First of all, it is vital to mention that the corporations have used distinct methods in their approaches of marketing and dealing with issues. While Nike has purposely used the theory of Cause Related Marketing to frame its advertising campaign, resulting in an issue and consumer backlash, Nestlé's issues have been created on the basis of its societal actions, and thus purposely used the theory of Issues Management.

It can be argued that Nike's choice of using Cause Related Marketing is based on several variables. First of all, Nike has used Cause Related Marketing for decades, starting with its first "Just Do It!" campaign back in the 1980s. This has thus become part of corporate values to enlighten its consumers on social causes. Second of all, the company supports the cause and one can argue that Nike will not choose to market the company on a cause that the management does not believe in. Third of all, due to the fact that Kaepernick received backlash for his way of protesting, it can be argued that Nike knew prior to the campaign that the company would also receive backlash for choosing Kaepernick as the face of its campaign. This further proves the second point that Nike does not choose a cause for its marketing that the company does not believe in. Since Nike finds the cause beneficial and important, it has chosen the social cause in spite of the chance of backlash. By contrast, the reason for Nike to choose the social cause can also be, as mentioned by some questionnaire respondents, that Nike knew that its consumer base is likely to be supportive of the social cause, resulting in Nike creating and maintaining a positive image towards its consumer base. Lastly, all these reasons can increase profits for Nike, which is always an important variable for corporations. Whether the intentions of Nike are merely profit driven or the company in fact is interested in shedding light on the social cause is difficult to say. However, the cause is in line with Nike's corporate values, and thus it can give an impression that the company's intentions are both.

Taking a look at Nestlé's use of Issues Management, it has previously been established that Nestlé has been the topic of issues due to its corporate activities. The company has been aware of its actions but might not have been aware of the issues emerging in societal debate. Even when the issues emerged, it seems as if Nestlé has ignored many of the cases mentioned, assumingly hoping that the issues would disappear by itself or that the societal debate would fade out. As this has not happened, Nestlé has adopted Issues Management to try and steer the issues in the company's desired directions, since the theory can give Nestlé the necessary tools to manage issues. Whether Nestlé has chosen to use the correct tools in Issues Management is dependent on the single case, as argued in the previous subsection. Due to the fact that Nestlé has not intentionally caused the issues, it has been wise for the company to react to the issues by using Issues Management, perhaps even decreased the damages of the issues and managed them to not evolve into crises.

The next question then is whether the two theories Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management can add value to a company when creating customer-based brand equity. As previously argued, both companies have created customer-based brand equity but in various ways, since Nike and Nestlé uses different branding strategies.

Arguably, Cause Related Marketing can add value when creating customer-based brand equity, since the benefits of using the theory are, among others, to create stronger relationships with stakeholders and to portray corporate values and beliefs. This is due to the fact that these variables are also part of creating brand equity. Furthermore, since Cause Related Marketing is a marketing approach, it is natural that the theory is beneficial in creating brand equity. As previously mentioned, one way for a company to create brand associations in consumer minds is through advertising. Ultimately, Nike's use of the social cause in its advertising campaign can create a brand association of the company valuing societal causes and caring about creating a difference in the world and in societies. This is a way for Cause Related Marketing to contribute to creating customer-based brand equity. Nonetheless, it is further vital to mention that the use of Cause Related Marketing can also do the opposite for a company when the theory is not used correctly. If the intentions of a company using the theory are clearly and solely to increase profits and if the partnership between the corporation and cause are not of equal terms, it can result in the company getting a negative reputation among its consumers. According to the respondents' answers, some questioned Nike's intentions of the company's use of Cause Related Marketing. However, some also saw the positive in the fact that the cause is getting increased attention. This positive effect was further shown in Nike's increase of profit, since its customer base were supportive of the cause and Nike's use of the cause.

When it comes to Issues Management, it is slightly different than Cause Related Marketing in its way of contributing to customer-based brand equity, since the former theory is used by companies as an emergency solution after an issue has arisen. At a first glance, it does not seem as if Issues Management can contribute with anything for companies when creating brand equity. However, it can be argued that if the theory is used wisely by companies and if companies change its actions according to activists' expectations without trying to avoid the issue in the beginning, it can have a positive affect on consumers. This can ultimately create a brand association in consumer minds of the company wishing to give back to the communities that it is present in. Although one can also argue that this has not been the case for Nestlé, since the company started by ignoring issues in each case. This gives the impression that the company does not care and will not change its course of actions if the company can get away with not changing. Furthermore, it seems as if there is a gap between Nestlé's values and Nestlé's actions in society, which is also a hindrance for Nestlé to create brand equity through Issues Management. Ultimately, if Nestlé adapted to its consumers' expectations of how the company should practice business in society and did not ignore the emerging issues, the company would be able to add value to its brand equity by using Issues Management.

7.0 Conclusion

Prior to concluding on the problem statement, it is vital to first answer the two research questions. To sum up, the first research question is *"What is the American consumer perception of the two brands Nike and Nestle?"*. Both companies have created customer-based brand equity in different ways, since the companies have chosen various branding strategies. Nike's choice of using a monolithic branding strategy makes it easier for consumers to recognize the brand, since the corporate and product brands are similar. Nestlé's choice of using an endorsed branding strategy makes it challenging for consumers to recognize the company's extensive range of products but arguably, the company has created a stronger brand equity of its product brands than its corporate brand. Respondents have positive and negative brand associations towards both companies. To put it brief, Nestlé's list of negative brand associations was longer than Nike's list. Arguably, the American consumer perception of the Nestlé brand is worse than of Nike's brand. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that Nestlé has maintained its title as the world's largest food and beverage company.

There may be three pivotal factors for how this title has been maintained despite of the corporate issues. First of all, Nestlé sells average products that are not too extensive, i.e. the company has a large potential consumer group. Second of all, the product portfolio is large to such an extent that it can be difficult to keep track of what the company owns if consumers wish to boycott the brand. Third of all, if consumers hear of Arrowhead Spring Water bottling water in California and wish to boycott the brand, consumers may continue to purchase KitKat chocolate bars, if they are unaware of the fact that both product brands are owned by Nestlé. Since Nestlé is such a large corporation, it can be argued that it is easier for the company to maintain its title and more difficult for consumers to have an influence on its corporate actions. Additionally, most respondents say that their perception of the Nestlé brand has changed after hearing of the corporate malpractice. However, it is difficult to say whether this will have an impact on Nestlé due to the reasons argued above. Although respondents also had negative brand associations of Nike, the perception of the brand was overall positive. Lastly, the Nike/Kaepernick case has caused both positive and negative feelings in the respondents but the outcome of the campaign was overall positive, since most respondents have got a better perception of the Nike brand preceding the campaign.

Following, the second research question is *"Why do the two large corporations Nike and Nestlé use such different approaches when facing and managing issues?"*. Similar to Kaepernick's protests, Nike's advertisement campaign featuring Kaepernick sparked mixed feelings in the American consumer. Unlike the newspaper articles on the case, the questionnaire results showed that some respondents were upset about Kaepernick's chosen venue for his protests. Arguably, if Nike has chosen the ALS cause, it would not had sparked as many mixed feelings among the American citizens as the Kaepernick case did. The choice of using Cause Related Marketing has created several benefits for Nike. It has strengthened the company's relationship with its consumers, increased sales, and strengthened the portrayal of corporate reputation, image, and values. Furthermore, it has contributed to publicity and spread awareness of the cause. However, some respondents question Nike's intentions of the partnership, accusing it of being merely to increase sales and exploitive of the cause. It is difficult to say what the intentions of Nike are but the fact that Nike has engaged in Cause Related Marketing since the 1980s, it seems as if its intentions are good and that the causes supported are equivalent to Nike's corporate values.

Looking at Nestlé's use of Issues Management is slightly different. The first case of Nestlé and milk formula identified the consumers and the organization Save the Children as problematic stakeholders, i.e. they are opposing to the issue but do not have much influential power. An indication of Nestlé not finding the issue at the active stage is when the company chose not to go into the public debate, ultimately making the 'life circle' of the issue develop to the codified stage. First, Nestlé tried the buffering response strategy, hence ignoring the issue. When the issue was addressed by stakeholders again, Nestlé adopted an advocacy strategy. This seems to be a better strategy for Nestlé. Although the company claims to comply to the WHO Health Code of ethical marketing of milk formula, Nestlé still receives complaints from activists of its malpractice. Seemingly, Nestlé's actions can be improved even further.

The second case of Nestlé and palm oil identifies the consumers and Greenpeace as an antagonistic stakeholder, thus being opposing to the case and having power of influence. Arguably, Nestlé perceives the issue as intense, making the company take immediate actions. As a response to the Greenpeace campaign, Nestlé makes the mistake of not following the theory, and thus having the campaign video removed from YouTube. This makes the activists more agitated, and thus Nestlé adopts the bridging response strategy, adapting to consumers' expectations. Although there are still signs of Nestlé doing business with unsustainable suppliers of palm oil, the company is changing direction of its actions, thus changing the direction of the issue, namely out of the media's spotlight.

Lastly, the case of Nestlé and water identifies both consumers and the US Forest Service as being low priority stakeholders, thus being opposed to the issue and having low power of influence. Seemingly, Nestlé does not view the issue as either intense or active, since the company does not act towards it. Hence, Nestlé adopts a buffering response strategy, i.e. ignoring the issue. From a corporate point of view, Nestlé chose the right strategy and is right to continue to bottle water from San Bernardino National Forest. However, from an ethical point of view, these actions should not continue and is incompatible with its stated values.

Moving back to the question of why the companies apply different approaches to the issues, it can be seen that Nike's use of Cause Related Marketing has its foundation in the company's wish to portray its values to stakeholders. It is Nike's choice to use the theory and to use Kaepernick for its campaign, ultimately creating a public issue against the company. By contrast, one can argue that Nestlé is responsible for its practices but the company has not chosen to be the center of attention of these issues. Thus, it is natural for the company to adopt the Issues Management theory in order to manage the issues and assumingly keep the damages at a minimum.

Finally, it is time to conclude on the problem statement: *"How can Cause Related Marketing and Issues Management contribute to building Customer-Based Brand Equity?"*. As it has been stated, both companies have created customer-based brand equity in their own ways. Taking a quick glance at the two theories, it is easier to see how Cause Related Marketing can contribute in creating customer-based brand equity than Issues Management. Some benefits of using Cause Related Marketing include creating a stronger relationship with stakeholders, increasing sales, and portraying corporate values and beliefs. These are similar to the variables needed when creating brand equity, and thus it can be argued that the theory can add value when creating brand equity. Furthermore, brand associations can be created through advertisement. Since Cause Related Marketing is a marketing approach, this can further contribute in creating brand associations with the consumer, thus enhancing brand equity. On the other side, it is also important to mention that Cause Related Marketing can be harmful to a company if it is not used correctly. Hence, if a company merely has the intention of increasing profits when partnering with a cause, the company can get a negative reputation amongst consumers. Similarly, some respondents questioned Nike's intentions with Kaepernick, although the majority were positive towards the increased publicity of the cause.

Since Issues Management is a theory adopted by companies as an emergency solution to issues, its contribution to creating brand equity is different than of Cause Related Marketing. Arguably, if companies apply the theory wisely and change its actions in accordance with consumers' expectations, it can have a positive affect on consumers. To consumers, this can create a brand association of the company wanting to contribute to societies. However, this is not the case with Nestlé, since it in many cases claims to have changed but its actions prove differently, giving an impression of the company not wishing to change if it can get away with not having to. Although Nestlé has not created brand equity through its use of Issues

Management, it is possible for the theory to contribute to creating brand equity if the theory is applied correctly by a company.

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