

Struggles in organizational attempts to adopt new branding logics: the case of a marketizing university

Jaakko Aspara^a, Hanna-Mari Aula^b, Janne Tienari^{b*} and Henriikki Tikkanen^{a**}

^a*Department of Marketing, Aalto University School of Business, Aalto, Helsinki, Finland;*

^b*Department of Management, Aalto University School of Business, Aalto, Helsinki, Finland*

Recent research underlines that strong branded identities are created through co-creational processes in which multiple stakeholders are actively involved and brand identities are matched with cultural, political, and economic forces in society. However, there is a lack of in-depth research into how organizations attempt to adopt new branding logics. To address this research gap, we conduct a study of a university that is rebranding itself in accordance with a new market-oriented, service-dominant logic. While harmonic value co-creation between the brand and stakeholders is emphasized in an earlier literature, our study shows that attempts to adopt these logics trigger contradictory and adversarial interpretations among stakeholders about the role and identity of the focal actor vis-à-vis their own. We conclude that adopting new branding logics involves struggles and dynamics of power and resistance, which have passed unnoticed in earlier research. Resistance is not only targeted toward the brand's symbolic meanings and conducted by marginal consumer groups to enhance their own identities. Rather, it can also be targeted toward the tangible resource roles that stakeholders are expected to assume vis-à-vis the brand, and conducted by various stakeholder resisters – with the outcome of undermining and shifting the essence of the brand itself.

Keywords: branding logics; consumer resistance; organizations; stakeholders; service-dominant logic; marketization; university; merger

The identities and self-images adopted by consumers are not a straightforward marketing issue (Berthon et al. 2007), as branding has become a core activity of contemporary consumerist culture (Schroeder 2009) and capitalist society (Holt 2006) as well as a meaning-making device in organizations (Kärreman and Rylander 2009). The logics by which effective branded identities are created are in flux. Most notably, extant research underlines that in today's marketplace, strong "iconic" or "gestalt" branded identities are created through interactional processes in which multiple stakeholders are actively involved and brand identities are aligned with cultural, political, and economic forces in society (Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2006). This contrasts with the traditional understanding of branding, which was based on one-way supply of brand images from marketers to consumers, who were rather passive recipients of brand

*Corresponding author. Email: janne.tienari@aalto.fi

**Also at: School of Business, Stockholm University, Sweden.

images and who did not actively ponder the motivations of marketers or the value that each party stood to gain from the focal brand.

Despite the fact that recent research has demonstrated the possibility of new logics for creating strong, stakeholder-valued brands in the marketplace, there is a lack of research into the *processes through which organizations attempt to adopt* such logics amidst wider cultural, political, and economic forces. To partly fill this research gap, we conduct an in-depth case study of a rather extreme example of a university rebranding initiative, which aligns with a contemporary market-oriented and “service-dominant” (SD) logic (cf. Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006; Merz, He, and Vargo 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2004). We consider this initiative as a revealing example of how a traditional, passively branded organization shifts to a new logic in which multiple stakeholders are invited to actively contribute to the focal brand and obtain value from it. Indeed, as an instance of a new branding logic, SD-aligned branding shares much common ground with the aforementioned notions of contemporary cultural and gestalt branding (Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2006), such as the emphasis on the active contribution of multiple stakeholders to the brand, as well as on the notion of co-creation of use-value to all parties (Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren, 2013).

Some strong university brands such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard have of course existed for centuries, and universities have always “branded” themselves with heraldic crests, seals, and mottos. This reminds us that university branding is not an entirely new phenomenon. But as universities have become further marketized in recent years not only in the Anglo-American scene but also in the state-controlled systems of higher education in Europe (Wedlin 2008), they have engaged in more holistic strategic rebranding initiatives, which go beyond the design of seals, slogans, and marketing communications to span university restructuring processes in their entirety (Hearn 2010). Such a move toward new branding logics constitutes a radical disruption for the university organization. Ours is a study of an organizational attempt to adopt a new branding logic from a critical perspective, with a focus on analyzing various stakeholder dynamics and resistances involved in this initiative.

We argue that adopting new branding logics involves struggles and dynamics of power and resistance, and invite researchers in the field of consumption culture, in general, to address these dynamics in the organizations and branding processes that they study. We further contribute to research on consumer resistance, in particular, by addressing the following less-studied phenomena identified by Izberk-Bilgin (2010): (a) the resistances and power play involved, when global branding phenomena take over traditionally non-market scenes, (b) the resistances of multiple, sometimes vague stakeholders groups, instead of merely those of various consumer groups, and (c) the shifting roles and identities of the variety of stakeholders involved in contemporary branding processes.

The present article is structured as follows. First, to set the stage for the changing cultural, political, and economic context, we describe how marketizing universities are adopting a brand logic that is de facto aligned with the SD logic advocated by some marketing scholars (Merz, He, and Vargo 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Second, we provide a brief review of the literature on university branding as well on SD-related branding. Third, we describe our in-depth case study methodology and, fourth, offer our findings. Finally, we critically discuss the adoption of new brand logics by contemporary organizations and reflect our findings vis-à-vis earlier research on consumption cultures.

Universities between autonomy and instrumentalism

During more than eight centuries, ‘university’ has been the name given by a society to a sort of supplementary body that at the one and the same time it wanted to project outside itself and to keep jealously to itself, to emancipate and control (Derrida 1983, 19)

Over time, universities have been subject to alternating religious, cultural, political, and economic forces. Since its inception, the concept of university has drawn meanings from surrounding society, and its position and autonomy have been legitimized in different ways in different locations at different times. At the same time, the structure and content of higher education have converged across boundaries of nation-states at several historical junctions (Rüegg 2004).

One key dimension along which universities have alternated over centuries is their focus on the terminal values of knowledge and truth defined by the academic community itself vs. an alternative focus on instrumental information and value created for external parties (Rüegg 2004). Some of the latter instrumental focus was observed in the West in the era of imperialism and the World Wars, when universities were subject to pressures to serve the political and military purposes of nation-states. In recent years, a different form of instrumentalism has emerged. This is the expectation that universities must provide marketable knowledge and value to industries, companies, employers, and the civil society. Indeed, a general “marketization” trend can be observed where private businesses and markets are increasingly taken as benchmarks for transforming universities and where applicability of knowledge as well as competition, efficiency, and external accountability are embraced and exercised through various techniques of measurement and control (Marginson 2008). Although such marketization has proceeded at a different pace in different countries (Krejsler 2006), the transformation of universities has accelerated across the West and beyond (Wedlin 2008). Thus, as a contemporary form of instrumentalism, universities are increasingly defined by policy-makers as producers of information and resources that should be useful and valuable to external stakeholders such as companies and industries – and less representative of the virtues defined by the academic community itself (Marginson 2008).

With their marketized focus on the delivery of instrumental use-value to external stakeholders, universities compete against each other in attracting the “best” students and scholars as well as funding from the market (Engwall 2007; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007). Such use-value has also been argued to call for interdisciplinarity, thus challenging disciplinary boundaries and traditions within academia (Gibbons et al. 1994). Yet another aspect of marketization is the consolidation of universities through mergers and other restructuring initiatives familiar from the corporate world. These endeavors, too, have typically been initiated from outside the academic community and orchestrated by management and administrators. Viewed from within universities, they have often been forced rather than voluntary (Skodvin 1999), causing uncertainty and stress among academics (Cartwright, Tytherleigh, and Robertson 2007).

Taken together, one can observe that the aforementioned developments can be viewed as signs of contemporary universities adopting the generic principles of the SD logic, as advocated by contemporary marketing thought (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Managerial SD logic expressly encourages organizations to focus on the use-value they provide, instrumentally, to stakeholders – replacing the idea that

organizations and their products have inherent value as such. Service in this perspective is synonymous with the benefits provided by an actor to other actors (Vargo and Lusch 2004). The aforementioned university marketization and the related notion of “higher education as a service” (Ng and Forbes 2009) testify to attempts by universities to align with SD logic. Moreover, the contemporary notion that the services of universities should benefit multiple stakeholders is also well-aligned with managerial SD logic, which emphasizes that service value is always co-created with multiple customers and stakeholders rather than being incorporated, per se, in goods or services (Vargo and Lusch 2004). In a similar vein, university stakeholders are seen to include not only faculty and students but also alumni, private donors and employers, the state, and accreditors (Ng and Forbes 2009).

Thus, setting the stage for our study, we have one logic and modus operandi (i.e. autonomous universities where knowledge and truth are pursued by scholars), which is disrupted by broader cultural, political, and economic forces (i.e. university marketization). This puts pressure on universities to align themselves with a new modus operandi. This shift, in turn, pressures them to adopt new identity and brand logics, evoking dynamics of power and resistance. In our empirical study, we focus especially on the latter part of this broader process (i.e. the adoption of new identity and brand logics, and the struggles involved).

Next, we provide a brief review of a prior literature on university branding and on a branding-related SD literature, and define research questions for our empirical study. However, it is important to note that even if the marketization of universities can be viewed as the alignment of emergent SD actors with the logic of instrumental use-value—creation for a variety of stakeholders, we describe the struggles in an organization’s *attempts* to adopt the SD identity and brand. We do not argue whether or how the organization *should* go about this endeavor, which is the focus of most of the prior, normatively and managerially oriented SD literature. The SD literature (Ballantyne and Aitken 2007; Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006; Fyrberg and Jürriado 2009; Merz, He, and Vargo 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2004) as such offers, indeed, a rather unproblematic picture of the value—creation philosophy and initiatives behind branding – as if value co-creation between stakeholders was essentially harmonic cooperation. Instead, we focus on the identities, interests, and struggles involved in the process, and highlight how it gives rise to dynamics of power and resistance.

Adopting a service-dominant logic in university branding?

Universities increasingly invest in branding. They appoint professional brand managers, define brand identities, integrate branding concerns into their strategies, and introduce branding initiatives. This signals how universities are under pressure to change from a “Republic of Scholars” into an organization like any other (Krücken and Meier 2006). However, the extant literature on university branding has taken a relatively traditional perspective, most often focusing on the external brand image of universities within a single stakeholder or “customer” group such as students (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007; Yang, Alessandri, and Kinsey 2008). By concentrating on one or few stakeholders and by assuming that a university is akin to a business firm (with a singular brand image in the customer group’s mind), much of the extant research has all but ignored their complexity as organizations (Chapleo 2010; Jevons 2006), failing to address them as objects of contestation among a wide array of stakeholders (Lowrie 2007; Lowrie and Hemsley-Brown 2011; Stevens,

Armstrong, and Arum 2008). Indeed, it has been argued that some branding perspectives try to abstract the heterogeneous and complex institution into a pithy image (Hearn 2010). Universities are likely to be “too complex to be encapsulated by one brand or identity definition” as they do not “speak with a single voice” (Waeraas and Solbakk 2009, 449), and branding of universities is likely to involve an ongoing negotiation of representations where both “what” and “who” are being branded is constantly under scrutiny (Vásquez, Sergi, and Cordelier 2013).

Making sense of the stakeholder complexity, polyphony, and controversy is where our focus on a university’s attempt to adopt a new logic of branding can inform the study of university branding – and where the literatures of new branding logics can learn from the study of a university. We specify our first research question as follows: *What kind of diverse stakeholder actions and struggles characterize the branding dynamics of an emergent SD actor such as a university, and how are they linked to broader cultural, political, and economic forces?* In focusing on this question, our study comes close to Vásquez, Sergi, and Cordelier’s (2013) research on the communication practices of university faculty in “being branded and doing branding,” meaning that we do not focus on explicit, conscious branding efforts such as logo changes and promotion campaigns alone but zoom into daily practices of a variety of stakeholders in (not) aligning themselves with a putative new brand.

At the same time, branding is not only about tangible actions but also about the perceived identities or images held by stakeholders of both themselves and other stakeholders. Prior SD literature, as well as the literature on contemporary branding logics (Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2006), recognizes that the contemporary (SD) brand is not a singular product or corporate brand image that can be simply added by the organization on top of its service output (through, e.g. marketing communications), but rather a complex sign system that symbolizes the entire, proposed value-creation processes (Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006). However, while the term “sign system” apparently refers to a complex variety of brand images in stakeholders’ minds, how exactly they operate in the context of SD branding and what perceptual processes take place in SD-aligned branding remain to be studied. Thus, we specify our second research question as follows: *How do stakeholders perceive the identity of an organization attempting to align with a contemporary (SD) branding logic?* The extant SD-related branding research does not ask or answer this question directly, other than by pointing out broadly that a brand of SD logic is about value propositions or promises made and delivered to stakeholders (Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006; Brodie, Whittome, and Brush 2009; Fyrberg and Jürriado 2009), as also emphasized for some time in the Nordic school of service marketing (Grönroos 2009).

Our two research questions reflect the nature of a brand both as an entity (reflector of brand identity and stakeholder identities) and as a process (of stakeholder actions and reactions) (Stern 2006). In addressing our research questions, we pay specific attention not only to the intentional efforts by university management to create a new identity and brand through holistic restructuring of the university, but also to reactions such as compliance and resistance that it generates across a variety of stakeholder groups. We discuss the meanings that the brand and its representations obtain among both the brand’s advocates and its opponents (Kärreman and Rylander 2009). Our premise is that the two positions feed on each other (Parker 2006) and that they affect the co-production of the new brand (Lowrie and Hemsley-Brown 2011) – not as harmonic value co-creation but as a contested process. In this process, power and resistance are closely knit together in an interconnected dynamic as modes of resistance “flow from

communicative networks that include dominant groups” (Fleming and Spicer 2007, 305; Scott 1985). We adopt the concept of “struggle” to denote this dynamic (Clegg 1989; Fleming and Spicer 2007; Thomas and Hardy 2011) in a university’s attempts to adopt a new branding logic. Finally, we take seriously the fact that all this takes place in a particular context that influences the ways in which the branding of the SD logic-oriented actor plays out. On the one hand, cultural conventions affect identities and branding, and cultural codes both enable and constrain organizations in using brands to create value for stakeholders (Schroeder 2009; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006). On the other hand, the political and economic environment has a bearing on branding, by shaping, enabling, and intervening in branding processes and the dynamics of power and resistance involved. With this theoretical framework we now turn to our empirical case.

Research site, empirical materials, and analyses

Our empirical focus is on Aalto University, which was formed through a merger of the *Helsinki University of Technology* (HUT), the *Helsinki School of Economics* (HSE), and the *University of Art and Design Helsinki* (UIAH) in Finland. HUT, which obtained university status in 1908, was by far the largest of the three merging universities, and the leading technological university in Finland. HSE, established in 1911, was the leading business school in Finland. UIAH, originally founded in 1871, was the largest university of its kind in the Nordic countries, although the smallest of the merging institutions. All three universities were the top institutions in their respective fields in Finland. The merger idea was first proposed in September 2005, the new name was introduced in May 2008, and the merger took effect on 1 January 2010, when Aalto University became a legal entity. While the merging universities had all been public and state-owned, the new university was placed under the control of a private foundation.

In order to study the dynamic processes related to the attempt to create a new Aalto University brand with an SD logic orientation, we adopted an interpretive case study design (Stake 1995). Our longitudinal study of the making of Aalto in 2005–2010 draws from a wide range of empirical materials. Since November 2007, when the official merger decision was made by the Ministry of Education, our study proceeded in real time. This has offered us an opportunity to study the emerging Aalto brand “in its totality” (Diamond et al. 2009).

We collected a comprehensive set of empirical materials, ranging from public documents and earlier research reports dealing with the university merger through documents and communication produced by the universities and their management to reports focusing on the faculty, students, and other stakeholders. We also conducted interviews with key individuals involved in the merger and branding project as well as key stakeholders. All our empirical materials are summarized in Table 1 below.

A preliminary analysis of our empirical materials indicated that a pragmatic way to make sense of the events in the merger and branding process was to structure them along the following phases: (1) *opportunity identification* for the merger and for the new university brand to be created in the merger, (2) *refinement* of the new brand to be created in the merger, and (3) *launch*. In further analyses, we located a number of themes that emerged from our empirical materials in each phase and noted how various stakeholders became active in promoting or opposing the emerging brand at different phases and in relation to different themes (research question 1) and to the kind of brand images involved (research question 2). To provide a supportive

Table 1. Empirical materials.

Texts produced by stakeholders external to Aalto and its predecessors

- Domestic and international governmental committee reports (OPM 2007)
- Research and commentaries on the reform of the Finnish university system (Lipponen, and Hakonen 2012; Lipponen, Lendasse, and Aula 2011)
- Memos and brochures by The Finnish Confederation of Industries (EK)
- Media texts in the major Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* and the business daily *Kauppalehti*, covering the period 6 September 2005, until 31 December 2010 (1203 media texts in total)
- Miscellaneous media texts in a range of outlets in Finland (e.g. regional newspapers and student magazines) and abroad (*The Financial Times*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Newsweek*) (FT 2009; Kao 2009)

Texts related to stakeholders internal to Aalto and its predecessors

- Online materials and documents on the making of new university, e.g. strategy, Human Resources (HR), and marketing (2007–2010); artifacts with visual imagery such as brochures and advertisements
- Powerpoint presentations, blog entries, and newsletters by the new university president (rector) (2009–2010)
- Aalto image survey for internal and external stakeholders (conducted in February–March 2011) and employee survey (conducted in May 2011) (Lipponen and Hakonen 2012)
- Retrospective account by the rectors of HSE and UIAH (Kasanen and Sotamaa 2010)
- KyWeb (online chatroom for HSE students) and *Kylteri* (HSE student magazine), search 2005–2010 carried out in March 2012
- Email conversations with HSE professors on the school's name and brand (in real time October 2009; retrospectively September 2012)
- Research report by a group of scholars who interviewed top management and employees at Aalto (Koschke et al. 2011), research report on the new career system (Kunelius, Noppari, and Reunanen 2009), research report on the new university's reputation (Aula and Tienari 2011)

Interviews

- Key decision-makers such as rectors and vice rectors of the merging universities, state officials at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, representatives of the Finnish business community and industry, the new president (rector) and her new top managers (interviewed in 2008–2010); 45 in total
 - Communications managers of the merging universities (interviewed twice: March 2009 and March 2010)
 - Communications experts the Ministry of Education and EK (interviewed in March–April 2009)
 - Senior branding consultant (interviewed in February 2010)
 - New head of communications (interviewed in September 2010 and May 2011)
-

framework for an analysis of the case in terms of its alignment with SD logic, we analyzed (a) the service promises (value propositions) offered to stakeholders (Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006) and (b) the stakeholder resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004) through which the new service brand was supposed to be realized. In analyzing the resources, we relied on an established categorization of key resources of service delivery systems previously applied in conceptualizing higher education as service: the processes, people, and physical aspects through which service (promises) is offered (Ng and Forbes 2009). Within this framework, the case accounts in the following section present a description of the case for our initial analysis (as attached in Appendix 1).

To extract findings and interpretations from the case description in terms of research question 1 (*What kind of diverse stakeholder actions and struggles characterize the branding dynamics of an emergent SD actor such as a university, and how are they linked to broader cultural, political, and economic forces?*), we revisited the empirical

materials and analyses to identify instances of stakeholder dynamics where power and resistance implicate each other and where stakeholder struggles could be detected in relation to branding of the new university. In so doing, we also examined the ways in which the stakeholder identities, on the one hand, and the new university's brand identity, on the other, were enacted in the branding dynamics by exploring how various stakeholders referred to "us" (and "them") in relation to the new university brand. In turn, this analysis fed in interpretations of our second research question (*How do stakeholders perceive the identity of an organization attempting to align with a contemporary (SD) branding logic?*) by indicating how various stakeholders perceived the university's new brand in relation to their identities. In practice, this meant analyzing the new roles and identities that would be imposed by the newly conceptualized university brand on the various stakeholders (in terms of promises given and resources expected in exchange) as well as on the new university itself. Overall, with these questions in the focus of our analysis, our research has been characterized by a process of iteration and a continuous interplay between theory, data collection, and analyses.

The case study

In the following, we present our findings on the branding of Aalto University in three phases: *opportunity identification* in 2005–2007 (with a focus on how various stakeholders identified opportunities that could be seized with a new university), *refinement* in 2007–2009 (with a focus on the development and negotiation of the new university concept and brand among stakeholders), and *launch* in 2010 (with a focus on the realization of the merger and further negotiation of the Aalto brand). [Appendix 1](#) provides a summary of the case account in terms of the framework described above (value propositions and stakeholder promises).

Opportunity identification

Case account

Professor Yrjö Sotamaa, rector of the UIAH, is generally credited with first voicing the idea of merging the UIAH, the HUT, and the HSE. This took place in September 2005 in Sotamaa's opening speech for the new academic year. He linked the initiative to "the well-being and future of the nation." *Helsingin Sanomat*, the foremost daily newspaper in Finland, picked up the story and framed it as an initiative to create a Finnish "innovation university." Through its lobbying organizations, the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) and the Federation of Finnish Technology Industries, the business community supported the initiative and made its interests clear on its website: "the central objective of [the merger] is to secure the competence capital within fields central to the development and competitiveness of the Finnish business community and society."

The university merger was promoted as a major national initiative in the midst of the economic boom of 2005–2007. The interests of Finnish business and industry, the minister for higher education, and the rectors of the three universities gradually converged with a joint vision. The label "innovation university" stuck, and it became the main template for branding the new university. Rectors Eero Kasanen (HSE) and Sotamaa (UIAH) later concluded that this brand template "provided something for everyone. State officials could enhance innovation policy, the business community could

promote [national] competitiveness, the Ministry of Education could advance structural reform, and university people could enhance their operations” (Kasanen and Sotamaa 2010, 260).

An inquiry was commissioned by the Finnish Government in October 2006 to outline the possibilities for major structural change in the Finnish system of higher education. The message of the inquiry report (OPM 2007) was that the system was in dire need of transformation: “the areas to be developed include the accomplishment of top research and teaching in nationally significant (chosen) core areas, increasing internationalization, and the strengthening of the economic and operational autonomy of universities.” It was also pointed out that there was a need for “interdisciplinarity and cooperation across disciplinary boundaries, as companies are forced at an accelerating pace to respond to the challenges of the globalized economy through developing new business competences, service business, and new models of innovation.” The report laid out a rationale for merging HUT, HSE, and UIAH. It suggested that the merged university would be granted extra resources to ensure its development into a “world-class institution.” The inquiry report used the label “top university” to describe the new entity.

Explicit critics were still few at this stage. They included students and faculty from UIAH who resisted the idea of the new university and its pro-business agenda, treating the very notion of a new “Top University” with sarcasm. They organized public demonstrations, which were covered by the media: *Helsingin Sanomat*, for instance, reported (March 7, 2007) on the demonstrations with the title “Swindle University,” which involved a sarcastic play of words, as the word “Swindle” (“huiputus”) was substituted for the close word “Top” (“huippu”). A related letter to the editor of *Helsingin Sanomat* (October 17, 2007) summarized the critique: “you can’t just say that you establish a top university. Putting together three internationally mediocre institutions doesn’t make a great one.” Following such reactions, the advocates of the merger soon reverted to talking about an “innovation university.”

In spring 2007, the merger became the “flagship project” in reforming the Finnish system of higher education. Political decision-makers in the center-right, market-friendly national government elected in April 2007 were pivotal in this new initiative that shook up the established order in the Finnish academic system. The business community promised to contribute 200 million euros to the initial capital of a private foundation (altogether 700 million euros with 500 million from the state) to govern the new university. “Finnish universities are crap and something needs to be done about it,” one of our interviewees in the business community put it bluntly.

The top panel of the table in [Appendix 1](#) provides a summary of the opportunity identification stage where key stakeholders (the Finnish business community, politicians, the Ministry of Education, the governmental inquiry committee, and the rectors of the three universities) began to actively speak for the “innovation university.” This marked the beginning of the initiative to create a new university brand, which would symbolize a number of novel opportunities deemed necessary in the global marketplace for higher education. The core service promises of the new university were markedly future oriented and pro-business.

Analysis

Stakeholder reactions and identity struggles (research question 1). Aligned with SD logic (Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006), the instrumental value promises of the new

university brand proposed by the initial advocates (e.g. industry representatives and the rectors of the constituent universities) were clearly discernible during the opportunity identification stage – and they involved specific promises to various stakeholders (instead of any single customer group; see [Appendix 1](#)), in exchange for their presumed involvement and resources in creating the new university. However, the initial value promises themselves also began to implicate shifts in the stakeholders’ identities vis-à-vis the renewed brand and its identity.

Most notably, certain stakeholders who had traditionally been *internal* to the university became *externalized*; and certain traditionally *external* stakeholders were *internalized*. For instance, students – traditionally viewed as key internal stakeholders in the university community – became partly externalized with respect to the new university brand; they were assigned the role of external customers entitled to higher quality education. In turn, the faculty found themselves in an ambiguous position. As they were not involved in the initial identification of the merger and rebranding opportunity, they, too, became somewhat externalized in, and yet subdued by, this “national innovation project.”

Correspondingly, some traditionally external stakeholders became partly internalized. Especially, some captains of industry (and industry interest groups) became akin to corporate insiders of the new university. They became the new university’s central resource-providers and assumed increasing decision-making authority concerning the university’s research and teaching (e.g. advocating particular focus areas for research). While endowments and active involvement of the business community in universities are not unusual for US universities (Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008), in Finland they marked a dramatic transition to a new form of university funding and governance. In contrast, the role of students and faculty in the university’s internal decision-making diminished. Especially at UIAH, some students and faculty reacted concretely to the identity shifts implicated by the value promises of the new brand by filing complaints about the new university and its pro-business stance. These stakeholder dynamics and identity shifts also had obvious links to broader economic and market(ization) forces. The upturn in the Finnish economy, combined with the market-friendly ideology of the national government, contributed to the pro-business and market stance of the initial brand promises.

Thus, the first moments of implicit resistance in our case pertained to the simple fact that for a university it is not self-evident who the “suppliers” and “customers” are (Naude and Ivy 1999; Waeraas and Solbakk 2009). In other words, the redrawing of the external–internal contours of the organization as such as well as the roles of suppliers and customers, started to invite resistance from stakeholders vis-à-vis their traditional roles and identities. This observation extends the prior literature’s notion of consumer resistance (Izberk-Bilgin 2010), wherein resistance has been depicted to occur mostly in the form of resistance by consumers or customers toward supplier brands and toward the meanings associated with such brands. In the present case, in contrast, the emergent resistance was more targeted toward the shifting supplier–customer roles and relationships themselves.

Perceived brand identities (research question 2). Interpreting the dynamics in terms of brand images reveals that at this early stage, the new university’s brand image consisted of future opportunities to be seized by countering certain perceived weaknesses of the “old” universities. In other words, the “innovation university” brand image was

explicitly conceptualized and framed as a promise to eliminate such weaknesses, and to seize opportunities in the future (e.g. industry involvement and interdisciplinary research to counter the current lack of innovations; [Appendix 1](#)). This conceptualization stands in contrast to traditional corporate and product branding, wherein brand images are conceptualized on the basis of the *current or present* (instead of future) strengths and values of the product or corporation; wherein current weaknesses and threats are mostly concealed (instead of serving as central reference points); and wherein competitors are usually the reference group (instead of the current, dire status of the focal organization). Furthermore, the involvement of some stakeholders per se – for example, captains of industry and international top scholars – began to appear as an important and integral part of the brand image of the newly branded university. This demonstrates the networked nature of the focal actor’s brand image, a substantial part of which consists of perceived links to (or secondary associations with) *other* actors. At the same time, reflecting the stakeholder struggles, the perceived links to these actors were regarded as attractive by some stakeholders (e.g. business community and politicians) and unattractive or threatening by others (e.g. some students and faculty).

Refinement

Case account

In November 2007, the Ministry of Education made the official go-ahead decision for the merger, provided that the Finnish Parliament would reach a consensus on reform of the Finnish university law, which was needed to make the privatization possible. The “innovation university” would be a crucial element in promoting a novel university model in Finland; it would be governed by a private foundation, monitored professionally by a board including representatives from the business community, and managed by a president who was to be unhindered by traditionally collegial academic decision-making.

Symbolic measures emphasizing a fresh start and a break from the past began to characterize the merger process. In May 2008, the name Aalto University was introduced. It referred to Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), the internationally renowned Finnish architect whose interdisciplinary reputation as an advocate of functionalism was used as a platform to brand the new university: “Aalto University aims to break down walls between scientific and artistic disciplines.” Thanks to a relatively favorable reception by both the media (Aula and Tienari 2011) and the faculty of HUT, HSE, and UIAH (Koschke et al. 2011), the selection of Mr Aalto’s name for the university appeared to create an aura of smooth transition from the past to the future for the university’s brand image, and delicately highlighted some of its putative new values related to practical innovations and interdisciplinarity.

In August 2008, soon after the founding of the private foundation to govern it, Aalto University became the first Finnish university to have a board composed entirely of outsiders. Matti Alahuhta, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kone, a Finland-based multinational industrial company, became chairman. In December 2008, the board chose Professor Tuula Teeri of the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden, herself an outsider, as president of the university.

The first manifestations of the new university’s innovative, interdisciplinary brand were three new units created in 2008: the Design Factory, the Media Factory, and the

Service Factory. The HSE alumni newsletter (Avista 1/2008) stated that “The point of departure in the factories is to bring students, teachers, researchers, and companies together to meet and resolve the challenges of everyday life.” The Design Factory in particular became the showcase for practically relevant interdisciplinary education and a new student-centered, company-cooperative culture at Aalto. It attracted attention in Finland and abroad (FT 2009; Kao 2009). However, among Aalto faculty, feelings about the factories were mixed, as the “innovation university hype was beginning to be a source of irritation” (Koschke et al. 2011, 18). Some of the irritation was also targeted toward the new logo and visual imagery of Aalto University (Figure 1(a)). While Aalto’s board and president argued that this unconventional visual imagery signaled innovativeness and open-mindedness on the part of the new university, many stakeholders greeted it with indifference or disdain. Some students, for example, dismissed the visual imagery as “kindergarten stuff” (Lipponen and Hakonen 2012; Lipponen, Lendasse, and Aula 2011), and parodies of the new visual imagery were circulated by actors critical of the university reform (Figure 1(b)). Sarcasm and parody about the visual imagery also reflected a broader concern that the traditional internal stakeholders – students and faculty – increasingly had about the heavy push to create an “American-style,” pro-business university in a Nordic welfare society such as Finland. The title of a feature article in the Aalto Student Union magazine (*Aino*, September 29, 2009) put this concern succinctly: “American, but not a dream.”

Indeed, increasing dissent was now voiced by many stakeholders. For instance, representatives of other Finnish universities questioned the rationale for the strong financial support of Aalto, which they regarded as unfair and detrimental to other universities (Kunelius, Noppari, and Reunanen 2009). Concerned about a new tenure track career system, some Aalto faculty, in turn, feared a division between a small elite in the new system (which they feared would consist of new “top” recruits from abroad) and a Finnish majority condemned to a marginal role (Herbert and Tienari 2013). The arts faculty and students of UIAH also continued to actively resist Aalto’s pro-business agenda. In addition, the student unions of the two other constituent universities, HSE and HUT, began quarreling with each other over how their assets would be rearranged in the merger.

Furthermore, while the fund-raising for the new university had began in an optimistic spirit in 2007, the global financial crisis hit Finland hard in fall 2008. The Finnish business community found it increasingly difficult to raise funds for the university. At



Figure 1. (a) Official version of Aalto University’s logotypes. (b) Satirical versions distributed of the official logotypes (Tomperi, 2009; fifi.voima.fi).

Aalto, talk about extra resources changed toward focus, cost-cutting, and streamlining operations.

For the faculty and students of HSE, the campus in downtown Helsinki and especially its historic main building became a symbol of past glory that had to be retained. In contrast, the university board and president advocated a one-campus model, to create a “unified culture” with a “common purpose” for achieving “world-class” status. HUT’s campus outside Helsinki, in Otaniemi, was chosen as the site for the new university; it offered room for expansion. HSE faculty and students continued to resist both the move to the suburbs and the university administration extended in Otaniemi. Faculty sensed that a “new layer of bureaucracy had been set up at the headquarters,” as one professor expressed his frustration. The middle panel of the Table in [Appendix 1](#) provides a summary of the key developments at the refinement stage.

Analysis

Stakeholder actions and identity struggles (research question 1). The refinement stage elicited important stakeholder dynamics in terms of actions and struggles. Reflecting the SD logic, the new university’s branding came to activate negotiations between stakeholders about the value propositions and resources of the new brand (cf. Merz, He, and Vargo 2009). However, while the SD logic literature typically implies that these negotiations constitute a process of harmonic co-creation where stakeholders jointly work to align their interests and resources and make their preferences and needs “match” in the pursuit of common opportunities (Lusch and Webster 2011), our case highlights the efforts of certain stakeholders to question the new brand promises in their entirety as well as to resist or refuse to play along. In effect, a number of stakeholders began to regard the initial opportunities promised in the brand as actual *threats*. This concerned both the core service propositions (e.g. the opportunity for practice-oriented, interdisciplinary innovations, which turned into a threat from the perspective of basic research in the disciplines) and the prospective utilization of stakeholder resources (e.g. the objective of attracting more internationally acknowledged scholars from abroad, which turned into a threat of excessive elitism as perceived by the present faculty). Thus, the Aalto brand offered a mirror against which the faculty, for example, became acutely concerned about their professional and school (HSE, UIAH, and HUT) identities, and a medium through which to share their frustration in the face of a threat that was perceived to be external to the university.

Thus, in this phase, extending the resistance toward the shifting customer–supplier roles (see phase 1), the instrumental brand values and benefits that had been envisioned, or promised, to various stakeholders became a further subject of struggle. Notably, the fact that the brand value(s) envisioned for some stakeholders may, paradoxically enough, become an actual threat to be resisted for others has not been explicitly recognized in the earlier literature, although brand identities have been noted to often involve paradoxes (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Extending observations in earlier studies, the value–threat paradox also involved resistance in the form of culturally elaborate sarcasm and parody (Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014; Mikkonen and Bajde 2013; Mikkonen, Moisander, and Firat 2011) – for example, around the Aalto logo and visual imagery – that served to ridicule and undermine the essence of the new brand. Another manifestation of stakeholder dynamics could be observed in the manner in which some actors suddenly turned from cooperators into competitors of the new university. This was the case with other Finnish universities, which had

traditionally had relatively friendly relations with Aalto's constituent universities. They now became openly envious of Aalto's resources and extra funding. Also, while the student unions had a long tradition of friendly co-existence, they now became adversaries when their funds were to be merged and redistributed.

Regarding the broader cultural, political, and economic forces, this second phase showed that the much-promising brand envisioned by the merger advocates in the previous stage – framed as a silver bullet to counter all the alleged weaknesses of the old universities – was too radical for the focal sociocultural context. At least, the initial promises failed to take the prevailing cultural codes into account and underestimated the extent to which the putative brand opportunities would represent threats to different stakeholders. University management did make symbolic efforts to provide smoother links from the past to the future (e.g. by choosing the neutral Aalto brand name), but even so, many of the planned changes (e.g. an “American-style” pro-business and innovation stance and a tenure track system; the radically new visual imagery) evidently remained at odds with traditional cultural codes in Finland. In addition, unexpected turmoil in the economic environment due to the financial crisis in fall 2008 called into question the initial resourcing model, given the economic realities of the main funders (government and business community). Eventually, these controversies pushed the management to tone down or reframe many of the initial brand promises (e.g. the cross-disciplinary innovation orientation; see Launch phase below).

Perceived brand identities (research question 2). Our findings point out that in the concept refinement phase, many of the opportunities initially associated with the university's new brand image became perceived threats for some of the stakeholders. To various stakeholders, the university brand essentially symbolized not only the value and resources offered by the focal actor to them, but also the value and resources expected or required of them in return. In effect, for stakeholders unwilling or unable to offer those resources in exchange, the opportunities afforded by the brand image became threats (e.g. for art students who did not wish to engage in pro-business “innovations;” professors who opposed cross-disciplinary “hype” and loss of their own identity; industry representatives who had diminishing financial resources; and HSE faculty and students who were reluctant to move to a common campus). The fact that the contribution and resources expected *in return* from the stakeholders would constitute an integral part of the brand image of a new SD logic-aligned actor (and the resistance this engenders) is in contrast to traditional understandings of corporate and product brand images, which mostly focus on impressions of the value and benefits which the focal product or corporation is expected to offer *to* customers and other stakeholders.

Launch

Case account

On 1 January 2010, the authority and responsibilities of HUT, HSE, and UIAH were legally transferred to the Aalto University Foundation and the new university officially started operations. At the time, opinion regarding the new university was sharply divided. On the one hand, the cross-disciplinary Design, Service, and Media Factories continued to receive positive attention from the media and from universities abroad. The Aalto Entrepreneurship Society (AaltoES), a student-led community and hub for

developing and testing ideas for start-up business, became another favorite of the Finnish media. On the other hand, much of the faculty and media had become critical or cautious about the new university. The dispute over establishment of the new Aalto student union, for example, was keenly followed by the media. “The students’ quarrel over money has poisoned the beginning of Aalto University,” the leading daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (June 6, 2010) concluded.

Importantly for the faculty, “academic excellence” became an increasingly essential part of Aalto’s brand promise as a “world-class university.” This catchword received the suffix “by 2020” when Aalto’s mission statement, vision, and strategic goals were drawn up. In spring 2009, internal research assessment exercises (RAEs) had been initiated with a specific focus on publications in top-tier international journals, in effect favoring research in disciplines over more boundary-crossing work. In 2010, the results of the RAE exercise were used in allocating financial resources across the university’s departments and research units, and to frame some of them as particularly important for the “world-class by 2020” goal. At the same time, a singular emphasis on top-tier journal publications as a measure of quality and success scared some faculty, who were concerned that they would be unable to live up to the new “world-class” Aalto brand (Herbert and Tienari 2013; Koschke et al. 2011) and would become redundant to it (Lund 2012).

With regard to the core service promises, the original idea of interdisciplinarity was further de-emphasized as the president stressed excellence in “basic research” in her speeches, newsletters, and blogs, especially in the natural and technical sciences. The president and her top management team assumed an increasingly prominent role in decision-making, further decreasing the authority of the schools. All decisions on the allocation of resources such as “slots” (positions) in the newly established tenure track system were ultimately made by the president herself. At the same time, three original key figures in the creation of Aalto – the rectors of the constituent universities – were sidelined into retirement or sabbatical leaves. The promise of the Aalto brand was now spearheaded by a board, president, and a team of top managers who had all joined the organization after the opportunity identification stage.

Finally, the campus question had now become one of the most critical internal disputes in developing Aalto and its brand. President Teeri and the board continued to advocate concentration at the ex-HUT campus outside Helsinki. The Finnish media reported that the students of the former HSE were strongly opposed to moving away from their downtown campus (*Helsingin Sanomat*, April 24, 2010). The dean and faculty of HSE also made their opposition to the one-campus model clear: “Aalto University needs a strong presence in the Helsinki city center.” The campus decision became not only a question of physical location (downtown Helsinki vs. suburban Otaniemi), but also a symbolic, identity-laden issue. The downtown campus symbolized the school’s heritage for the ex-HSE faculty, while concentrating operations in Espoo would signify HUT’s dominance in the merger.

The bottom panel of the table in [Appendix 1](#) provides a summary of key developments at the launch stage.

Analysis

Stakeholder actions and identity struggles (research question 1). Some of the opportunities initially identified in 2005–2007 with the Aalto University brand were being pursued in 2010. However, significant modifications and adjustments resulting from

struggles across various stakeholders had been made. These struggles continued in the launch phase, which demonstrated overall that the management responsibility or locus of the new university brand – who or which stakeholders were in the driver’s seat – alternated over time and was dispersed in the network in and around the focal organization, rather than residing in the original advocates (many of whom had been sidelined) or even entirely within the present top management. Thus, while the earlier SD logic literature tends to see one actor in control of the brand (as “brand governor” in Fyrberg and Jürriado 2009) and consumer resistance research has tended to assume pre-defined roles for consumers who resist firms, products, and services that are branded (Izberk-Bilgin 2010), our case clearly shows that the control as well as resistance may shift over time and does not reside in any one stakeholder group.

Overall, a sense of ambiguity remained in the Aalto branding process. Uncertainty and insecurity mounted among the faculty, who felt unable or were simply unwilling to live up to the new “world-class” university brand, as decision-making authority was simultaneously centralized at the headquarters in Otaniemi. The university brand was progressively delivered and communicated in mutual exchanges among various stakeholders. Accordingly, the targets and subjects of branding efforts – reciprocally conducted by and toward various stakeholders – were also dispersed, and involved multi-way communications from the focal actor to stakeholders, from the stakeholder to the focal actor, and from stakeholders to other stakeholders. As examples of the latter, the brand was increasingly affected in the launch stage by negative and adversarial communications between two student unions and by disputes between faculty and top management over the campus location. At the same time, however, the media’s infatuation with initiatives such as the Design Factory and Aalto Entrepreneurship Society bolstered Aalto’s brand as an innovative, exciting new university.

Furthermore, the launch phase culminated in a broader societal and cultural struggle between traditional (discipline-based) and new (interdisciplinary) university models (cf. Brint 2005; Gibbons et al. 1994). The Aalto brand continued to be a manifestation of the new marketized interdisciplinary university model, while internally it was now geared toward discipline-based research (e.g. with the emphasis on top-tier publications and a high-performance tenure track). Strong traditional cultural codes prevented implementation of the most radical innovation-oriented and cross-disciplinary brand promises. Because of this controversy, a substantial sense of ambiguity remained characteristic of the Aalto branding process: some stakeholders (e.g. industries, some of the newer faculty, the students’ Entrepreneurial Society) accepted the new order and started living according to the roles and identities assigned to them in this hybrid of innovation and discipline-oriented basic research, while others (some of the traditional faculty; some students) continued active resistance to those roles and identities or, most often, remained passive about them.

Perceived brand identities (research question 2). The launch phase notably underlined that an essential component of an SD logic-aligned actor’s brand image comprises the stakeholders’ perceptions of the *direction* in which the branded actor is moving. This includes the potential benefits of the brand that are provided in exchange for certain resources in the future. This was manifested expressly in how the meanings and activities around the new Aalto University influenced – and were influenced by – the perceived stance of the university toward *future* (opportunities as well as threats) – instead of by static impressions of the organization’s *current* stature, benefits, or values. This

contrasts with the traditional product and corporate branding notions, wherein the influential time perspective of the brand image is typically a snapshot, as customers (and other stakeholders) are mostly seen to be affected by the brand's current image and identity at a certain point of time (e.g. a product purchase, stock investment, or job application).

Discussion

Table 2 provides a summary of our key findings, on the basis of which we outline below the contributions of our study – to the consumer culture theory (CCT) literature on contemporary branding logics and consumer resistance, as well as to the literatures on SD branding and university branding. In Table 3, we provide an additional summary of findings related to the perceived SD brand identity or image, contrasting it with traditional concepts such as corporate and product brand identities (cf. Balmer and Gray 2003; Hatch and Schultz 2003).

To start with, an earlier literature on contemporary branding logics has emphasized that effective brands are created in interactional processes that actively involve multiple stakeholders, and that brand identities are affected by cultural, political, and economic forces in society (Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2006). However, the bulk of this literature has focused on brands which have been effective in creating an “iconic” or cult status and/or operate in exciting consumption spheres, brandscapes, or subcultures (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2006). Our study extends this literature by focusing on the attempt of a traditional non-market organization to adopt a new branding logic. Our analysis highlights several aspects of the processes involved, which have thus far not received explicit research attention: dynamics of power and resistance and the brand identity perceptions in the struggles involved.

First, prior literature in CCT emphasizes that a key component underlying effective contemporary brands is the brand's ability to facilitate multi-way interactions *among* the brand's multiple consumers (i.e. consumer–consumer–brand relationships) – instead of simple interactions from the brand to consumers (i.e. brand–consumer relationships) (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002; Muñoz and O'Guinn 2001). Our study highlights that attempts to facilitate mutual value–creation and interaction among the brand's stakeholders are constrained by at least the following aspects: (a) it may not be clear who the new brand's suppliers and customers are, and what their value–creation relationships to each other are (or are supposed to be), and (b) customers and other stakeholders may have a natural tendency to create such interactions with each other that undermines rather than strengthens the mediating role of the emerging brand. In our study the former (a) was evident in the fact that much of the branding process at the university revolved around the question of which stakeholder is supposed to provide what resources to whom (i.e. who is whose supplier and customer) and the fact that the new branding logic implied significant role and identity changes for many stakeholders (e.g. internal stakeholders became “customerized” and external stakeholders became insiders). The latter (b) was seen especially in the later stages of the process, where some of the customers and other stakeholders of the new brand began to contradict each other (e.g. controversies related to the new tenure track system; quarrel between the student unions; dispute over the campus) and thereby undermined and diverged on the branding initiative, rather than facilitated and converged on it.

Table 2. Summary of key findings.

	Stakeholder dynamics (research question 1)		Perceived brand identity (research question 2)
	Stakeholder and identity struggles	Underlying sociocultural and market forces	
Opportunity identification phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketizing SD actor's brand involves various promises to a multitude of stakeholders, framed as opportunities to eliminate weaknesses of the old organizations • Certain internal stakeholders (students) are externalized and certain external stakeholders (industry captains) are internalized in terms of decision-making • Previously internal stakeholders (e.g. students) or distant stakeholders (e.g. companies) become customers ("customerized") for the brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An economic upturn, combined with the market-friendly ideology of the new center-right government contribute to the pro-business and market stance in the initial brand promises, as well as to optimism about its financial resources • Contemporary innovation hype serves to back up the rhetoric justifying the renewal as well as many specific brand promises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SD actor's brand image is explicitly conceptualized in terms of (and thus contains) pairs of "future opportunities–present weaknesses" (i.e. impressions/promises by the new actor [university] to eliminate a set of present weaknesses in future) • The SD actor's brand image is networked so that it centrally includes perceived links to certain stakeholders

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

	Stakeholder dynamics (research question 1)		Perceived brand identity (research question 2)
	Stakeholder and identity struggles	Underlying sociocultural and market forces	
Refinement phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The putative opportunities involved in brand promises turn into perceived threats for certain stakeholders • Stakeholders debate and struggle over the brand's promises and resources regarding the future • Struggles include resistance in culturally elaborate ways through sarcasm, irony, and satire • Some previous cooperative stakeholders suddenly turn into competitors or adversaries (e.g. student unions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framing of the new brand promises as eliminating (all) alleged weaknesses of the old organizations is too radical for the prevailing cultural context and codes • The management makes symbolic efforts to provide smoother links from the past to the future (e.g. name choice), but even so, many of the planned renewals (e.g. American-style pro-business/innovation stance and tenure track system; the radically new visual imagery) remain at odds with the traditional cultural codes • Also, unexpected turmoil in the economic environment puts the planned resourcing model at odds with the economic realities of the main funders (government and industries) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SD actor's brand image becomes heterogeneous and conflict-laden, so that the opportunities contained in it turn into threats for certain stakeholders • The SD actor's brand image symbolizes to various stakeholders not only the (i) value and resources the focal actor has to offer to the stakeholder but also (ii) what value and resources the stakeholders themselves are required to offer in exchange (thus engendering resistance)
Launch phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management and communication locus of the brand alternates over time and is dispersed in the network around the focal organization • Especially, non-conventional communications and exchanges to, from, and between stakeholders gained ground (taking over coordinated communications from the focal actor and its management to the stakeholders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eventually, the cultural controversies push the management to take back or reframe many of the brand's initial promises • The broader struggle between traditional (discipline-based) and new (interdisciplinary) university models come to a head • A substantial sense of ambiguity remains in the branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SD actor's brand image contains the stakeholders' perceptions of the direction of the change toward which the branded actor is moving

Table 3. Comparison of SD branding with product and corporate branding (based on Balmer and Gray 2003 and Hatch and Schultz 2003).

	Product (or service) brand	Corporate brand	SD logic-aligned brand
Definition	A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers [American Marketing Association (AMA)]	A company name that identifies one company as distinct from other companies to multiple stakeholders (both internal and external) "A visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of an organization's unique business model" (Knox and Bickerton 2003)	The name of an actor that symbolizes to various stakeholders (1) what value and resources the focal actor has to offer to the stakeholder and (2) what value and resources the stakeholder is required to offer in exchange
Focus attention on	Individual product(s) or service(s) sold under the brand (name)	The company behind the company name – and its corporate identity	The exchanges occurring in a network of stakeholders around the focal actor
Brand image/value perception (of stakeholders)	Unidirectional from the branded product to customer/user: <i>What are the products (sold under the brand name) typically like? What value and benefits do the products offer me (as a customer)?</i>	Unidirectional from the company/organization to stakeholder: <i>What is the organization like (corporate associations)? What value and benefits does the company/organization offer to me (as a stakeholder)?</i>	Bidirectional, reciprocally among actors and stakeholders: (1) <i>What value/resources does the actor promise to me (as a stakeholder) and (2) what value/resources am I expected to provide to the actor and its other stakeholders?</i>
Brand image influencing/attracting stakeholders	Only present or contemporaneous brand image associations attract customers (if perceived unique and valuable)	Only present or contemporaneous corporate image associations (or reputation, or actual/conceived identity) attract stakeholders (if aligned with their own values)	Present and prospective future associations together (i.e. current brand associations as well as opportune and threatening future brand associations) attract as well as threaten stakeholders
Present image vs. future vision	Distinguished (present brand image vs. desired/aspired brand image/identity)	Distinguished (present corporate image, reputation, or actual/conceived identity vs. intended corporate image or ideal/desired identity)	Non-distinguished, integral (the perspective extending from the present to the future is intrinsically involved in the brand associations)
Time horizon	Short (life of product)	Long (life of company)	Fluctuating (between current and future development prospects and realizations)

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued).

	Product (or service) brand	Corporate brand	SD logic-aligned brand
Management responsibility	Brand manager	Chief executive	Alternating (driver's seat occupied by various protagonists at various times)
Delivered by	Marketing	Entire company	The focal actor, in mutual exchange and narratives with other actors in the network
Attract attention and gain support of	Customers (for the product)	Multiple stakeholders (for the company)	Multiple actors, reciprocally (by and for)
Communications mix	Marketing communications	Corporate communication	Communications (1) from the focal actor to stakeholders, (2) from the stakeholder to the focal actor, and (3) from stakeholders to other stakeholders about the focal actor
Importance to company	Functional	Strategic	Integral and implicit
<i>Key actors and points of resistance</i>	Consumers'/buyers' resistance or denial of the meanings associated with the product brand (e.g. not trusting the premium quality of a brand)	Stakeholders' resistance of the values associated with the corporate mode of operating (e.g. not accepting the mass-produced/marked nature of the corporation's supply chain)	(1) Stakeholders' resistance of their own roles as well as those of others; (2) Stakeholders' resistance of brand's actual values as threats; (3) Shifting resisters of the brand

These considerations also provide contributions to the SD literature and university branding literature. Rather than focusing on the external brand image of universities among one stakeholder group such as students (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007; Yang, Alessandri, and Kinsey 2008), our analysis shows that the brand emerges and evolves – becomes (re)constructed and co-developed – through interaction among a variety of stakeholders. This multiple stakeholder focus is consistent with earlier conceptual explorations of SD branding (Fyrberg and Jürriado 2009; Merz, He, and Vargo 2009). However, while prior research has tended to view this multiple stakeholder process as relatively harmonious co-creation, with the brand “facilitating” relationships between the actors (Fyrberg and Jürriado 2009), our study depicts the process as a struggle involving alternating resistance by one stakeholder group against another. In other words, while Fyrberg and Jürriado (2009) briefly refer to issues of power and trust in the stakeholder network, they view the brand itself as a rather unproblematic concept – a “facilitator” of the network. In contrast, our study demonstrates how the brand actually comes to symbolize the very struggles in the process occurring in a network of stakeholders where no actor is unilaterally a customer or a supplier of value and resources, but *both* (akin to both operands and operants; cf. Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren, 2013).

Second, our study highlights that despite the attempts by university management – or any other individual stakeholder – to take control, the control of the brand inevitably becomes diffused and heterarchical. In other words, producers and consumers of the brand mix and to some extent coalesce into “prosumers” as the branding becomes “co-authored” in a somewhat open-source way (Pitt et al. 2006, 118). However, our case gives a more controversial view to this process than the term “open-source” would as such imply. In our case, “proresistors” could more accurately describe the role of many of the stakeholders rather than “prosumers.” In this sense, our findings also somewhat contrast with those of Diamond et al. (2009, 132) who note that “marketers can [still] retain a significant degree of control while choreographing co-authorship opportunities . . . , while primary brand ownership remains with the corporation and value to the corporate owner is undiminished.” In the light of our study, it is also questionable whether the adaptation of the focal brand identity over time in response to stakeholder reactions and inputs will make the new brand more valuable to consumers or “choreographable” to senior managers. Rokka, Karlsson, and Tienari (forthcoming) capture these kinds of challenges in managing branding with the notion of “balancing acts.” In the Aalto case, this is evident in, for example, balancing over time between a unified representation of the new university and a more fragmented image reflecting differences between its constituent parts (see also Vásquez, Sergi, and Cordelier 2013).

Third, our study offers opportunities to forge links between research on contemporary logics of branding in CCT, and critical perspectives on identity, power, and resistance in CCT as well as in organization studies. Our study shows that a new brand proposed by some is likely to disrupt the identities of others in and around the organization (Land and Taylor 2011). Acts of power – such as attempting to adopt a new branding logic – invite resistance. Power and resistance operate together in webs of relations, in which “power is never complete and possibilities for resistance always exist” (Thomas and Hardy 2011, 326). Fleming and Spicer (2007) capture this dynamic with the notion of struggle – referred to above – which offers a fruitful way to make sense of identities in organizational branding initiatives. In such struggles, dominant narratives of organizational reality offer identities to stakeholders, which are

contested and resisted in alternative narratives (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown and Humphreys 2003).

In this sense, our study also extends prior CCT literature's notion of consumer resistance, wherein resistance occurs mostly in the form of people with a (self-evident) consumer role resisting against supplier brands and the meanings associated with them. In contrast, in our case the main resistance came (a) in the form of stakeholders' resistance against their newly defined or shifting supplier vs. customer roles per se (e.g. external vs. insider identities). This further implied that the resisters (as well as advocates) of the new brand shifted over time. Also, resistance emerged (b) in the form of questioning the very value(s) and benefits envisioned for the stakeholders, as certain actors framed the values and benefits as threats instead. This value–threat paradox adds to earlier consumer resistance literature's observations about paradoxes involved in resistance. Earlier examples include consumer resistance of Starbucks due to its suppression of local coffee shop culture despite it being framed as the local American option (Thompson and Arsel 2004), and hipsters' resistance of mass-produced products that are explicitly marketed as “hip,” yet sometimes replacing them with mass-produced private label products (Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014).

In line with the recent consumer resistance literature (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Mikkonen and Bajde 2013; Mikkonen, Moisander, and Firat 2011), our study further points out how initial brand promises may encounter criticism in culturally elaborate ways through sarcasm and parody that may undermine or at least generate shifts in the essence of the brand. Yet, in contrast to many of the previous studies concentrating on sarcasm, parody, and other forms of consumer resistance, our analysis underlines that it may not only be marginal outsiders who engage in such resistance vis-à-vis the focal brand in order to enhance their own in-group sense of belonging (cf. Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014). Instead, sarcasm and parody can offer a way for stakeholders to raise other stakeholders' awareness of problems of the new branding logic; a form of broader resistance and, perhaps, a way to find allies in the struggle over the modus operandi of the branded entity. Crucially, as a form of resistance, sarcasm and parody in any case draw meanings from the cultural codes available in the particular context, and only become understandable when viewed in this context (Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006).

Fourth, the Aalto University case shows that the power relations and struggles in branding are not exclusively repressive or counter-productive, but also offer potential for creativity (Rouse 1994), as apparent in the many advances that Aalto and its brand made among stakeholders nationally and internationally in a relatively short time. In this sense, our findings suggest that the marketization of universities – or that of traditional non-market *fora* in general (Fonseca 2005) – is a more complex phenomenon than either its advocates or critics may lead us to believe. In the USA, the forerunner in marketized academia, critical scholars have argued that universities have been hijacked by administrators and career managers whose sovereignty has been placed above the purposes of faculty and students (Aronowitz 2000; Ginsberg 2011). In Nordic countries such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway the marketization trend is more recent. It has thus far been welcomed as a positive development by policy-makers, while reactions within universities remain mixed (Aarrevaara, Dobson, and Elander 2009; Czarniawska and Genell 2002; Krejsler 2006; Wæraas and Solbakk 2009). The Aalto University case is intriguing because it represents a dramatic and rapid attempt to break with the conventions and traditions in its context, bringing to

light both the struggles and more positive aspects associated with adopting a new branding logic.

Finally, when it comes to brand (identity) perceptions (Table 3), our study highlights the essence of the brand as a symbol that signifies to various stakeholders *both* what value and resources the actor has to offer to the stakeholder *and* what value and resources the stakeholders themselves are expected to offer in exchange. Notably, both the CCT literature on contemporary branding logics (Diamond et al. 2009) and the SD literature have emphasized reciprocal, two-way creation of value and exchange of tangible and intangible resources (Brodie, Glynn, and Little 2006; Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren, 2013; Merz, He, and Vargo 2009). However, the notion that the SD brand image of an actor would explicitly come to involve impressions of not only the value/resources to be obtained from the actor but also the contribution/resources required from it has to our knowledge not been proposed before. Another key distinction of the present brand image perspective, not explicit in previous research, pertains to the future-oriented time perspective. Here, our study extends Berthon et al.’s (2007) notion that brand managers must be able to leverage a “symphony” of old and new brand meanings as the essence of the new brand’s perceived identity/image lies in the future roles and identities it promises to various stakeholders. Yet, we add (see bottom role of Table 3) that these future promises associated with the brand are also likely to invite stakeholder resistance of their own new roles and identities as well as those of others; resistance in the form of framing the brand’s values as threats; and shifting resistors (as well as advocates) for the brand in general.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored a university organization’s attempts to adopt a new branding logic amidst wider cultural, political, and economic forces. The study elucidates how sociocultural and market context influences the dynamics of branding (Schroeder 2009; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling 2006) as the brand becomes lodged in new networks and cultural discourses (Holt 2006). The marketizing organization’s attempt to adopt the new branding logic could be seen to reflect Arvidsson’s (2005, 244, 248) holistic view of brand as a “platform of action” that tries to anticipate “certain activities and certain modalities of relating to those activities,” enabling the “production of particular immaterial use-values” and functioning as a “programming device” for the undertakings of various stakeholders. At the same time, the role of the brand as a programming device for use-value–creation to stakeholders is not unproblematic and uncontested. In particular, our study extends the extant literature on contemporary branding logics by highlighting how mutual value–creation and interaction between the brand’s stakeholders do not necessarily facilitate the creation of a strong brand and how resistance and struggles among stakeholders and stakeholder identities may retard the branding process and change the trajectory of the brand identity – albeit also providing room for some new ideas and creativity.

Despite the rhetoric of contemporary branding frameworks emphasizing harmonic value co-creation between the brand and stakeholders as well as among stakeholders themselves (Diamond et al. 2009; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002; Muñoz and O’Guinn 2001), our study shows that organizational attempts to adopt new branding logics will trigger contradictory and adversarial interpretations among a variety of stakeholders about the role and identity of the focal actor vis-à-vis their own roles and identities. These heterogeneous interpretations, and the struggles and resistance they

elicit, lead to shifts in the essence and control of the brand itself. In line with some earlier CCT perspectives, our study shows that while brands become more valuable to the extent that they penetrate the public's consciousness, they also tend to break loose from the control of their original advocates (Holt 2006; see also Pitt et al. 2006). We add that the brand becomes subject to future-oriented struggle over the identity of the brand itself and those of its stakeholders, which invites heterogeneous forms of resistance. This resistance is not only targeted toward the brand's symbolic meanings and it is not only conducted by marginal groups to enhance their own identities (cf. Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014; Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Rather, it is also focused on the tangible resource roles the stakeholders are expected to assume vis-à-vis the brand in exchange of promises of use-value. The outcome is an undermined, or at least shifted and struggle-laden, essence for the brand itself. This is in somewhat stark contrast with the optimistic, new service-oriented logic that the marketizing organization attempts to pursue.

References

- Aarveaara, Timo, Ian R. Dobson, and Camilla Elander. 2009. "Brave New World: Higher Education Reform in Finland." *Higher Education Management and Policy* 21 (2): 1–18.
- Alvesson, Mats, and Hugh Willmott. 2002. "Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual." *Journal of Management Studies* 39 (5): 619–644.
- Aronowitz, Stanley. 2000. *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Arvidsson, Adam. 2005. "Brands: A Critical Perspective." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 235–258.
- Aula, Hanna-Mari, and Janne Tienari. 2011. "Becoming 'World-Class'? Reputation-Building in a University Merger." *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 7 (1): 7–29.
- Ballantyne, David, and Robert Aitken. 2007. "Branding in B2B Markets: Insights from the Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing." *Journal of Business & Industrial Management* 22 (6): 363–371.
- Balmer, John M. T., and Edmund R. Gray. 2003. "Corporate Brands: What Are They? What of Them?" *European Journal of Marketing* 37 (7–8): 972–997.
- Berthon, Pierre, Morris B. Holbrook, James M. Hulbert, and Leyland Pitt. 2007. "Viewing Brands in Multiple Dimensions." *MIT Sloan Management Review* 48 (2): 37–43.
- Brint, Steven. 2005. "Creating the Future: 'New Directions' in American Research Universities." *Minerva* 43 (1): 23–50.
- Brodie, Roderick J., Mark S. Glynn, and Victoria Little. 2006. "The Service Brand and the Service-Dominant Logic: Missing Fundamental Premise or the Need for Stronger Theory?" *Marketing Theory* 6 (3): 363–379.
- Brodie, Roderick J., James R. M. Whittome, and Gregory J. Brush. 2009. "Investigating the Service Brand: A Customer Value Perspective." *Journal of Business Research* 62 (3): 345–355.
- Brown, Andrew D., and Michael Humphreys. 2003. "Epic and Tragic Tales: Making Sense of Change." *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 39 (2): 121–144.
- Brown, Stephen, Robert V. Kozinets, and John F. Sherry, Jr. 2003. "Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning." *Journal of Marketing* 67 (3): 19–33.
- Campbell, Norah, Aidan O'Driscoll, and Michael Saren. 2013. "Reconceptualizing Resources: A Critique of Service-Dominant Logic." *Journal of Macromarketing* 33 (4): 306–321, doi:10.1177/0276146713497755.
- Cartwright, Susan, Michelle Tytherleigh, and Susannah Robertson. 2007. "Are Mergers Always Stressful? Some Evidence from the Higher Education Sector." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 16 (4): 456–478.
- Chapleo, Chris. 2010. "What Defines 'Successful' University Brands?" *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 23 (2): 169–183.

- Clegg, Stewart. 1989. *Frameworks of Power*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cronin, James M., Mary B. McCarthy, and Alan M. Collins. 2014. "Covert Distinction: How Hipsters Practice Food-Based Resistance Strategies in the Production of Identity." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 17 (1): 2–28.
- Czarniawska, Barbara, and Kristina Genell. 2002. "Gone Shopping? Universities on Their Way to the Market." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 18 (4): 455–474.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1983. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils." *Diacritics* 13 (3): 3–20.
- Diamond, Nina, John F. Sherry, Albert M. Muñoz Jr., Mary Ann McGrath, Robert V. Kozinets, and Stefania Borghini. 2009. "American Girl and the Brand Gestalt: Closing the Loop on Sociocultural Branding Research." *Journal of Marketing* 73 (3): 118–134.
- Engwall, Lars. 2007. "Universities, the State and the Market: Changing Patterns of University Governance in Sweden and Beyond." *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19 (3): 87–103.
- Fleming, Peter, and André Spicer. 2007. "Beyond Power and Resistance: New Approaches to Organizational Politics." *Management Communication Quarterly* 21 (3): 301–309.
- Fonseca, Vanessa. 2005. "Nuevo Latino: Rebranding Latin American Cuisine." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 8 (2): 95–130.
- FT (*Financial Times*) 2009. "Merger with Innovation at Its Heart." Feature article, *Financial Times* March 29, 2009.
- Fyrberg, Anna, and Rein Jürriado. 2009. "What about Interaction? Networks and Brands as Integrators Within Service-Dominant Logic." *Journal of Service Management* 20 (4): 420–432.
- Gibbons, Michael, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott, and Martin Trow. 1994. *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin. 2011. *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Grönroos, Christian. 2009. "Relationship Marketing as Promise Management." In *The SAGE Handbook of Marketing Theory*, edited by Pauline Maclaran, Michael Saren, Barbara Stern, and Mark Tadajewski, 379–412. London: Sage.
- Hatch, Mary Jo, and Majken Schultz. 2003. "Bringing the Corporation into Corporate Branding." *European Journal of Marketing* 37 (7/8): 1041–1064.
- Hearn, Alison. 2010. "Through the Looking Glass: The Promotional University 2.0." In *Blowing up the Brand: Critical Perspectives on Promotional Culture*, edited by M. Aronczyk and D. Powers, 197–219. New York: Peter Lang.
- Hemsley-Brown, Jane, and Shivonne Goonawardana. 2007. "Brand Harmonization in the International Higher Education Market." *Journal of Business Research* 60 (9): 942–948.
- Herbert, Anne, and Janne Tienari. 2013. "Transplanting Tenure and the (Re)construction of Academic Freedoms." *Studies in Higher Education* 38 (2): 157–173.
- Holt, Douglas B. 2006. "Toward a Sociology of Branding." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6 (3): 299–302.
- Izberk-Bilgin, Elif. 2010. "An Interdisciplinary Review of Resistance to Consumption, Some Marketing Interpretations, and Future Research Suggestions." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 13 (3): 299–323.
- Jevons, Colin. 2006. "Universities: A Prime Example of Branding Gone Wrong." *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 15 (7): 466–467.
- Kao, John. 2009. "Tapping the World's Innovation Hot Spots." *Harvard Business Review* 87 (3): 109–114.
- Kärreman, Dan, and Anna Rylander. 2009. "Managing Meaning through Branding – the Case of a Consultancy Firm." *Organization Studies* 29 (1): 103–125.
- Kasanen, Eero, and Yrjö Sotamaa. 2010. "Epilögi – tie Aalto-yliopistoon." [Epilogue – the Road to Aalto University.] In *Tulkintoja, tosiasioita, tarinoita: Helsingin kaupparkeakoulun historiaa*, edited by E. Pöykkö and V. Åberg, 260. Porvoo: WS Bookwell.
- Knox, Simon, and David Bickerton. 2003. "The Six Conventions of Corporate Branding." *European Journal of Marketing* 37 (7/8): 998–1016.
- Koschke, Pauliina, Ilkka Arminen, Tiina Mälkiä, and Ismo Lumijärvi. 2011. "Kun tiede ja taide kohtasivat tekniikan ja talouden. Aalto-fuusiota selvittäneen tutkimushankkeen

- väliraportti.” [An Interim Report of a Research Project on Aalto Merger.] University of Helsinki and University of Tampere.
- Krejsler, John. 2006. “Discursive Battles about the Meaning of University: The Case of Danish University Reform and its Academics.” *European Educational Research Journal* 5 (3–4): 210–220.
- Krücken, Georg, and Frank Meier. 2006. “Turning the University into an Organizational Actor.” In *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change*, edited by Gili S. Drori, John W. Meyer, and Hokyung Hwang, 241–257. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kunelius, Risto, Elina Noppari, and Esa Reunanen. 2009. “Media vallan verkoissa.” [Media in Networks of Power.] University of Tampere, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, publications, series A-112/2009.
- Land, Christopher, and Scott Taylor. 2011. “Be Who You Want to Be: Branding, Identity and the Desire for Authenticity.” In *Branded Lives: The Production and Consumption of Meaning at Work*, edited by Matthew J. Brannan, Elizabeth Parsons, and Vincenza Priola, 35–56. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Lipponen, Jukka, and Marko Hakonen. 2012. “Henkilöstön kokemuksia Aalto-yliopiston fuusioprosessista 2009–2011.” [Employee experiences of the Aalto University merger process 2009–2011.] Accessed June 5, 2012. <https://inside.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=24282833>
- Lipponen, Jukka, K. Lendasse, and Hanna-Mari Aula. 2011. “Aallon logon herättämät mielikuvat 2009 ja 2010.” [Perceptions of the Aalto logo in 2009 and 2010.] Unpublished manuscript.
- Lowrie, Anthony. 2007. “Branding Higher Education: Equivalence and Difference in Developing Identity.” *Journal of Business Research* 60 (9): 990–999.
- Lowrie, Anthony, and Jane Hemsley-Brown. 2011. “Editorial: This thing Called Marketisation.” *Journal of Marketing Management* 27 (11–12): 1081–1086.
- Lund, Rebecca. 2012. “Publishing to Become an ‘Ideal Academic’: An Institutional Ethnography and a Feminist Critique.” *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28 (3): 218–228.
- Lusch, Robert F., and Frederick E. Webster Jr. 2011. “A Stakeholder-Unifying, Cocreation Philosophy for Marketing.” *Journal of Macromarketing* 31 (2): 129–134.
- Marginson, Simon. 2008. “Academic Creativity Under New Public Management: Foundations for an Investigation.” *Educational Theory* 58 (3): 269–287.
- McAlexander, James H., John W. Schouten, and Harold F. Koenig. 2002. “Building Brand Community.” *Journal of Marketing* 66 (1): 38–54.
- Merz, Michael A., Yi He, and Stephen L. Vargo. 2009. “The Evolving Brand Logic: A Service-Dominant Perspective.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 37: 328–344.
- Mikkonen, Ilona, and Domen Bajde. 2013. “Happy Festivus! Parody as Playful Consumer Resistance.” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 16 (4): 311–337.
- Mikkonen, Ilona, Johanna Moisander, and A. Fuat Firat. 2011. “Cynical Identity Projects as Consumer Resistance – the Scrooge as a Social Critic?” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 14 (1): 99–116.
- Muñiz, Albert M. Jr., and Thomas C. O’Guinn. 2001. “Brand Community.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 27 (4): 412–432.
- Naude, Pete, and Jonathan Ivy. 1999. “The Marketing Strategies of Universities in the United Kingdom.” *International Journal of Educational Management* 13 (3): 126–136.
- Ng, Irene C. L., and Jeannie Forbes. 2009. “Education as Service: The Understanding of University Experience Through the Service Logic.” *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 19 (1): 38–64.
- OPM. 2007. *Teknillisen korkeakoulun, Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun ja Taideteollisen korkeakoulun yhdistyminen uudeksi yliopistoksi* [Merging Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics and University of Art and Design into a New University]. Helsinki: Ministry of Education.
- Parker, Martin. 2006. “The Counter Culture of Organisation: Towards a Cultural Studies of Representations of Work.” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 9 (1): 1–15.

- Pitt, Leyland F., Richard T. Watson, Pierre Berthon, Donald Wynn, and George Zinkhan. 2006. "The Penguin's Window: Corporate Brands from an Open-Source Perspective." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 34 (2): 115–127.
- Rokka, Joonas, Katariina Karlsson, and Janne Tienari. Forthcoming. "Balancing Acts: Managing Employees and Reputation in Social Media." *Journal of Marketing Management*. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2013.813577.
- Rouse, Joseph. 1994. "Power/Knowledge." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by G. Gutting, 92–114. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rüegg, Walter, ed. 2004. *A History of the University in Europe. Volume 3. Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E. 2009. "The Cultural Codes of Branding." *Marketing Theory* 9 (1): 123–126.
- Schroeder, Jonathan E., and Miriam Salzer-Mörling, eds. 2006. *Brand Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Skodvin, Ole-Jacob. 1999. "Mergers in Higher Education – Success or Failure?" *Tertiary Education and Management* 5 (1): 63–80.
- Stake, Robert E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stern, Barbara B. 2006. "What Does Brand Mean? Historical-Analysis Method and Construct Definition." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 34 (2): 216–223.
- Stevens, Mitchell L., Elizabeth A. Armstrong, and Richard Arum. 2008. "Siege, Incubator, Temple, Hub: Empirical and Theoretical Advances in the Sociology of Higher Education." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 127–151.
- Thomas, Robyn, and Cynthia Hardy. 2011. "Reframing Resistance to Organizational Change." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 27 (3): 322–331.
- Thompson, Craig J., and Zeynep Arsel. 2004. "The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experiences of Globalization." *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (3): 631–642.
- Tomperi, Tuukka, ed. 2009. *Akateeminen kysymys? Yliopistolain kritiikki ja kiista uudesta yliopistosta* [Academic question? Criticism on the universities act and the dispute over the new university]. Tampere, Finland: Vastapaino.
- Vargo, Stephen L., and Robert F. Lusch. 2004. "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing." *Journal of Marketing* 68 (1): 1–17.
- Vásquez, Consuelo, Viviane Sergi, and Benoit Cordelier. 2013. "From Being Branded to Doing Branding: Studying Representation Practices from a Communication-Centered Approach." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 29 (2): 135–146.
- Wæraas, Arild, and Marianne N. Solbakk. 2009. "Defining the Essence of a University: Lessons from Higher Education Branding." *Higher education* 57 (4): 449–462.
- Wedlin, Linda. 2008. "University Marketization: The Process and Its Limits." In *The University in the Market*, edited by Lars Engwall and Denis Weaire, 143–153. London: Portland Press.
- Yang, Sung-Un, Sue Westcott Alessandri, and Denni F. Kinsey. 2008. "An Integrative Analysis of Reputation and Relational Quality: A Study of University–Student Relationships." *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 18 (2): 145–170.

Appendix 1. Analysis of the brand promises and stakeholder resources involved in the Aalto University case

	Service brand promises		Stakeholder resources	
	Value propositions	Processes and structures	People	Physical environment
Phase 1 – opportunity identification (2005–2007)				
<i>Perceived opportunities of the new university to counter perceived present weaknesses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interdisciplinary innovations with practical relevance (to the business community) • Better, world-class research (to the scientific community) • Higher quality teaching and education (to students and the business community) • “Top” university capitalizing on the latest technology (to all key stakeholders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More autonomy (expected from the government) • More resources (expected from the government and the business community) • Interdisciplinary research in focus areas (expected from the schools and faculty) • A student-centered culture (expected from the schools and faculty) • Business venturing (expected from the schools, faculty, and students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More internationally acknowledged top scholars (expected from the merging universities) • Visible support from captains of industry (expected from the business community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, common campus model (expected from the local government, schools, faculty, and students)

(Continued)

Appendix 1. (Continued).

	Service brand promises		Stakeholder resources	
	Value propositions	Processes and structures	People	Physical environment
Phase 2 – refinement (2007–2009) <i>Perceived opportunities turning into threats</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary innovation approach becomes viewed as antithetical to top disciplinary research (by the new president and some professors) • The “world-class,” “top” ideology and rhetoric is contested (by other universities and some internal stakeholders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring results in new layers of bureaucracy (as perceived by the schools and faculty) • Additional funding is problematized (as perceived by other regional universities) • Funding from business community runs into problems (as perceived by some firms and industry organizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on supporting “top” scholars runs the risk of elitism (as perceived by some faculty) • Centralization of decision-making authority is problematized (as perceived by some faculty) • New brand name hierarchy becomes an identity threat (as perceived by some employees and faculty) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common campus model and elimination of existing campuses become an identity threat (as perceived by some schools, faculty, and students) • People become reluctant to move (as perceived by HSE students and faculty)

(Continued)

Appendix 1. (Continued).

	Service brand promises		Stakeholder resources	
	Value propositions	Processes and structures	People	Physical environment
Phase 3 – Launch (2010–) <i>Outcomes of negotiations and refinements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Factory and some other innovative units continue to flourish, but enthusiasm around interdisciplinarity is diminishing (vis-à-vis industry and academic community) • Discipline-based “basic research” emphasized in internal RAE leading to the identification of key focus areas (vis-à-vis faculty) • Development of teaching still receives scant attention (vis-à-vis students and society) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund-raising by business community is adequate (by firms and industry organizations) • University-level headquarters developed further; decision-making is further centralized (by schools and departments) • Resources allocated to “top” research units (by headquarters, schools, and faculty) • Service administration is reorganized (by headquarters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New president (rector) assumes central role in decision-making (by the board and top management) • Brand communication work faces some discontinuities (by the headquarters and the schools, and communication directors) • Original promoters of the merger step down (by the board and new top management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus question heating up; decisions to be expected only later (by the schools and the cities of Espoo and Helsinki)