Introducing a conceptual model of brand orientation within the context of Social Entrepreneurial Businesses

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Abstract: The Social Entrepreneurship Organization (SEO) is a new kind of business that, despite of the young age of the term, has already been discussed widely. Compared with traditional non-profit organizations, SEOs aim to solve social or environmental problems by using modern management practices and means of innovation, and many SEOs strive to work profitable. Although SEOs are a popular field of research, a key, yet under researched concept in explaining their survival and success is the concept of strategic orientations. Strategic orientations can be defined as guiding principles that influence the strategy-making and concrete behavior of organizations. Strategic orientations that have been researched intensively in the past include customer, market, competitive, employee, product, resource, entrepreneurial and – most recently – brand orientation. Brand orientation is an approach in which the focus of the organization is set on the creation, development, and protection of its brand identity. In this paper, a conceptual model of brand orientation is introduced. The model suggests that there is a cultural and a behavioral layer of brand orientation. The cultural layer consists of values, norms and symbols and influences the behavioral layer that consists of analyses and activities. Then, a case study method based on in-depth interviews with Social Entrepreneurs is used to illustrate and to discuss our model in the context of SEOs. Looking at the results, we argue that our conceptual model is a good starting point to describe brand orientation in the context of SEOs.

Keywords: Strategic Orientations; Brand Orientation; Social Entrepreneurial Organizations; Social Entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction

The Social Entrepreneurship Organization (SEO) is a new kind of business that, despite of the young age of the term, has already been discussed widely in the press, in politics, and in science. The founders of such SEOs set social priorities without excluding well-known business principles – instead, they use them, putting them in a new framework. In general, SEOs aim at generating social impact by using innovative solutions to resolve well-known problems [1] [2]. They work profit-oriented, but their earnings stay completely or at least to major parts within the organization [3].
In the last years, there has been a lot of research around SEOs. Commonly, those studies focused on their overarching purpose or on the processes underlying innovative and entrepreneurial activity [4]. A key, yet under researched concept in explaining the survival and success of SEOs is the concept of strategic orientations [5], sometimes called “the corporate mindset” [6] or the “dominant general management logic” [7]. A company’s strategic orientation can significantly influence the degree to which it accomplishes its goals from a macro- and micro-perspective [8]. Aside from the work of Ma et al. [9] and Hong/Cho [10], not much attention has been given to the impact of different strategic orientations on the performance of these new, hybrid social businesses. One strategic orientation that in recent years has been discussed within the for-profit-sector is the so called brand orientation. In this paper, we develop a model of brand orientation within the context of SEOs and test it with the goal of validation by using secondary data generated by a study that conducted qualitative interviews with social entrepreneurs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Entrepreneurs, Social Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship Organizations (SEO)

SEO are founded and managed by social entrepreneurs. Although the use of the term social entrepreneur is increasing rapidly, there seems to be some confusion about what exactly a social entrepreneur is and does. The term as currently used seems vague and undefined. This lack of a common concept raises questions regarding which social or profit-making activities fall within the spectrum of social entrepreneurship [11]. Dacin et al. [2] identify 37 definitions of social entrepreneurship or social entrepreneur, the most common one being the one provided by Dees [12], revised [13]. According to Dees, social entrepreneurs "play the role of change agents in the social sector,

• Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),
• Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,
• Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,
• Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and
• Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created" [13, p. 4].

For Cho [14, p. 36], social entrepreneurship is “a set of institutional practices combining the pursuit of financial objectives with the pursuit and promotion of substantive and terminal values." According to Yunus [15, p. 31], “any innovative initiative to help people may be described as social entrepreneurship. The initiative may be economic or non-economic, for-profit or not-for-profit.” Zahra et al. [16, p. 5] assert that social entrepreneurship “encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner.” According to Abu-Saifan [11], it is important to set the function of social entrepreneurship apart from other socially oriented activities such as philanthropy, social activism or environmentalism and to identify the boundaries within which social entrepreneurs operate. He views the social entrepreneur as a “mission-driven individual who uses a set of entrepreneurial behaviors to deliver a social value to the less privileged, all through an entrepreneurially oriented entity that is financially independent, self-sufficient, or sustainable" [11, p. 25].
According to Abu-Saifan [11], SEOs can be divided into mission-driven and profit-driven organizations. Mission-driven SEOs perform a hybrid of social and commercial entrepreneurial activities to achieve self-sufficiency. In this scenario, a social entrepreneur operates an organization that is both social and commercial, with the revenues and profits generated used only to further improve the delivery of social values. By contrast, SEOs with a profit-driven strategy align with a business with a social purpose that simultaneously performs social and commercial entrepreneurial activities to achieve sustainability. In this scenario, a social entrepreneur operates a financially independent organization that is both social and commercial. Such an organization is financially independent and the founders and investors can benefit from personal monetary gain. Figure 1 illustrates the boundaries between the different business strategies.

The last approach to defining SEOs focuses on the primary mission and outcomes of the social entrepreneur. This highlights the fact that SEOs aim at generating social impact by using innovative solutions to resolve well-known problems [1] [2].

The above-mentioned definitions of social entrepreneurship therefore agree that the concept places a central focus on two features, i.e. social or environmental outcomes and innovation. Many authors also emphasize that social entrepreneurs distribute their socially innovative models via market-oriented action (e.g. by scaling up their initiatives and other contexts by forming alliances and partnerships) with the aim of reaching broader and more sustainable outcomes [17]. These dimensions map onto what Cho [14] identifies as the main building blocks of SEOs, i.e. sociality, innovation and market relatedness.
2.2 Brand orientation

Strategic orientations are the guiding principles that influence the strategy-making and concrete behavior of an SEO [18]. The framework of strategic orientation integrates the idea that a strategy is not always explicitly decided by management, but also evolves through decision patterns and organizational learning [19], which is useful in the SEO context. The literature offers a wide variety of different strategic orientations: market or customer orientation (e.g., [20] [21] [22] [23]), innovation or technology orientation (e.g., [8]), entrepreneurial orientation (e.g., [24] [25]), learning orientation (e.g., [26] [27]) and, last but not least, brand orientation (e.g., [28] [29] [30] [31] [32]).

Researchers describe the concept of brand orientation as an approach that focuses on brands as resources and strategic hubs [33] [30] [31]. Specifically, “Brand orientation is an approach in which the process of the organization revolves around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands” [31, p. 119].

Inspirations for the new orientation have come from case studies [33] [30] and from the simultaneously emerging field of strategic brand management (e.g., [34] [35] [36] [37]). The perspective on brands as strategic assets [38] and on brand management [39] [40] as a core competence [41] finds support from the field of resource-based strategy [42] [43] [44] [45] [38]. The statement that “the brand is not an unconditional response to the wants and needs of customers” [31, p. 119] challenges the market-oriented paradigm by assigning greater emphasis to the organization’s mission, vision and values.

From a cultural perspective, brand orientation may also be defined as a certain type of corporate culture or as a particular company mindset. Urde suggests that the way of relating to brands and the organization’s brand competence are “prerequisites of brand development” [31, p. 123]. Hatch and Schultz offer insights into the alignment of vision, culture and image [46] [47]. Their approach uses culture as a foundation, vision as a point of gravity and image as the external aspect of the brand, relating their work closely to the ideas of the brand-oriented corporation. Balmer and Greyser [48] explore the multiple identities of the corporation and the evolution of corporate branding.

The literature offers a wide range of conceptualizations of corporate culture [49] [50]. Baumgarth [51] [28] uses Schein’s corporate culture framework to explain the internal structure of brand orientation. The cultural layer, according to the corporate culture model by Schein [52] and Homburg/Pflesser [20], covers values, norms and symbols. Values are defined as deeply embedded, taken-for-granted, largely unconscious behaviors. They form the core of culture and determine what people think ought to be done. Norms, i.e. conscious strategies, goals and philosophies, represent the explicit and implicit rules of behavior. In an organization, they determine how the members represent the organization both to themselves and to others. Symbols or artifacts are the most apparent element of culture and have been used in different environments for establishing identity [53]. They include any tangible, overt or verbally identifiable element in an organization (e.g. furniture, dress code, stories, and jokes).

From a behavioral perspective, brand orientation characteristics include the importance accorded to the internal anchorage of the brand identity (mission, vision, and values). The idea of ‘living the brand’ has a strong link to the brand orientation concept [28] [54] [55] [56] [57] [58] [59]. Other examples of brand-oriented behaviors
are corporate identity and corporate design, integrated marketing communication, measurement of brand equity, the impact of brand orientation on managerial practice, employer branding and e-branding.

To conclude, the behavioral layer measures the manifestation of the respective orientation. The classical management and marketing concept distinguishes between behaviors involving analysis and activity. Analysis comprises approaches like market research and controlling including key performance indicators, while activity includes strategic decisions and the marketing mix.

Overall, brand orientation is a certain type of corporate culture and a corresponding behavior. To sum up, our suggested conceptual model of brand orientation suggests that the cultural layer that consists of values, norms and symbols influences the behavioral layer that consists of analyses and activities. Naturally, we also expect an effect from the behavioral to the cultural layer but suppose that this one is weaker than the contrary one (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A conceptual model of brand orientation.

Urde [31], already in the year 1999, identified Nestlé, Nicorette, Volvo, DuPont, and Tetra Pak as companies that did not perceive the wants and need of customers as the only natural basis for the company's marketing strategy – and called them brand oriented. Illustrating the brand orientation approach, Urde et al. [71] use the case of The Body Shop which rejects animal testing, chemicals and exploitation of third world farmers and has for a long time placed those beliefs at the heart of its brand identity. According to Baumgarth et al. [29], Apple is another good example of a brand oriented company. Apple’s brand identity – characterized through attributes like user friendliness, design and lifestyle – builds up the starting point for any activity of the company. In contrast, Dell could serve as a counterexample. Their business model that is based on mass customizing and direct delivery could be described as customer or market focused. Urde et al. [71, p. 18] name Avis as a market oriented company. They argue that – though the company is on its way to put more emphasis on the brand – the strategy of Avis is based on an “obsession for satisfying the customer, regardless of the cost.” According to their view, Electrolux illustrates an approach that combines market with brand orientation.

Another interesting case study of brand orientation comes from the area of destination branding. According to Schmidt & Lückenbach [72], the Austrian city of Kitzbühel is a good example of a brand oriented destination. Following an inside-out approach, the responsible project group that had been formed by members of the
tourism board, by city representatives, by hotel and restaurant managers and by other members of the local community, identified Kitzbühel’s brand identity and concluded that legendary sport and cultural events played an important role within the branding system. This was later expressed by the slogan “Kitzbühel - The legend”. In a following step, the city marketers adjusted their strategy according to the identity of the brand and to the new positioning. This led, e.g., to the development of new or the revival of existing events like a golf and mountain bike festival, a junior soccer tournament, or the snow polo world cup. To sum up: While other destinations, in an outside-in-approach, may analyze their customers and, based on the results of their studies, develop events that would meet their needs and wants, Kitzbühel did it in a brand-oriented way. The defined their brand and looked for new offerings that would fit the brand identity.

Considering social businesses in the context of brand orientation, Urde et al. [71, p. 16] analyze Amnesty International and conclude the following: “Brand orientation emphasizes the significance of the brand identity (mission, vision, and values) as a guiding light and hub for organizational culture, behavior, and strategy. The internal aspect of the brand – the organization – is seen as vital in the brand-building process. The perspective is from the inside out, while the needs and wants of consumers are recognized, the integrity of the brand is paramount.” Schmidt & Baumgarth [70] identify the Generationsbrücke Deutschland as a brand oriented organization and argue that their culture which puts emphasis on the formation of a strong brand drives their behavior which includes branding workshops and research about the brand.

3. A case-study approach to the model of brand orientation within the context of SEOs

Previous research underpins the relevance of the concept of strategic orientations for the analysis of different types of organizations. Surprisingly, previous research has extended the focus on classical companies only to include non-profit organizations (e.g., [73] [64] [74] [75] [67] [76] without considering the specific context of an SEO. The works of Ma et al. [9] and Schmidt & Lückebach [72] are an exception to this. Ma et al. analyzed the effect of entrepreneurship on market orientation in the SEO context. Their empirical study confirms that market orientation has a positive effect on public performance and job creation. The positive relationship between entrepreneurship is only partly supported. The qualitative study of Schmidt & Lückebach, based on interviews with social entrepreneurs, showed that brand orientation is a relevant strategic orientation to at least some of the successful SEOs.

The records in writing of 16 of these interviews that took part from June to September 2013 have now been re-assessed and newly interpreted. Additionally, the information given by the interview partners was updated in those cases where further data was accessible. One additional interview with a social enterprise took place in June 2014. Table 1 provides an overview of the SEOs included in the renewed analysis. In all cases, interviews were held with members of the founding boards of the SEOs. Our intention was to determine if the model of brand orientation described in Figure 2 could be applied to SEOs. While first results of this study have already been presented at the 3rd International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing in Madrid and will also be published in the corresponding conference proceedings, Table 2 now gives a complete overview of the final results.
Table 1. The records capacity of institutions (yearly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEO</th>
<th>Founded in</th>
<th>Area of Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abgeordnetenwatch.de</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Transparency and accountability in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arbeiterkind.de</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Support of pupils and students in non-academic families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belya</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Education of children in developing countries, financed via design and sales of handbags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bettervest</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Crowdfunding in project for energy efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookbridge</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Learning centers in rural areas of developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Circle</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Transparency and sustainability in the trade with Ethiopian coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue Social Enterprise</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Respect and tolerance for minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generationsbrücke</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Connecting the young with the elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hofgründer.de</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Succession planning and consulting for farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundebande</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Resocialization for female prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phineo</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Transparency and sustainability in the social sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProBoneo</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Intermediation of pro bono services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Your Life!</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Build bridges between pupils, students and companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Cup</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Education for girls in developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talents4Good</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Recruiting for jobs and projects with social impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranferis</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Cross-functional cooperation in the health sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viva con Agua</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Clean water and primary sanitary care in developing countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The application of the conceptual model to selected SEOs (in randomized order).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEO</th>
<th>Brand related culture</th>
<th>Brand related behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values (e.g. the development of a strong brand is a priority for the management)</td>
<td>Norms (e.g. brand related rules exist that have to be followed under all circumstances)</td>
<td>Activities (e.g. an integrated market communication approach is implemented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined Values: Close to the people, transparent, progressive, innovative, young</td>
<td>Symbols (e.g. visible branding elements like logos etc. exist)</td>
<td>The vision and the brand are continuously reviewed and further developed in workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clear vision gives the guideline for every day’s work</td>
<td>Analyses (e.g. the strength of the brand is measured regularly)</td>
<td>Continuous discussion of the own values on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The brand and the corresponding values have been discussed right from the start</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration with an advertising agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined Values: Stylish, accessible, „be good be beautiful“, good at all levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication of the brand by internet, newsletters, social media, conferences, networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation partners must fit to the values of the organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined Values: Sustainable, efficient, cost-effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees take</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Early discussion of the question: Where do we want to go?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined Values:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Defined Values:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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5. The management of the organization considers the brand to be very important. Very early in the history of the organization, the positioning has been discussed. Defined Values: Transparency, integration, authenticity, thinking differently, young, sustainable. Management thinks that employees play the decisive role in the process of brand building. When recruiting, the fit of the candidate to the brand is considered. Documents exist in which the organizational values are defined. In employment ads is communicated what makes the company different compared to others. Communication of the brand by homepage, networking, mailings. The brand is legally registered.

6. Preoccupation with the brand right from the start. Defined Values: Flexible, quick, open, focused, adaptive, resistant, convincing, emphatic. Management thinks that employees play a decisive role in the positioning process of the company. It is expected that the own values are exemplified in every day’s work. A written mission statement exists. Communication of the brand by trade fairs, events, forums, conventions, conferences.

7. From the starting point of the organization, the brand has been discussed. The topic “brand” seems very important to management. Defined Values: Joy, enthusiasm, together. Management thinks that employees play a decisive role in the positioning process of the company. When selecting new employees, the fit of the candidate to the organization is deeply considered. A written down mission statement exists. Continuous evaluation of the own work is currently being elaborated. Workshops referring to the brand are regularly held with participation of the employees. Professional corporate design by long lasting collaboration with a graphic designer. Communication of the brand by PR, networking, speeches, website, individual approaches.

8. Debate about brand management when the organization was founded. Defined Values: Trust, communication, education, enabling, value. Cooperation with a branding expert. Communication of the brand by...
Management considers it to be of highest importance that employees and partners bring the values to life. Positioning and values must be exemplified by employees.

9. **Defined Values:**
- Authentic, solution oriented, likeable

A lot of attention has been paid to find an emotional name. Communication of the brand by word of mouth, presentations, editorial comments, website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SEO</strong></th>
<th><strong>Brand related culture</strong></th>
<th><strong>Brand related behavior</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Norms</strong></td>
<td><strong>Symbols</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. At the start of the organization, thinking about the own brand and elaborating an individual profile has been regarded as very important. The initial high budgets for communication show the importance of the topic.</td>
<td>Defined Values: Making the difference, independent, trustful, cooperative, high quality. The value oriented acting of employees – especially in situations of conflict – is, in the opinion of the management, very important to fulfill the organizations demand for quality. Line manager must be role models.</td>
<td>„Welcome folders“ and onboarding seminars for newly hired employees. Handbook for employees. The design of the visitors lounge is compliant to the brand. Usage of recurrent brand elements, e.g. color of the windows, big logo displays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Defined Values: Appreciation, professional charisma, effect-oriented. The management thinks that employees play an important role for positioning the organization.</td>
<td>The values of the organization are written down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A brand has been developed right from the start but this process was not promoted consciously.</td>
<td>Defined Values: Cheeky, different, offbeat, engaged, result oriented. Management thinks that employees are decisive multipliers to make the values come alive, they are the medium for the image. When recruiting management takes care that candidates have the right spirit.</td>
<td>In recruiting ads it is communicated what makes the company different to others and what spirit is needed by candidates if they want to apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The brand played</td>
<td>Defined Values: A written down</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a decisive role right from the beginning

Decisions about the Logo and the corporate design are considered to be very important

The topic “brand” played an important role right from the beginning

Defined Values: Professional, moral, enthusiastic, responsible, intelligent, inclusion, diversity

Management thinks that employees are decisive multipliers to make the values come alive

In meetings held regularly it is discussed together with employees what the company stands for

A brand management workshop took place

Communication of the brand by homepage, Facebook, newsletters, word of mouth

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Management discussed the topic of brand management right from the beginning and has answered the following questions: “What is typical for us? What makes us different?”</td>
<td>Defined Values: Individual, small, exclusive, cooperative, working together, substantiated, professional, sustainable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Very early, the topic of brand management has been picked up</td>
<td>Defined Values: Interconnectedness, oriented towards capabilities, sense of self, joy, motivation, activism, bundling, substantiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The topic of brand management has, according to the organization’s founder, a huge importance</td>
<td>Defined Values: Humorous, self-confidence, honesty, openness, approachable</td>
<td>Written down brand positioning Logo pins T-Shirts with the logo and the slogan Diverse promotional items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees play an important role in managing the brand and are considered as being part of it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees must fit 100% to the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking a look at the cultural level of brand orientation, Table 2 shows that for most of the investigated SEOs, the brand plays a major role right from the foundation of the organization. This implies that their management places great value on brand management: the development of a strong brand is one of their top priorities (the brand as a value). On the layer of norms, we could find out that all of the SEOs in focus possess individual and in most cases very specific and differentiating values that serve as their guiding principles. Furthermore, many of the SEOs expect that their employees „live” the brand resp. the values of the brand or the company (the
brand as a norm). Finally, at least some of the SEOs have outlined brand models or written mission statements. Some of them even use their employment ads to point what their brand stands for (the brand as a symbol).

On the behavioral side, instruments of analysis are not commonly used by the SEOs under consideration. Only some of the investigated SEOs review their branding concept on a regular basis – even by discussing it in internal workshops or by challenging it with the views of customers and/or other stakeholders. But there is plenty of evidence that brand orientation manifests itself in brand related activities: Brand management workshops with the participation of employees are a possible activity for brand oriented SEOs. As one could expect, corporate design and measures of integrated marketing communication are others commonly in practice.

4. Conclusion

The considerations introduced in this paper followed three goals: First, we introduced the concept of brand orientation and related it to the context of social enterprises. Second, we discussed a general conceptual model in order to specify the cultural and behavioral characteristics of brand orientation. Third, we validated the model by means of case studies.

The data basis is still too limited to come to a final conclusion. However, looking at the results of our approach, we argue that the conceptual model of brand orientation shown in Figure 1 is a good starting point to describe this strategic orientation in the context of SEOs. In a first step, the model could form a basis for measuring the degree of brand orientation of different SEOs. Hence, corresponding scales need to be developed. Exemplary items for the measurement of the degree of brand orientation in the context of SEOs are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Exemplary items for the measurement of the degree of brand orientation in the context of SEOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand orientation</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural layer</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>•Today, the development of a strong brand is our top priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•In our organization, the brand has always been considered to be very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>•We have clearly defined brand values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•We expect that every employee “lives” our brand and follows the corporate behaviour, communications, and design guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>•Our employees display visible branding elements when in contact with customers (e.g., nameplate with logo).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•We have a written down brand book that describes our brand identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural layer</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>•We measure regularly the strength of our brand (e.g., brand awareness, brand image).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•The vision and the brand are continuously reviewed and further developed in workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>•We implement an integrated market communication approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•In our organization, brand management workshops take place regularly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a second step, the impact of brand orientation – compared with other strategic orientations (e.g., market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation) – on the overall performance of an SEO could be measured. Last but not least, in order to measure how market, entrepreneurial and brand orientation influence the success of an SEO, it is essential to identify moderators (e.g., characteristics of the enterprise, the founder(s) and the market) that affect the strength of the relation between these variables.
To sum up, the suggested model of brand orientation fills important gaps of the SEOs research and the overall research on strategic orientations. In addition to that, the model offers a spring board for future research projects.

References


