UTILISING MARKETING RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES FOR VALUE CO-CREATION IN CROSS-CATEGORY BRAND ALLIANCES

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Copyright Statement

Abstract

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In this study, the stages of the cross-category brand alliances are investigated by integrating the resource-based view (RBV), and service-dominant (S-D) logic as the underpinning theories. The utilisation of marketing resources and capabilities for value co-creation is explored by analysing five case studies from Turkey. The dyadic relationship between the alliance partner brands is taken as the unit of analysis. The study contributes to brand alliance literature by analysing the level of resources allocated by the partner brands to the brand alliance, and the influence of resource allocation on value outcomes through an integration of RBV an S-D perspective. The categorisation of different alliance types and the opportunity cost model for alliance partner selection are additional contributions of the study to the brand alliance literature. It contributes to RBV literature by identifying the types of resources utilised to achieve competitive advantage in brand alliance context, and by introducing the "alliance resource portfolio" term to explain the integrated pool of resources in a brand alliance. In addition, the study contributes to S-D and value co-creation studies by classifying types of resources, value co-creation roles and value outcomes in the value co-creation process of cross-category brand alliances from a B2B perspective. Findings of the study would help marketing managers to optimise the level of resource allocation in a brand alliance for better value outcomes, to prevent the risks that might occur during the brand alliances, and to make better partner brand choices in their future brand alliances. Furthermore, marketing managers should improve the ways of internal communication to involve different levels of human resources and invest in external communication channels to improve the interaction with the partner brands and customers in the value co-creation process of brand alliances. One of the key findings of the study is that the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances not only involves the customers but also creates values for the customers which in turn contribute to the values and resources of the partner brands. The resources that have a critical influence on the value outcomes of a cross-category brand alliance are identified as marketing resources and capabilities, human resources, technological resources, and brand alliance experience. The direct value outcomes which are co-created by partner brands are financial value, customer acquisition, customer satisfaction and brand awareness. In addition, the brands in a cross-category brand alliance co-creates indirect value outcomes of innovation and knowledge. Although improved brand image and increased customer loyalty are among the popular aims and expectations of marketing managers of case study brands, the achievement of these indirect value outcomes are limited according to the findings of the study.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother,

Sevim Özer,

who made education possible for me and many…

Declaration

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Sign Date 12/11/2020

Ediz Edip Akcay

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CMO	Chief Marketing Officer
G-D	Goods Dominant
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GSM	Global System for Mobile communications
Ho-Re-Ca	Hotel-Restaurant-Catering
HVC	High-Value Customers
R-A	Resource-Advantage
RBV	Resource-Based View
S-D	Service-Dominant
SCP	Structure–Conduct–Performance
VCC	Value Co-Creation

1. Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the study is first introduced through the background of the research and by stating the gaps in the literature. It is followed by the research aims and objectives, research questions and the contribution of the study. In the definitions of key terms section, the key topics which are the focus of the study are explained and defined. An overview of cross-category brand alliances, global examples and examples from Turkey are given in the following section. The final part of the chapter explains the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Background of the Research and Gaps in the Literature

Newton's (1687) law of universal gravitation starts with the basic assumption that every particle in the universe attracts others with force. While the reason for the attraction between particles is still questioned, there is an increasing research interest to understand why brands attract each other. Kotler and Keller (2016, p.352) define brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or some combination of these elements, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". In this research, the term "brand" refers to a company's name, logo or symbol that is used to represent the company in the marketing activities.

Although Newton's law relates the force of attraction to the mass and distance between the particles, the nature of relations in the business context is not proportionally and distinctly related as in physics. In today's complex and ever-changing business environment, companies are struggling to obtain sustainable competitive advantage (Jones et al. 2018). Marketing resources and capabilities are recognised as important drivers of competitive advantage by marketing scholars and practitioners (Davcik and Sharma 2016; Fahy et al. 2006; Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016).

While traditional theories of the firm stated that the competitive advantage is the result of competitive behaviour in the market, the resource-based view (RBV) states that a firm’s strategic resources are the source of competitive advantage (Melle and Della Corte 2013). According to the RBV, the rationale for making strategic alliances is the value-creation potential of pooled partner resources in an alliance (Das and Teng 2000). A strategic alliance is defined as “an agreement between two or more organisations to share resources or knowledge to pursue mutually beneficial objectives while remaining independent organisations” (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2017, p.3). In addition to the value-creation potential, strategic alliances have been claimed to provide companies with a vital tool for gaining sustainable competitive advantage and developing a differentiation strategy in the market (Liu et al. 2016; Culpan 2008).

In a recent survey among CEOs of more than 1,300 global companies, 40% of the CEOs in the survey claimed that forming strategic alliances with new partners is one of the key drivers of corporate growth and profitability (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2019). However, the evidence from business reports such as the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) Council report indicates that over 60% of the alliances fail to reach the expected outcomes (Whitler 2014). Some other studies state that the failure rate of the strategic alliances is over 50% (Zineldin and Dodourova 2005; Russo and Cesarani 2017).

According to Zineldin and Dodourova (2005), the primary reasons for the failure of strategic alliances are the dissimilarity in the alliance objectives and the lack of clarification in the objectives, the inability of the alliance partners to share the risks of the alliances, lack of trust between the alliance partners, and insufficient coordination of management teams. While brands are using alliances as a strategic tool to enter new markets (Hao et al. 2013), co-create value (Vargo and Lusch 2011), access and acquire new customers (BPI Network 2014) and utilise partner’s resources (Park et al. 2004), the high failure rate pushes the brands to look at the factors that influence the outcome of the alliance more carefully (Baynham 2016). Despite the high failure rate, brands keep making more and more alliances. Hence, it is legitimate to question the reasons behind the motive of managers towards brand alliances.

Brands are deploying different types of co-marketing activities such as ingredient branding, brand extension, advertising alliance, joint promotion or cross-category brand alliance to reduce the financial risks and benefit efficiently from the alliances they form (Liu et al. 2016, Hadjicharalambous 2013). Although strategic alliances between brands are increasingly implemented in their marketing strategies and critical to enhancing their competitive position, the topic is scarcely researched (Grieco and Iasevoli 2017).

The term “brand alliance” is used in this study to refer to the strategic alliances between brands. The brand alliance is a subset of strategic alliances in which two or more brands collaborate to integrate their brand attributes while promoting their products or services (Cooke and Ryan 2000). Studies of the different types of brand alliances addressed customers’ perceptions of brand alliances (Washburn et al. 2004; Lafferty 2007; Smarendescu et al. 2013; Sarmaniotis et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016), the moderator effect of product involvement and brand knowledge on the relationship between brand equity and brand alliance evaluation (Liu et al. 2016).

In one of the early studies about brand alliances, Washburn et al. (2004) explored the brand equity from the customer perspective. They concluded that partnership with a brand influences consumers’ evaluations of partner brand’s equity. Still, this study investigated consumers’ reactions to brand combinations but not the influence of relationships between the partner brands on a brand alliance. Exploring the cause-brand type of brand alliances, Lafferty (2007) assessed the consumer perceptions of fit between a cause and a brand. While the study developed important suggestions about the partner selection criterion, the focus of the research was on the consumer perceptions of the brand alliance.

Later, Smarandescu et al. (2013) focused on the cross-category brand alliances and investigated the consumer perceptions of partner brands. As the study explored the consumer side, the findings present that level of consumers’ brand attribute knowledge influence the judgements of the brand alliance. Yet, Smarandescu et al. (2013) recommend further research to explore other factors such as product category fit, attribute relevance to the goal of the alliance which would be more related to the business side of the brand alliance context.

Sarmaniotis et al. (2014) studied consumer evaluations of brand alliances and validated co-branding type of brand alliances as an important business strategy for participating brands. The authors suggest that brand positioning is a strong indicator of consumer evaluation of brand alliances. Although Decker and Baade (2016) focused on the organisational dissimilarities between partner brands in an alliance, the study's findings were based on the consumers' evaluations of the co-branding type of brand alliances. Overall, while the consumer perceptions and evaluations of brand alliances are explored in these studies, the relationships between partner brands and utilisation of marketing resources and capabilities in a brand alliance setting are scarcely researched.

Exploring inter-firm relationships in a brand alliance context will help to identify the business side factors that influence the outcomes of a brand alliance. Past studies (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993; Casciaro and Piskorski 2005) emphasise that managerial challenges due to resource dependence cause power imbalance which is a significant obstacle while forming brand alliances. Investigating the relationships between partner brands would reveal the reasons of managerial challenges to prevent future power imbalance issues. Moreover, understanding which marketing resources and capabilities are utilised in a brand alliance will provide companies insights to choose partner brands that have the complementary resources to achieve competitive advantage in the market because of the brand alliance. Considering the high failure rate of the alliances (Whitler 2014; Zineldin and Dodourova 2005; Russo and Cesarani 2017), the efficient allocation of marketing resources and correct partner brand selection would contribute to the success of future brand alliances.

The focus of this study is a specific type of brand alliances: cross-category brand alliance. A cross-category brand alliance is defined as a specific marketing strategy where two independent brands from different product categories come together to share a common goal (Smarandescu et al. 2013). There are studies about cross-category brand alliances (Decker and Baade 2016; Smarendescu et al. 2010; 2011; 2013) that focused on how customers associate the brand attitudes of partner brands in their minds after the alliance and how they perceive the brand fit. However, they did not address how partner brands create value together in the brand alliance.

In its essence, a brand alliance is made to generate value for the brands by accessing new customer segments (Hao et al. 2013; Vraneševic et al. 2017), increasing sales (Yue et al. 2006), and benefiting from partner brand's unique resources and competencies (Dickinson and Heath 2008). However, the past studies (Washburn et al. 2004; Lafferty 2007; Smarendescu et al. 2013; Sarmaniotis et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016) mostly omitted the impact of the brand alliance on the business side.

Instead, they focused on the perceptions of the consumers (Washburn et al. 2004; Lafferty 2007; Smarendescu et al. 2013; Sarmaniotis et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016), and the consumers' evaluation of brand alliances (Dickinson and Heath 2008). Besides, they did not investigate the interaction and relationships between the partner brands during the brand alliance but focused on brand attributes.

Understanding the value co-creation process between the partner brands will help the brands to choose partner brands that would bring more value to the brands at the end of the alliance. Also, identification of the resources and capabilities that are more important in the value co-creation process will assist the companies in making efficient resource allocation during the brand alliance. Investigating how value is created during the brand alliances will contribute to the brand alliance literature by identifying the business side factors that are critical to the success of the brand alliances.

Furthermore, very little is known about how brands use their marketing resources and capabilities for value co-creation in a cross-category brand alliance setting. The relations with partner firms create opportunities to attain a competitive advantage by accessing and utilising valuable resources and capabilities of the partner brands (Yim et al. 2015). Although the resource-based view states the firm's unique resources as the source of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney 1991), partner brands can turn their joint resource portfolio into a unique marketing resource that is valuable and difficult to imitate by competitors.

"Resource portfolio" is a term that was introduced by Oliver (1997) to define the available assets and resources of a firm which contribute to competitive advantage. Barney and Arikan (2001) point out that the competitive advantage of a company in the product market relies on the resource portfolio the company controls. In the alliance context, Lambe et al. (2002) state that companies can benefit from complementary resources in an alliance when they can eradicate inadequacies in each other's resource portfolio. The relationships and interactions between partner brands initiate a value creation process which would generate market competitiveness with the joint strategic resources (Mele and Della Corte 2013).

The term "value" is used to refer to different phenomena in the literature (Bowman and Ambrosini 2000). In the classical economy theories, the value is classified into use value and exchange value types. While use value is subjective and related to the perceptions of the customers about a product or service, exchange value is the monetary amount that a customer pays for a product or service at the time of the exchange (Bowman and Ambrosini 2000). In this perspective, value creation is done through the actions of employees of a company who utilise the resources in a company to produce new use values for the product or service which would change the exchange value (Bowman and Ambrosini 2000). However, this value definition focuses on the exchange between the buyer and seller and ignores other types of value created (Sheth and Uslay 2007).

Lepak et al. (2007, p.181) broaden the definition of use value to "the specific quality of a new job, task, product, or services as perceived by users concerning their needs, such as the speed or quality of performance on a new task or the aesthetics or performance features of a new product or service". With this definition, the use value is not limited to the perception of the customers and extended to the users of newly created value.

Looking at the value from the organisation side, Swaminathan and Moorman (2009) defined value as abnormal stock returns, and value creation relies on increasing the firm's value in the stock market. However, this definition limits the value in financial terms. To overcome the mono-dimensionality of value definition that limits it into finance, Ekman et al. (2016) suggest that value is multi-dimensional, and it is based on each stakeholder's perceptions. The outcomes of the value creation can be tangible (monetary) and intangible (non-monetary) which would be "uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary" as suggested by Vargo and Lusch (2008, p.7) in their service-dominant logic foundational premises. In S-D logic, value creation's position "moves from the producer to a collaborative process of co-creation between parties" (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 256).

In this study, value is evaluated from the business perspective and "regarded as a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices" (Walter et al. 2001, p. 366). The broader value definition is applied, which consists of both monetary and non-monetary outcomes (Walter et al. 2001). The focus of the study is the value co-creation between companies and regarded as the collaborative activities between companies which intend to create new value outcomes by integrating resources (Chowdhury et al. 2016). While the dyadic relationships between the brands in an alliance are explored, the role of customers in the value co-creation process is not omitted because value co-creation not only happens at the dyadic level but also includes the interaction with the other actors in the network and beyond (Ekman et al. 2016).

It is increasingly accepted that value co-creation is crucial for firms' strategic success (Tantalo and Priem 2016). Since the pioneering work of Vargo and Lusch (2004) pointing to the need to evolve to a new dominant logic for marketing, there has been a growing interest in the service-dominant (S-D) logic for marketing to explain the value co-creation concept in the B2B service and solutions research (Kohtamäki and Rajala 2016). The S-D logic changed the standard meanings that are attached to goods-dominant logic. It introduced the concept of "co-creation of value" with the network (Ballantyne and Aitken 2007) which influenced many researchers to study value co-creation processes not only in B2C but also in B2B environment (Pera, Occhiocupo and Clarke 2016).

The introduction of the value co-creation concept in marketing helped researchers to explain the marketing activities of B2B firms by claiming that all businesses are services, and that the values are an integral part of goods exchanged at any point of sale (Ballantyne et al. 2011). However, the influence of a firm's resources and capabilities on value co-creation (VCC) process is scarcely studied (Zhang et al. 2015). Value co-creation articles (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Vargo et al. 2008; Payne et al. 2009; Gebauer, Johnson and Enquist 2010; Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola 2012) mostly investigated the role of customers in the value co-creation process, relations and interchange between customers, suppliers and firms for the co-creation of value. The question of how firms can create shared value for different stakeholders in a brand alliance remains unanswered (Tantalo and Priem 2016).

Besides, VCC literature focused on goods-services design and development process by the collaboration of customers and companies. Still, the relationship between partner brands is a crucial area to be investigated in VCC studies (Ramaswamy and Ozcan 2016). Thus, there is a need to analyse the relationship between partner brands during the value co-creation process in the alliances. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand how partner brands as stakeholders co-create value in brand alliances.

1.2.1. The Resource-Based View

The resource-based view (RBV) is one of the theories that attempt to explain how firms achieve competitive advantage. According to the RBV, the companies utilise internal resources, skills, and competencies to improve the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency rather than benefiting from external activities in the value chain (Mele and Della Corte 2013). The RBV explains the performance differences between the firms with the assumption that a better performing firm has the resource portfolio that provides the advantage in the market (Barney and Arikan 2001). However, later articles emphasised the role of stakeholder relationships as a strategic resource that help the companies to obtain a competitive advantage in the market (Kull et al. 2016).

According to the RBV, resource term denotes any capability or competence a firm has (Mele and Della Corte 2013). In this research, the RBV is used as a foundation theory that explains why brands contribute their internal resources to the cross-category brand alliance with the expectation of achieving a competitive advantage. Integrated resource portfolios of the brands are used as the basis to explore how brands use their resources to co-create value.

The capability extension of RBV suggests that the resource deployment ability of a firm through organisational capabilities might have more importance on firm performance than the resource levels of the firm (Vorhies et al. 2009). Vorhies et al. (2009) state that resource deficiencies of a firm can be compensated through organisational capabilities such as product-market strategy and marketing capabilities. Taking the capabilities extension of the RBV into consideration, the utilisation of marketing capabilities of partner brands in a brand alliance is explored in this study to understand the role of marketing capabilities in the value co-creation process.

1.2.1.1. Dynamic Capabilities Approach

The competitive advantage of a firm relies on its portfolio of unique knowledge assets and complementary assets (Teece et al. 1997). Although the resource-based view focuses on unique firm capabilities and assets that shape the firm performance, it does not clarify how sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved through isolating mechanisms (Teece et al. 1997).

The dynamic capabilities approach studies extended RBV to explore the impact of dynamic markets on the firm's quest of competitive advantage (Lin and Wu 2014). Dynamic capabilities approach attempts to explain how resource and competence combinations can be used and protected in the changing environments to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Teece et al. 1997).

According to Teece (2007, p.1319), dynamic capabilities of a firm helps to "create, deploy, and protect the intangible assets that support superior long-run business performance". Dynamic capabilities approach focuses on the management capabilities development and unique integrations of organisational, functional, and technological skills that are difficult to be imitated by other companies (Teece et al. 1997). In this study, the dynamic capabilities approach is used to explore how the integration of marketing resources and capabilities of partner brands influence the value co-creation process in different category settings.

1.2.1.2. Marketing Resources and Capabilities

There are several studies (Morgan et al. 2009; Davcik and Sharma 2016; Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016; Qureshi et al. 2017; Chang et al. 2018) that showed the significance of marketing resources and capabilities to develop competitive advantage and achieve better performance levels. These studies are in line with the RBV which proposes the importance of resources to achieve competitive advantage and S-D logic that states the role of resources to create value

Marketing resources and capabilities have a distinctive role in identifying customer needs, rival products, and distribution channels (Barrales-Molina et al. 2014). Marketing resources of a firm include both tangible resources (i.e. physical resources) and intangible resources (i.e. intellectual and relational properties) like the operant and operand resource terminology of S-D logic (Hooley et al. 2005). According to S-D logic, physical resources such as raw materials are classified as operand resources. In contrast, the human, organisational, informational, and relational resources are classified as operant resources (Hunt 2004, cited in Madhavaram and Hunt 2008). While an act or operation is needed for the utilisation of operand resources, operant resources (specialised skills, knowledge) act on other resources to provide a competitive advantage for the companies (Madhavaram and Hunt 2008).

The marketing resources of a firm determine the limit of their marketing capabilities, which can be defined as the combination of mid-level marketing activities and higher-level marketing activities of a firm (Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016). The marketing capabilities of a firm are measured by its success in managing the marketing function (Qureshi et al. 2017). Thus, it is critical for a brand how it utilises marketing resources and capabilities in its marketing strategy to obtain competitive advantage and better performance levels.

In the branding literature, the term brand equity is used to describe the value of marketing assets and liabilities attached to the brand (Aaker 1991; Baker and Saren 2016). The brand equity is critical for the brands to create value both for the customer and the firm (Aaker 1991). According to the marketing research company Kantar Millward Brown, brand assets of a company which contributes to the brand equity consist of slogans, colours, logos, fonts, physical cues such as packaging and shape, characters, celebrity associations and other imagery (Guerrieria 2018).

Brodie et al. (2006) proposed the service-based brand equity perspective that emphasises the integrating role of the brand to create added-value in a network of the firm, employees, customers, and other stakeholders. In this research, the utilisation of marketing resources and capabilities by partner brands in the brand alliance is investigated to explore its impact on value co-creation process.

1.2.2. Service-Dominant Logic

The RBV is stemmed from the idea that a company's resources are the source of competitive advantage. In contrast, service-dominant (S-D) logic emerged as a theory that explains how companies use the resources to provide benefits for another party and create value (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Mele and Della Corte 2013). S-D logic interprets the resources as the core of value creation and shifts the focus of exchange in marketing from goods and tangible resources to services and intangible resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

Early studies in S-D logic investigated mainly the dyadic relations between the firm and customer. Besides, recent studies (Mele and Della Corte 2013; Matinheikki et al. 2017; Waseem et al. 2018) expanded the view to the relations between other actors and networks to explore how resources are integrated into the value co-creation process. This research is using the extended view of S-D logic and investigating the impact of integrated resources in the brand alliances on the value co-creation process.

1.3. Research Aims and Objectives

This research focuses on the relationships between partner brands during the value co-creation process in cross-category brand alliances. It aims to investigate which marketing resources and capabilities are in relation to the alliance outcome in cross-category brand alliances. While several authors (Medcof 1997; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009; Li and He 2013) tried to explain the factors that have an impact on an alliance outcome, very few studies investigated the value co-creation process and its relation with the alliance outcome in cross-category brand alliances.

The research aims to fulfil the following objectives in the cross-category specific area of the brand alliance literature:

- To identify how and which types of value are co-created by partner brands in a cross-category brand alliance
- To map the resources and capabilities that partner brands utilise in a cross-category brand alliance to co-create value
- To propose/design a theoretical framework to depict the relations of partner brands’ resources and capabilities with the cross-category brand alliance outcomes during the value co-creation process

1.4. Research Questions

The research objectives are elaborated in this study, according to the research questions below.

- How and which types of value are co-created by partner brands?
    - What are the potential risks that can emerge during the value co-creation process?
- Which resources and capabilities do partner brands utilise to co-create value?
- How are the resources and capabilities connected to the brand alliance outcomes and co-created value?

1.5. Contribution of the Study

This paper contributes to the literature by proposing a theoretical framework for the value co-creation process in brand alliances after studying how value is co-created by integrating the RBV approach with the service-dominant logic of marketing. The integration of RBV and S-D logic in the brand alliance context contributes to not only strategic alliance literature but also to value co-creation literature. The focus of the past alliance studies (Lambet et al. 2002; Lin et al. 2009; Kuzminykh and Zufan 2014; Jiang et al. 2015) is the impact of different factors on the performance of the alliance. However, the performance criteria are mostly limited to the financial terms in these studies.

Integrating S-D logic in the alliance studies makes it possible to explore value-in-use rather than the exchange value, which extends the value outcomes of a brand alliance to intangible options. The application of operand and operant resource logic of SDL to RBV helps to elaborate on the utilisation of different types of resources such as marketing resources and capabilities, technological resources in the brand alliance context. Therefore, this study contributes to RBV and S-D theories by applying S-D approach to the brand alliance context to investigate how brands achieve competitive advantage through utilisation of own and partner brand resources.

Based on the above-identified gaps in the literature on cross-category brand alliances and considering the evidence of high failure rates from the practice, this study will provide a framework for managers that they can use as a unique tool to control and manage their resources more efficiently in an alliance. Furthermore, the study contributes to brand alliance and value co-creation literature by investigating the topic in an emerging country context. The insights from emerging country case studies will help the international companies to understand the challenges and opportunities of forming a brand alliance in an emerging market. Also, international company managers will discover the significant factors that contribute to value co-creation when they form a brand alliance with a partner from a different product category in an emerging country.

Even though several studies showed the influence of marketing resources and capabilities on firm performance, there is little research that studied the influence of the brand alliance resource portfolio of partner brands on the brand alliance outcome. This study aims to identify the relation between marketing resources and capabilities and brand alliance outcome from a value co-creation perspective. Besides, understanding the relations between the brand resources and brand alliance outcome will help the practitioners to improve the outcome of their brand alliances.

Another contribution of the study is analysing real brand alliances that are formed by the case study brands instead of hypothetical brand partners and alliances as studied in past brand alliance studies (Kalafatis et al. 2012; Ahn and Sung 2012; Riley et al. 2015; Decker and Baade 2016). Exploring real brand partners is recommended by past studies (Baumgarth 2004; Decker and Baade 2016) to increase the external validity and generalisability of findings.

1.6. The Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

To clarify the usage of different terms for the same concepts in different studies, the definitions of key terms and concepts of this study are presented in this section. The concepts are explored in detail in the literature review chapter.

1.6.1. Value and Value Co-Creation

Before moving to the definitions of value co-creation, it is helpful to define value in the service-dominant logic. Value is the “perceived worth in exchange of sacrifices made" (Ford and Mouzas 2013, p. 12) and it is subjective in the S-D logic, "the value is determined by the beneficiary of service" (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 8). Value co-creation (VCC) attracted interest since the Vargo and Lusch article in 2004 about the move from goods-dominant logic to service-dominant logic in marketing. Early definitions of value co-creation included a dyadic creation of value between the company and the customer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

Similarly, Ballantyne et al. (2011) define value co-creation as customer involvement in the creation and delivery of products and services. However, later articles (Grönroos and Ravald 2011; Choi and Burnes 2013; Tantalo and Priem 2016; Pera et al. 2016) emphasise the role of other stakeholders in the value co-creation. These articles propose a broader definition that includes all joint activities of any parties involved in the collective value creation process. Among different definitions of value co-creation, this research explores the value co-creation between the stakeholders, specifically the partner brands in a brand alliance. All the activities of the alliance partner brands and the resources they use in the brand alliance are investigated to understand the relation between the resources and the value co-creation process from the RBV perspective.

1.6.2. Brand

In the marketing literature, the brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or some combination of these elements, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler and Keller 2016, p. 352). It is accepted that the brand is the most valuable intangible asset of any company. According to Millward Brown market-research company, the brands of the companies comprise more than 30% of their stock market value in the S&P 500 index (The Economist 2014).

The global top 10 brands according to their brand value in the BrandZ list that is prepared by Millward Brown are mostly from the technology category which are Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Tencent, Facebook, and Alibaba (WPP 2018 – see Table 46 in Appendix 1). As they are the symbols that represent the companies, the brand name can be used interchangeably to represent the organisation. In this study, the term brand is used to refer to a company's name, logo or symbol that represents the company in the marketing activities. Therefore, the resources of a company such as marketing, human resources, technology, or physical facilities are accepted to be the part of the brand resources rather than the "firm", "company" or "organisation" resources.

1.6.3. Brand Alliance

Several authors used different terminology to name the marketing collaborations between different companies. The most common terms that are used in different studies are marketing partnership (Gibbs and Humphries 2009), marketing alliance (Das et al. 1998; Swaminathan and Moorman 2009), co-marketing alliance (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993; Ahn et al. 2009; Grieco and Iasevoli 2017), co-branding alliance (Kippenberger 2000; Helmig et al. 2008; Shen et al. 2017), advertising alliance (Samu et al. 1999; Smarandescu et al. 2013) and brand alliance (Washburn et al. 2004, Riley et al. 2015; Voss and Mohan 2016, Kupfer et al. 2018). In their study to explore different definitions of marketing collaborations, Grieco and Iasevoli (2017) summarise the conditions for a marketing collaboration as follows:

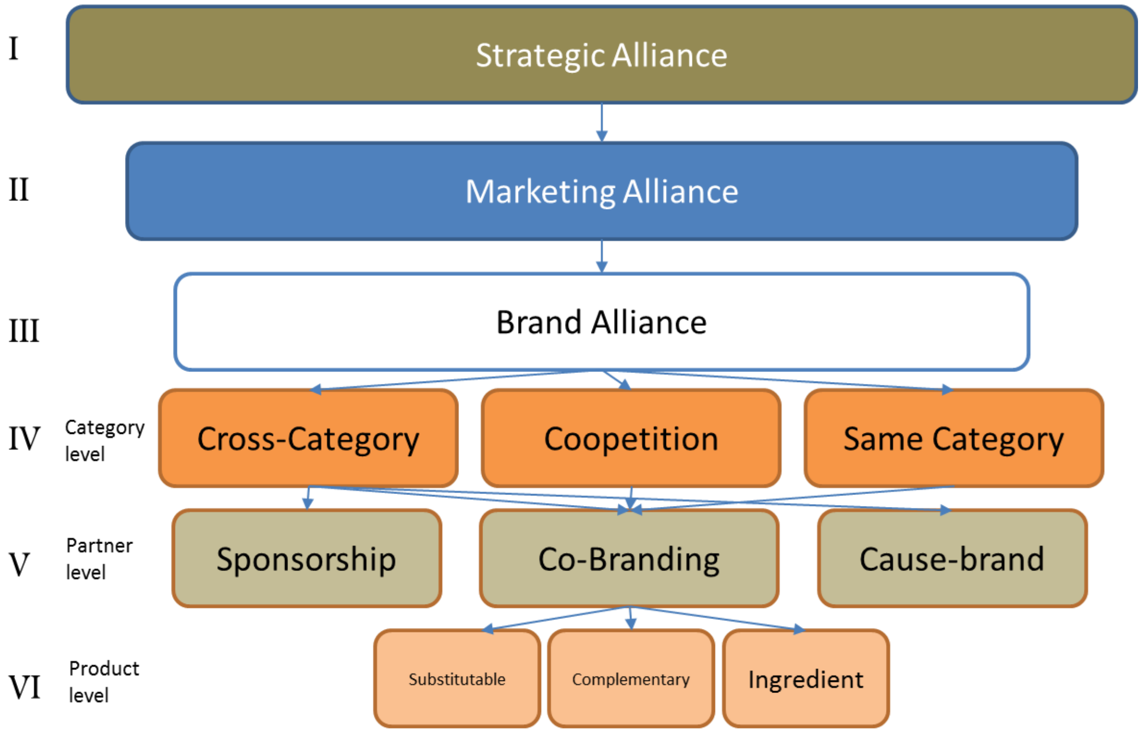
- There are two or more partners present which are clearly perceived by customers
- The collaborations aim to achieve synergic advantages and benefits for the partners involved
- A typical managerial process is developed to organise, plan, and assess the activities
- There is the possibility to implement the alliance in all marketing activities such as analytical, strategic, and operative activities
- The collaboration aims to generate increased and delivered value for customers

In this study, the term "brand alliance" is used to define the collaborations between two companies which promotes their brands in shared marketing activity for a short or long period. It is helpful to revisit the definition of marketing alliance by Swaminathan and Moorman (2009, p.53) to clarify the difference between a marketing alliance and a brand alliance.

"Marketing alliances are formalized collaborative arrangements between two or more organizations focused on downstream value chain activities."

Das et al. (1998) list technological alliances and marketing alliances as subsets of strategic alliances. The authors suggest that the cooperation in a marketing alliance can be in the form of "cross-selling products, sharing brand names, advertising, or promotion; distribution channels, sales forces, or sales offices; and marketing and service networks" (p. 29). As can be seen in the cooperation types listed, marketing alliances include but not limited to the brand alliances "in which two or more brand names are presented jointly to the consumer" (Rao et al. 1999, p. 259). Thus, marketing alliance is a broader type of strategic alliance than the brand alliance because marketing alliance focuses not only on the promotion side of marketing activities but also other aspects such as shared distribution and sales channels. The relationships between different alliance types are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Alliance Types and Relationships



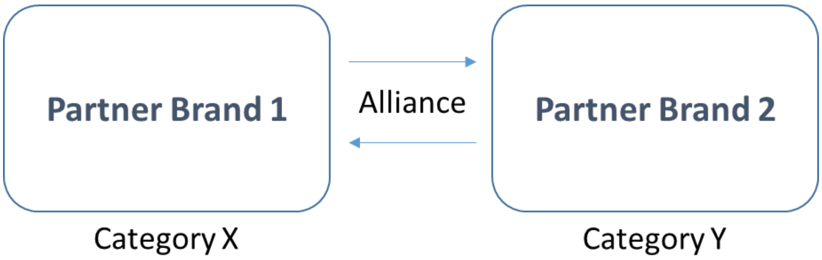
A detailed explanation of each brand alliance subcategory is provided in the "Marketing Alliances" section (Section 2.3) of the literature review chapter. The brand alliances can be classified at the category level into same-category, cross-category, and coopetition types. Sponsorship, co-branding, and cause-brand types are the brand alliance types at the partner level. Co-branding can be made with cross-category, same category, or rival brands (coopetition). Sponsorship and cause-brand type of brand alliances are subcategories of cross-category brand alliances. Substitutable, complementary, and ingredient brand alliances are the subcategories of co-branding at the product level. As the focus of this study is cross-category brand alliances, all subcategories of cross-category type are elaborated in the further sections of the study.

The shared marketing activity in the brand alliances that are investigated in this study can be in the form of advertising, sales promotion, placement, personal-selling, distribution, outsourcing or sponsorship. Depending on the nature of the brand alliance, the brands aim to reach business customers or end consumers by the shared marketing activities in the brand alliances that are studied in this research.

1.6.4. Cross-Category Brand Alliance

The cross-category brand alliance is a subcategory of the brand alliances in which the brands from different categories come together to form an alliance (Smarandescu et al. 2013). Although it is defined as a distinct type, the cross-category brand alliance can consist of the other types of brand alliances such as sponsorship, cause-brand alliance, and co-branding. The following diagram (Figure 2) depicts the cross-category brand alliance.

Figure 2 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Diagram



(Adapted from Smarandescu et al. 2013)

1.6.5. Brand Category

There are different types of brand categorisation in brand alliance literature. One type of categorisation classifies the brands according to their concepts, categorising them as functional or expressive brands (Lanseng and Olsen 2012). Ahn and Sung (2012) added another dimension to brand categories and classified the brands according to their symbolic meanings such as prestigious or upscale. Another classification uses the attributes of the brand and categorises them as hedonic and utilitarian (Riley, Charlton and Wason 2015). The brand category that is used in this study is taken from Smarandescu et al. (2013) article, which categorises the brands according to their product category.

The other consumer-focused categorisations are widely used in the brand alliance studies that evaluate the consumer perceptions of the brand alliances. However, product categorisation is used in this study to be more objective about the brand categories from a business perspective. Thus, the cross-category brand alliance that is studied in this research is defined as the brand alliances between two or more partner brands from different product categories such as technology, automotive and entertainment. The categorisation of brands in different studies is listed in Table 47 in Appendix 1.

1.7. Overview of Cross-Category Brand Alliances

In this section, an overview of cross-category brand alliances is explored with real-life examples. The section starts with global examples of different types of cross-category brand alliances. It continues with an overview of the Turkish market in terms of brand alliances which is supported by cross-category brand alliance examples from Turkey.

1.7.1. Global

The strategic partnerships between brands are increasingly becoming popular (Yan and Cao 2017) because of the expected benefits of brand partnerships such as gaining competitive advantage, access to new markets, shared risk of resource usage and innovation potential. Furthermore, it is claimed that the brand partnerships between the world's most valuable brands help them to accelerate the growth of their brand value (Hammett 2018).

According to a survey among more than 1.000 CEOs in 90 territories around the world, 40% of them are planning to make a new strategic alliance in the next 12 months to drive revenue growth (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2019). In addition, Kantar Millward Brown's BrandZ report for the top 100 most valuable brands states that brand alliances that help people to make their lives easier are an effective tactic to increase the brand value (Hammett 2018). The examples of cross-category brand alliances between brands from different product categories can be seen in the forms of various brand alliance types such as co-branding, sponsorship, and cause-brand alliances. In Table 48 in Appendix 1, some examples of recent cross-category brand alliances at the global scale are summarised and listed.

1.7.1.1. Co-Branding

One of the early examples of a co-branding type of cross-category brand alliances is between FMCG & drinks brand Dr Pepper and cosmetics brand Bonne Bell in 1975 (Bernazzani 2018). During the brand alliance, the world's first flavoured lip balm producer Bonne Belle introduced co-branded lip balm with Dr Pepper which tastes like the drink. The brand alliance is supported by marketing communication activities such as advertisements in magazines (see Figure 36 in Appendix 1). The co-branded product turned into a long-time success among young customers which inspired other brands to make cross-category alliances with brands in the beauty & cosmetics category (Bernazzani 2018).

Despite the differences between the types, there are no strict lines that differentiate the cross-category brand alliance types. In some cases, the types of cross-category brand alliances consist of one another. For instance, the brands that are in a co-branding partnership might have complementary products and share advertising with both brands present on the advertisement material as in the case of Apple fitness technology products and Nike shoes for Nike+ product (Bernazzani 2018). Besides, sponsorship can be accepted as a co-branding initiative where brands come together to make shared marketing communication activities. Similarly, brands produce co-branded marketing communication materials and products in cause-brand alliances as in the case of Target and Unicef (Bernazzani 2018) and Adidas & Parley partnership (Hammett 2018).

1.7.1.1.1. Complementary Products

The long-term brand alliance between the sports fashion brand Nike and technology brand Apple is an example of a brand alliance for complementary products and co-branding. The collaboration first started in 2006 when the brands introduced Nike+Ipod (see Figure 39 in Appendix 1) to improve the running experience of Nike customers by connecting to iPod technology (Apple Inc. 2006). Nike+ online community enabled co-creation with the customers through mobile technology and interaction between individuals and brands (Ramaswamy 2008). The partnership between Nike and Apple turned into a series of collaborations for fitness products and technologies in the coming years with the increasing popularity of fitness tracking technology, and the co-branding helped the brands to provide better customer experience (Bernazzani 2018).

Another example of co-branding that includes complementary products is between e-commerce brand Amazon and credit card brand Visa (Loudenback 2017). Amazon collaborated with Visa for their Amazon Prime Rewards Signature Card (see Figure 40 in Appendix 1) product as the solution provider, and the brand alliance help the company to drive growth among Prime members with the customer benefits it provided (Hammett 2018).

The brand partnership between technology brand Huawei and camera brand Leica is not only a brand alliance between complementary products but also a long-term technology partnership with shared ambitions and spirit, according to the directors of the brands (Leica 2016). While the chairman of Leica claims the brand brings its values and expertise to the partnership (Leica 2016), it is expected that the alliance will boost the growth of Huawei thanks to the global brand recognition of Leica (Byford 2016).

Entertainment and technology brand Spotify partner with brands from different categories that would complement their product such as their cross-category brand alliance with telecommunications brand Vodafone UK (Ingham 2013) and transport & technology brand Uber (Taylor 2015). The brand alliances of Spotify do not only include shared marketing communication activities but also integrated products and services that would improve customer experience (Ingham 2015). In the case of Vodafone UK, the partners launched a product bundle in which Vodafone customers have Spotify membership as part of their mobile package (Ingham 2013). The brand alliance helped Spotify to boost their revenue more than 40% in UK market in 2013 thanks to the new subscribers as a result of the partnership with Vodafone (Williams-Grut 2014), and the brands carried the alliance to the other markets such as Ireland, Germany and Turkey where Vodafone operates (Ingham 2015).

The partnership is also a showcase for Vodafone to prove their improved speed and technology to their customers (Ingham 2013). Also, it allows reaching new customer segments and markets as in the case of Turkey where the Spotify partnership allowed them to provide better service for the youth segment and lead the digital transformation in the country (Ingham 2015).

Spotify's partnership with Uber is another case in which Spotify customers can choose the songs they would listen during Uber journey using their Spotify accounts (Taylor 2015 – see Figure 41 in Appendix 1). Both brands aim to increase their customer base by offering better customer experience than competitors (Bernazzani 2018). The cross-category brand alliance between Spotify and Uber is an example of added value for the customer when the values of each brand are consistent with each other (Taylor 2015).

1.7.1.2. Cross-Category Brand Alliance

One example of the cross-category brand alliance that started as a one-time partnership but turned into a long-term collaboration thanks to the success of the first campaign is the one between fast-food brand McDonald's and entertainment brand Monopoly (Carter 2016; Verheul 2017; Newsroom 2018). The roots of the partnership go back to 1987 when two brands partnered for the first time in the US (Verheul 2017). In the brand alliance, the customers can win prizes when they buy Monopoly branded products from McDonald's (Carter 2016 – see Figure 37 in Appendix 1).

After the success of the brand alliance in the US, the brands extended the partnership to other countries such as Canada, Germany, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Verheul 2017). The brand alliance is supported by various marketing communication activities such as TV commercials, radio, press, billboards, social media, and digital marketing Newsroom 2018). In the United Kingdom, the brand alliance turned into a much-anticipated annual tradition since its debut in 2015 (Verheul 2017). Although the brand alliance brings additional revenue for McDonald's thanks to the increased chance of winning prizes in the larger portions of products, the campaign received criticism from health campaigners in terms of encouraging families to buy more fast food (Boseley 2018). The brand alliance did not only help McDonald's to engage with their customers in an experiential and fun way but also helped Monopoly to increase awareness among a new generation of customers (Carter 2016).

1.7.1.3. Sponsorship

Sponsorship is an example of cross-category brand alliances in which more than one brand cooperates with one single brand like the sports events, teams or athletes and each brand applies own marketing strategy separately from the other sponsor brands. The Olympic Games is a showcase of sponsorship type of cross-category brand alliances when the brands sponsor one single major event. While the world's biggest brands like Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Visa sponsor the Olympic Games, they do not intervene each other's marketing strategies, and they make their advertising activities with their primary partner Olympic Games (Biscaia and Rocha 2018).

Other sponsorship examples include the major partnerships the football clubs make with brands from different product categories such as automotive brand Chevrolet's partnership with football club Manchester United or the sponsorship of Emirates Airlines with Italian football club AC Milan (Unlucan 2015). Furthermore, there are cross-category brand alliances in the type of sponsorship where the brands cooperate with the personal brand of the athlete such as Roger Federer's past partnership with Nike for his brand RF (Payne 2018).

1.7.1.4. Cause-Brand Alliances

The cause-brand alliances are made for long-term objectives such as improvements in brand image and brand reputation (Lafferty et al. 2004). One example is the partnership between Target from the retail sector in the United States and Unicef children's charity (Bernazzani 2018) which aimed to assist delivering food for the children in need around the world by selling inexpensive fitness product (see Figure 38 in Appendix 1). The brand alliance not only encourages children for a healthy lifestyle but also increases awareness of global malnutrition and helps Target to commit to Unicef's sustainable development goals (Bernazzani 2018).

According to Unicef (2019), the brand alliance helped to unlock 8.2 million food packets and protected the lives of 52.000 children in different countries. Adidas made a brand alliance with Parley to launch a new trainer range which is made from recycled plastic that is found in the sea. The cause-brand alliance between the brands contributed to the continued success of brand value growth of Adidas in the BrandZ ranking of Kantar Millward Brown (Hammett 2018).

1.7.1.5. Risks

Although the goal of cross-category brand alliances is achieving the expected benefits on revenue, brand value, and customer perceptions, the failure rate of brand alliances are not low (Baynham 2016). As the brand alliances involve the fusion of brands at different levels and periods, there are mitigating risks when something goes wrong about one brand (Matthew 2010). One of the examples of cross-category brand alliances that failed due to the controversy it caused is between the fuel & energy brand Shell and entertainment & toy brand Lego. The long-term partnership not only helped Lego to add authenticity to its car-related toys and improve distribution but also helped Shell to reach the young target audience to improve the brand image with the positive brand association (Kosin 2017).

However, the pressure from environmental organisations such as Greenpeace on Lego about the possible harm that Shell cause on the environment because of oil drilling in the Arctic led to the end of 50-year-old brand alliance (Matthew 2010 – see Figure 42 in Appendix 1). The negative impact of one brand on another during the brand alliance is defined as "spill-over effect" by Simonin and Ruth (1998), and it is discussed in more detail in the alliance outcome section in the literature review chapter (Section 2.8).

The past studies about brand alliances mostly focused on the customer perceptions of brand alliances and the studies were generally conducted in the developed country context (Smarandescu et al. 2013; Nguyen et al. 2018). Still, these studies point to the need for further research in different country settings. This study aims to cover this gap by investigating cross-category brand alliances from an emerging market and by exploring the impact on the types of values created during the VCC process rather than the consumer perceptions of the brand alliance.

Studying the cross-category brand alliances in an emerging market context will provide insights to the multinational brands about the success of brand alliances when they decide to enter a new emerging market. Moreover, Baumgarth (2004) points the need to explore brand alliances in different cultural contexts to improve the generalisation of the findings of past studies. There are several studies (Bluemelhuber 2007; Li and He 2013; Lee et al. 2018) which focused on the role of country of origin in the brand alliances in emerging markets.

Studying other factors such as the role of marketing resources and capabilities in an emerging marketing context will provide additional insights for the multinational brands to understand which resources and capabilities they should prioritise while forming a new brand alliance in an emerging market. Therefore, case studies from an emerging country will contribute to the literature by enhancing the evaluation of past findings and contribute to practice by providing insights to global brands for more efficient allocation of resources in a brand alliance and better partner brand selection in emerging markets.

1.7.2. Turkey

In this study, case studies of cross-category brand alliances from Turkey are investigated. Turkey is an emerging country with recent economic policy uncertainty because of the failed coup attempt in 2016, parliamentary system changes in 2017 and subsequent events (Jirasavetakul and Spilimbergo 2018). Still, it is the 13th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP according to purchasing power parity comparison, and it is a growing economy with a 7.4% growth rate in 2017 (CIA 2019). There are 374 companies listed on the stock exchange in Turkey (19th in the world) in 2017 which indicates the size of the economy and the development of the stock market thanks to the advanced use of equity financing (The Global Economy 2019).

The history of brands in Turkey can be traced back to the late 18th century. One of the first registered brands in history, Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir is accepted as the inventor of Turkish delight and still serving the customers in their first shops in the historical peninsula of Istanbul (Hürriyet 2019a). Similarly, the examples of first advertisements can be seen in the 19th century in private newspapers (Yilmaz et al. 2019). Like the brand alliance examples from the world, there are early examples of cross-category brand alliances between automotive and fuel companies (Total 2018 – see Figure 43 in Appendix 1), household appliances and FMCG companies (Haberturk 2018). While there is no clear identification of the first brand alliances in the country, the increasing popularity of brand alliances is observed in the last 20 years especially after the rise of mobile and digital marketing activities (UNC Digital 2016).

1.7.2.1. Co-Branding

The co-branding alliances by the credit card companies mostly aim to provide extra benefit for the customers such as discounts, loyalty points or ease of payment (Garanti Bonus 2019 – see Figure 44 in Appendix 1). Furthermore, Cinemaximum which is the biggest movie theatre chain in the country, makes several brand alliances with the brands from different product categories such as fuel (Tarhan 2017), retail (Migros 2019) and fast-food (TAB Gıda 2019a) to increase their sales through the sales channels of partner brands.

While the entertainment brand Monopoly partnered with fast-food brand McDonald’s in other countries for a long time as mentioned in the global brand alliances section, the rival fast-food brand Burger King made a successful brand alliance with Monopoly in Turkey (Burger King 2011). The brands included the telecommunications brand Vodafone in the cross-category brand alliance as the technology provider and won awards thanks to the success and innovativeness of the campaign (Tab Gıda 2019b).

1.7.2.1.1. Complementary Products

One example for the cross-category brand alliance for complementary products is between Turkish technology brand Vestel and global entertainment brand Netflix (Sabah 2016). The partnership between the brands started as a sales promotion of 3 months free Netflix subscription for the customers who bought Vestel televisions when Netflix entered the Turkish market in 2016 (Sabah 2016). It turned into a long-term partnership in which Vestel produces smart television systems (see Figure 47 in Appendix I) with an embedded Netflix app and a Netflix button on the remote controls (Vestel 2019).

The cross-category brand alliance is an example where one brand gets the benefit of accessing a new market and customer segment while the other benefits from the brand reputation and technology of the partner brand. Another example is the brand alliances of detergent brand Finish with different dishwasher producer brands (Yantra 2010). Although the brand works with several brands from the same category at the same time, some brands invest more in the brand alliance in terms of marketing communication activities. In one case, Finish and household appliance brand Arcelik promoted the new dishwasher campaign in a co-branded TV advertisement where Arcelik recommends Finish as the preferred dishwasher detergent (Yantra 2010).

1.7.2.2. Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Turkish Airlines, which is Turkey's national airline company, makes brand alliances with several brands from different categories such as credit cards, hotels, telecommunication, and fuel (Turkish Airlines 2019). Their brand alliance with Garanti Bank for the passenger miles program continues since 2000 with the same bank thanks to its success in creating benefits for both brands and customers (Hürriyet 2018).

One of the first successful brand alliances between a telecommunications brand and fuel brand was conducted in 2003 between Turkcell which is the market leader in the telecommunications sector and BP which is a global fuel and energy brand (Hürriyet 2003). The success of cross-category brand partnerships between the mobile operator brands in the telecommunications sector and brands from several industries such as fuel, FMCG, retail and fast-food brands (Haberturk 2010) led to the spread of cross-category brand alliances to other sectors. Besides, the local credit card brands conduct several brand alliances in a year and spend a significant marketing budget on promoting the cross-category brand alliances (Garanti Bonus 2019).

1.7.2.3. Sponsorship

As in other countries (Biscaia 2018), the sponsorship type of cross-category brand alliance is expected in the sports industry in Turkey. In addition to the suppliers of sportswear, the sports clubs make partnerships with several brands from different product categories such as telecommunications (Kuburlu 2011), rent-a-car (Milliyet 2018), banking industry (Milliyet 2016), insurance (Hurriyet 2019b) and travel (Goal 2017). Although the sponsorship agreements are primarily based on financial terms, there are various marketing communication activities during the brand alliances such as advertisements, events, and co-branded promotions (Kuburlu 2011, Milliyet 2016). The sports clubs evaluate the sponsorship to represent the vision of their brand by making a partnership with reputable brands as in the example of Trabzonspor and QNB Finansbank brand alliance (Milliyet 2016 – see Figure 45 in Appendix 1).

On the other hand, the brands use the sponsorship as a way to create added value (Milliyet 2018), reach a new target audience (Milliyet 2016) and access new markets. As an example, Turkish Airlines uses the brand logo on the shirts of the teams they sponsor only in the international games of the sports clubs (Goal 2017). Other than the sponsorships for placing the brand logo or name on the sportswear, the sports clubs make brand alliances for their sports venue names (Kuburlu 2011), sports branch names (Hurriyet 2019b) and licensing agreements for the products sold in merchandise stores (Hurriyet 2016). In the brand alliance between Fenerbahce and Hello Kitty; Fenerbahce allowed Hello Kitty to produce co-branded products to be sold in the merchandise shops of the sports club to create value for female and children fans, and any fans that are interested in Hello Kitty products (Hurriyet 2016).

1.7.2.4. Cause-Brand Alliances

The cause-related brand alliances in Turkey are mostly made between retailers, FMCG companies and charities (Dalin 2017; Retail Turkiye 2018; Domestos 2018; TEGV 2019). The brands not only promote the charity on their products to increase the donations (Dalin 2017; TEGV 2019) but also organise events and projects with the charity to create awareness about the cause they support (TEGV 2017; Domestos

2018). The cleaning products brand Domestos (2018) cooperates with an education charity to increase awareness about hygiene among children. In addition to giving information to the children about the importance of hygiene by visiting the schools, the animated figures they use in their advertisement materials to symbolise microbes are used in the books of elementary school children thanks to the cooperation with the charity (Domestos 2018).

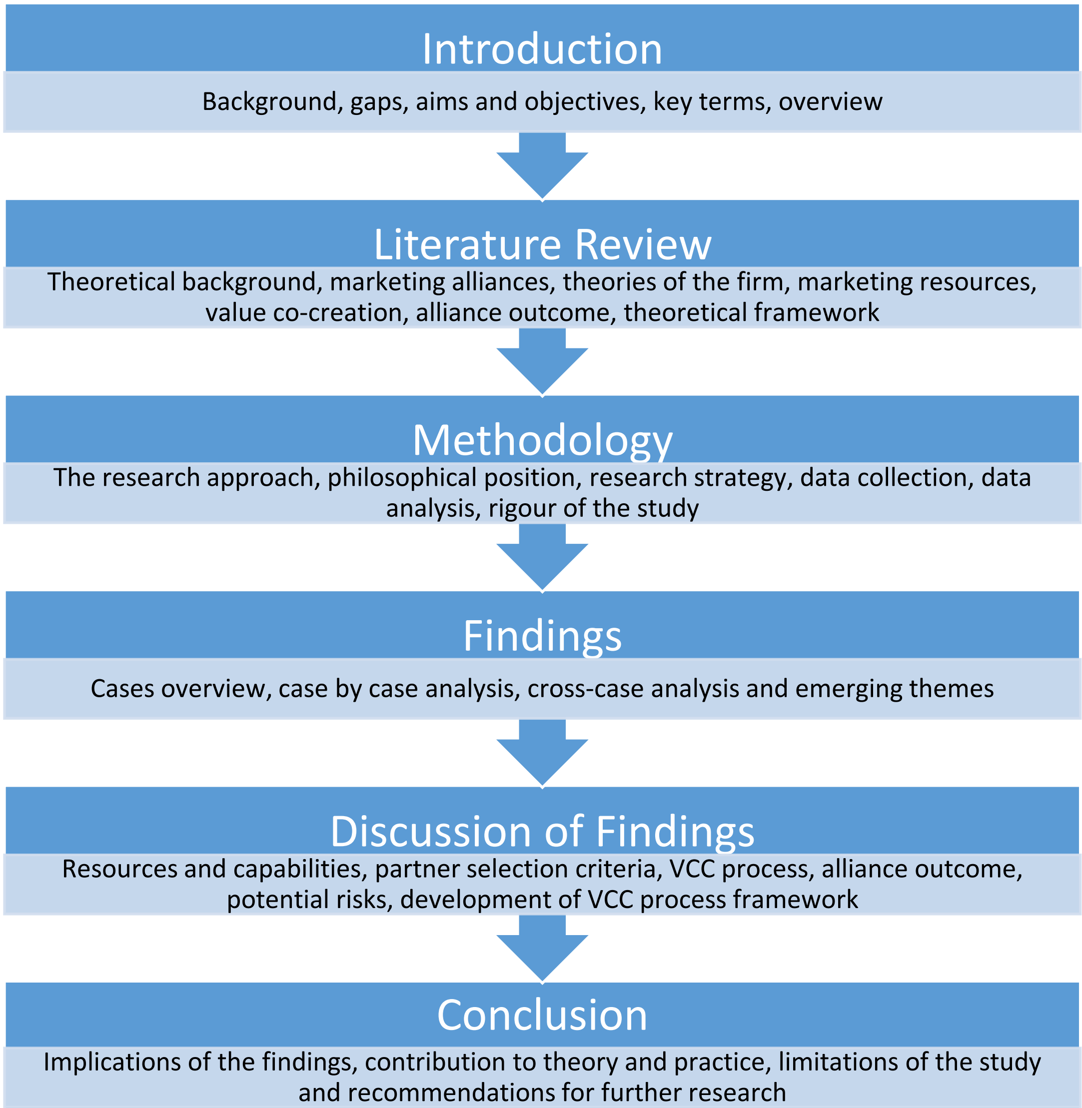
In some cases, FMCG brand includes the retailer brand (see Figure 46 in Appendix 1) in the alliance to promote the cause-related brand alliance (Dalin 2017; Retail Turkiye 2018). The FMCG brand Maylo which produces toilet and kitchen rolls, made a partnership with the education charity TEGV to collect donations for supporting reading awareness among children through the sales of their products. The specially designed products were sold only at an exclusive retailer, which is Migros, because of their widespread store chain around Turkey (Retail Turkey 2018).

The recent examples of cross-category brand alliances in Turkey are listed in Table 49 in Appendix 1. Despite the increased application of cross-category brand alliances in Turkey in recent decades, the studies about the brand alliances in general and cross-category brand alliances specifically in an emerging country and Turkey context are scarce. This research investigates the cross-category brand alliances from Turkey, which is an emerging country as case studies and explores the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances by analysing the brand alliances as the unit of analysis.

1.8. The Structure of the Thesis

In this section, the structure of the thesis is summarised by explaining the content of the chapters. The structure of the thesis is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 The Structure of the Thesis



This study starts with the introduction chapter, Chapter 1, which summarises the background of the study, explains the contribution of the study, discusses the aims and objectives of the research and gives the definitions of key terms and concepts. An overview of brand alliances globally and in the context of Turkey, which is the source of the case studies, is presented in the introduction chapter.

In Chapter 2, the literature review is introduced with the theoretical background of brand alliances and value co-creation. The chapter continues by clarifying the various definitions and types of marketing alliances. The aims and expectations of partner brands in a brand alliance and partner brand selection criteria according to different studies are explored in the following sections. The cross-category brand alliance type of the marketing alliances which is the topic of this research and the reasons of entering a cross-category brand alliance are reviewed in separate sections by exploring the theories of the firm, and the resource-based view (RBV) specifically.

By building on the RBV, marketing resources and capabilities and their impact on the brand alliance outcome are discussed in this chapter. It is followed by discussing the studies on value co-creation, definition and types of value and alliance outcome in the final sections of the chapter. The final section of Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that is developed based on the insights from the RBV, service-dominant logic, value co-creation and brand alliance studies. The theoretical framework helped to prepare the themes for the interview guide that is used in the data analysis of the research. It is revisited in the discussion and findings chapter of the research.

The methodology that is used in the research is introduced in Chapter 3. The research approach, philosophical position, research strategy, data collection and data analysis methods of the study are discussed in detail. The case study method and the steps to develop a framework by using this method is explained in the relevant sections of the chapter. The choice of data sampling, data analysis method and interview conduct are described. In a dedicated section, the development of the interview guide based on the themes from the theoretical framework is explained. The chapter is finalised with the discussion of the rigour of the study.

Chapter 4 starts with an overview of the case studies that are used in the research. The background and context of the case studies are explained in relation to the cross-category brand alliance studies. The chapter continues with the findings of the study that are presented in a case by case format. Following the aims and objectives of the study, the findings focus on the themes of the theoretical framework to answer the research questions. In the cross-case analysis section of the chapter, the similarities and differences between the cases are discussed, and emerging themes are presented.

Chapter 5 consists of the discussion of the findings and the development of a framework based on the findings. The findings are discussed in terms of relations between partner brands, utilisation of marketing resources and capabilities, alliance partner brand selection criteria, VCC process, the types of values co-created, and emerging issues. The development of the research framework is explained and compared with the theoretical framework of Chapter 2.

The final chapter of the research, Chapter 6, presents the conclusion of the study. The sections of the final chapter are implications of the findings, contribution to theory and practice, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

2. Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter starts with the theoretical background of the topic and discusses fundamental theories that addressed cross-category brand alliance and VCC. The chapter continues with the “Marketing Alliances” section, which summarises different types of marketing alliances and the particular type of cross-category brand alliances. Mainly, the researcher addresses the reasons why firms enter cross-category brand alliances by referring to the theory of the firm, particularly the resource-based view approach. Also, the researcher explores recent studies on marketing resources and capabilities.

Furthermore, the researcher discusses the “Value Co-Creation” concept and explores the processes and relationship between companies and stakeholders when they come together to create value. VCC in B2B context and the types of value topics are also discussed in the VCC section. The next section of the chapter elaborates on the literature about the alliance outcome. In the final section, before the summary of the chapter, the researcher proposes a theoretical framework which will help to illustrate the research questions of the study.

2.2. Theoretical Background of the Research

Collaborations, where two or more brands come together to form an alliance, are increasingly popular among brands (Yan and Cao 2017). Brands form an alliance to achieve more than they do on their own (Lewis 1999) and to create a synergistic collaboration with the expectation of achieving a sum greater than the parts (Rodrigue and Biswas 2004). By forming an alliance, brands can leverage their brand equity (Washburn et al. 2004; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009), enhance customer satisfaction (Gundlach and Murphy 1993), increase market share (Smarandescu et al. 2013; Vranešević et al. 2017), and have access to new markets and customers by utilising their partner’s resources (Hao et al. 2013; Vranešević et al. 2017).

While the nature of the alliance proposes the creation of shared value as the alliance outcome, the synergy and relations between the partners have a significant role on the outcome of the alliances (Tantalo and Priem 2016). While value co-creation is an emerging concept in the brand management literature, few studies investigated the complex ecosystems of partner brands and stakeholders that came together to create synergistic outcomes (Gyrd-Jones and Kornum 2013). Besides, there is a need to understand how alliance partners ensure the creation of value and efficiency in their relationship during the alliance (Albers et al. 2013).

It is critical to distinguish between different types and definitions of the alliance to clarify the type of alliance this research investigates. A strategic alliance is broadly defined by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (2017 p.3) as "an agreement between two or more organisations to share resources or knowledge to pursue mutually beneficial objectives while remaining independent organisations". This definition covers any type of alliance that firms undertake such as joint ventures, co-production, or co-marketing activities. Brand alliance can also be defined as cooperation between two brands while staying independent brands to create synergy by benefiting from each other's resources, capabilities and core competencies. During the brand alliance, brands aim to obtain benefits from the alliance, which will be greater than individual efforts (Yan and Cao 2017).

In a brand alliance, the brands are presented to the customers together, assuming that each brand's perception will be enhanced in the minds of the customers (Erevelles et al. 2008). Washburn et al. (2004) point out that brand alliance is a specific marketing strategy in which two or more partner brands transfer their brand equity to the alliance to create positive signals of quality and trust in the customer's mind. This research focuses on the cross-category brand alliance type of the alliances where brands from different product categories that share a common goal come together to form an alliance (Smarendescu et al. 2013).

Previous literature on brand alliances examined (1) the influence of customer-based brand equity of partner brands on customer evaluations of the alliance (Washburn et al. 2004), (2) investigated the relations between manufacturer-supplier partner brands (Erevelles et al. 2008), (3) analysed the brand concept consistency and product category fit of partner brands (Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Samuelsen et al. 2015), (4) explored the impact of congruity and country image on global brand alliance evaluation (Hao et al. 2013), (5) proposed that there is a link between attribute knowledge, individual differences and brand attribute inferences in cross-category brand alliances (Smarandescu et al. 2013), (6) investigated the role of multiple types of quality signals on partner brand evaluations (Fang et al. 2013) and, (7) tried to build a unified framework to evaluate brand alliance strategies (Hadjicharalambous 2013).

There are articles (Washburn et al. 2004; Erevelles et al. 2008; (Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Samuelsen et al. 2015; Hao et al. 2013; Smarandescu et al. 2013; Fang et al. 2013; Hadjicharalambous 2013) which successfully indicated how and which factors change the perceptions of the brands in customer's minds when the customers are exposed to a brand alliance. However, their analyses were mostly based on the customer perspective and their evaluations of the alliance. As the emphasis of the literature is on the customer perception side; underpinning theories, i.e. signalling theory, associative network memory model, congruence theory, which are mostly derived from social psychology and consumer psychology literature, were used in the studies. Therefore, there is a need to critically analyse the relations between partner brands in the brand alliances from a B2B perspective.

Analysing the brand alliances in B2B setting helps to understand (1) why firms form brand alliances, (2) which resources and capabilities are deployed by the brands, (3) what are the expectations of the firms from the brand alliance. It would not be possible to investigate these questions in the B2C context in which the past studies explored how customers perceive the brand alliance rather than why and how the brand alliances are formed. Also, studying brand alliances from a B2C perspective would make it possible to explore value co-creation process between the brands and customers but not the value co-creation process between two brands. The studies that explored the brand alliances in B2C context present findings of how customers perceive the fit between brands' attributes, such as brand name (Lafferty et al. 2004), product category (Lanseng and Olsen 2012), or country of origin (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007). However, they do not investigate the fit between brands' resource portfolios in the brand alliance, which would not be possible to explore in a B2C context.

Moreover, studying the topic in the B2C context would limit the opportunities to investigate the relations between partner brands during the value co-creation process.

Thus, this study aims to study brand alliances in B2B setting to reveal the insights about the brand alliance formation, value co-creation process between the partner brands, and the influence of brand resource portfolios on brand alliance outcomes.

Despite the popularity of brand alliances, it is not adequately understood how and under which conditions two firms benefit from a brand alliance (Yan and Cao 2017). There are several types of brand alliances where two companies come together for co-branding (Samu, Krishnan and Smith 1999), and when two brands are in coopetition (Bouncken and Fredrich 2016). Also, there are brand alliances where the brands have complementary products (Prince and Davies 2002; Yue et al. 2006; Cao and Sorescu 2013), substitutable products (Lewis 1999; Conroy and Narula 2010; Yan and Cao 2017) or non-competing products (Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Smarandescu et al. 2013; Nguyen et al. 2018).

While there is an increasing interest for the research about brand alliances, the focus of most of the literature is on consumer perceptions about the co-branded products and partner brands in the alliance (Yan and Cao 2017). Despite the acceptance of marketing resources and capabilities as the driver of competitive advantage and better marketing performance, the literature rarely explores the relationships in a brand alliance between marketing resources and capabilities, competitive advantage and marketing performance in a resource-based view perspective (Davcik and Sharma 2016). Hence, it is crucial to study the relationship between partner brand resources and brand alliance outcome taking the RBV perspective.

Moreover, recent research (Vargo et al. 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2011; Pera et al. 2016) emphasised the roles of each stakeholder in creating value. The authors claimed that multiple stakeholders beyond the customer deploy resources to co-create value. Value co-creation is a vital concept that is used by companies to create a positive customer experience and better long term inter-organisational relationships (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016). It can be categorised into different forms such as co-production, co-innovation, co-development, co-ideation, and experience creation (Agrawal and Rahman 2015).

The B2B literature focused on the value co-creation from the perspective of supplier-buyer or buyer-seller relationships and supply chain network or innovation networks (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Gebauer et al. 2010; Ballantyne et al. 2011;

Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012). However, very little research addresses how value is co-created in a brand alliance and the context of alliances during the value co-creation process. Pera et al. (2016) claim that although the literature on value co-creation focused on the pivotal role of customers in value co-creation, it did not systematically address the value co-creation process from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Besides, less is known about how each brand contributes with its resources to the value co-creation process. To date, there is not a mechanism that can be used to identify this contribution. Therefore, it is essential to study the value co-creation process in the brand alliances from an RBV perspective.

In a brand alliance, the brands leverage their unique resources and capabilities through the integration of partner brand's unique resources and capabilities to have a stronger place in the marketplace (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993), thus, achieving competitive advantage over other brands thanks to the brand alliance. Achieving competitive advantage through unique resources is at the core of RBV (Oliver 1997), thus, applying RBV to brand alliance context helps to understand how brands integrate and utilise their marketing resources to have a better position in the market. Furthermore, dynamic capabilities extension of RBV (Teece 1997) helps to explore the capabilities that the brands utilise in a brand alliance to adapt to different market conditions.

In a brand alliance, not only tangible resources such as finance but also intangible resources such as skills and knowledge are contributed to the brand alliance. Furthermore, the value outcomes of a brand alliance are not only based on financial terms. Applying S-D logic to the brand alliance context makes it possible to investigate both operand and operant resources that the brands contribute to the alliance. Besides, S-D logic suggests the value definition of "value-in-use" instead of "exchange value" which provides a basis to investigate and classify different value outcomes of the brand alliance other than the financial outcomes.

Moreover, the focus of this study is the marketing collaboration between the partner brands, which is in essence developing value propositions in cooperation with the partner brand. The development of value propositions with other stakeholders through core competences is one of the foundation principles of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004), which makes it suitable for this study. Therefore, RBV and S-D logic are used as the theoretical underpinnings of the study to investigate the integration and utilisation of marketing resources and capabilities of partner brands to create value in a brand alliance.

2.3. Marketing Alliances

In this section, the studies about the marketing alliances are reviewed firstly by clarifying the definitions and types of marketing alliances. The studies about the aims and expectations of brands, partner brand selection, cross-category brand alliances and reasons for forming brand alliances are reviewed in separate subsections.

2.3.1. Definitions and Types

There has been a growing interest in academic research in the different types of marketing alliances since collaborations, where two or more brands come together to form an alliance, are gradually more popular among brands (Yan and Cao 2017). The marketing collaborations between brands are given several different names depending on the nature of the collaboration and the choice of the authors to define the collaboration such as marketing partnership (Gibbs and Humphries 2009), marketing alliance (Swaminathan and Moorman 2009), co-marketing alliance (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993; Ahn et al. 2009), co-branding alliance (Kippenberger 2000; Dickinson and Heath 2008; Helmig et al. 2008; Shen et al. 2017), advertising alliance (Samu et al. 1999; Smarandescu et al. 2013) and brand alliance (Washburn et al. 2004; Riley et al. 2015; Voss and Mohan 2016, Kupfer et al. 2018). In this research, the phrase "brand alliance" will be used to name short-term or long-term marketing partnerships that are made between at least two brands.

Brand alliances differ from strategic alliances in terms of the type of contractual exchanges. Traditional contractual exchanges take place in brand alliances where two independent companies come together with the goal of brand building or co-marketing operations. Non-traditional contractual exchanges occur in strategic alliances to develop new products, technologies or better efficiencies (Gundlach and Murphy 1993).

Besides, the brand alliances are different from the business partnerships in which the companies merge or acquire another. While the brands stay independent in a brand alliance, they cooperate to support each other's marketing goals (Kunitzky 2010). The marketing collaboration definitions by different authors are listed in Table 1 below to present the differences between the definitions.

Table 1 Definitions of Marketing Collaborations

Term	Definitions
Alliance	"Alliance intended as a generic, unspecific term including all forms of relationships or associations with a third party. " (Blackett and Boad 1999, p. 133)
Strategic Alliance	"An agreement between two or more organisations to share resources or knowledge to pursue mutually beneficial objectives while remaining independent organisations" (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2017, p.3)
Marketing Alliance	"Formalized collaborative arrangements between two or more organizations focused on downstream value chain activities" (Swaminathan and Moorman 2009, p. 53)
Co-Marketing Alliance	"Contractual relationships undertaken by firms whose respective products are complements in the marketplace" (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993, p. 32)
Brand Alliance	"The situation in which two or more brands are joined together in some fashion" (Washburn et al. 2004, p. 487) "Brand alliance to include all circumstances in which two or more brand names are presented jointly to the consumer". (Rao et al. 1999, p. 259)
Co-Branding Alliance	"A long-term brand alliance strategy in which one product is branded and identified simultaneously by two brands" (Helmig et al. 2008, p. 60) "Co-branding occurs when there is a pairing of at least two partner brands, and they cooperate in a marketing context such as advertising, product development or distribution" (Dickinson and Heath 2008, p. 22) "The brand alliance strategy when two or more brands cooperate to launch their co-brand" (Shen et al. 2017, p. 174)
Advertising Alliance	"Two or more brands from different product categories are presented together in an advertisement" (Samu et al. 1999, p. 57)

As can be seen in the definitions, the brand alliance is a term that can be used to cover the marketing strategy in which two or more brands collaborate for different purposes. The purpose of the brand alliance might be a joint advertisement where brands are featured together (Samu et al. 1999), a joint marketing activity where the products of the brands complement each other (Buckin and Sengupta 1993), or launch of a new brand that is formed together by partner brands (Shen et al. 2017).

In addition, there are different types of brand alliances based on the fit of products they have (Yue et al. 2006; Cao and Sorescu 2013; Prince and Davies 2002), the nature of the relationship between partner brands (Farrely et al. 2005; Lafferty et al. 2004), their relevant position in the market (Bouncken and Fredrich 2016) and their product category (Smarandescu et al. 2013). These brand alliances can be classified as brand alliances for complementary products (Yue et al. 2006; Cao and Sorescu 2013; Prince and Davies 2002) or complementary competences (Blacket and Boad 1999), for substitutable products (Lewis 1999; Blacket and Boad 1999; Conroy and Narula 2010; Yan and Cao 2017), co-opetition (Bouncken and Fredrich 2016, Rai 2016), sponsorship (Ruth and Simonin 2003; Farrely et al. 2005; Gross and Wiedmann 2013), cause-brand (Lafferty et al. 2004; Lafferty 2007; Lafferty 2009; Ullah et al. 2017; Ilicic et al. 2019), co-branding (Samu et al. 1999; Shen et al. 2017; Ilicic et al. 2019), and cross-category brand alliances (Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Smarandescu et al. 2013). It is essential to clarify the differences between various marketing alliance types before focusing on the type of cross-category brand alliance, which is the topic of this research. In Figure 4 below, the hierarchy and relationships between different types of alliances are illustrated. In Table 2 below, different types of brand alliances are listed.

Figure 4 Alliance Types, Hierarchy and Relationships

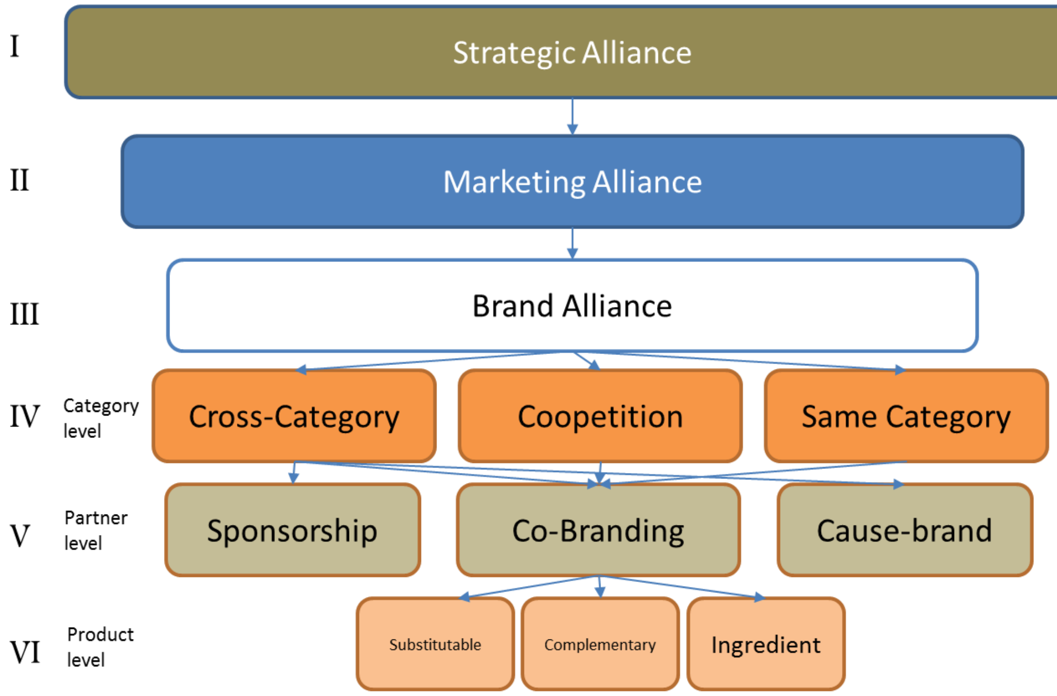


Table 2 Types of Brand Alliances

Hierarchy Type & Level	Type of the Brand Alliance	Related Articles
Category Level	**Cross-Category**	Lanseng and Olsen (2012); Smarandescu et al. (2013); Nguyen et al. (2018)
Category Level	**Coopetition**	Chiambaretto et al. (2016); Bouncken and Fredrich (2016); Rai (2016)
Category Level	**Same Category**	Kuzminykh and Zufan (2014); Schumann et al. (2014); Chung and Feng (2016)
Partner Level	**Sponsorship**	Ruth and Simonin (2003); Farrely et al. (2005); Gross and Wiedmann (2015); Biscaia and Rocha (2018)
Partner Level	**Co-branding**	Blacket and Boad (1999); Samu et al. (1999); Helmig (2008); Cao and Sorescu (2013); Shen et al. (2017); Nguyen et al. (2018)
Partner Level	**Cause-brand**	Lafferty et al. (2004); Lafferty (2007); Lafferty (2009); Ullah et al. (2017); Ilicic et al. (2019)
Product Level	**Complementary products / competences**	Blacket and Boad (1999); Yue et al. (2006); Cao and Sorescu (2013); Prince and Davies (2002)
Product Level	**Substitutable products**	Blacket and Boad (1999); Lewis (1999); Conroy and Narula (2010); Yan and Cao (2017)
Product Level	**Ingredient branding**	Blacket and Boad (1999); Shen et al. (2017)

Co-branding is the type of brand alliance in which two or more brands collaborate to form a new brand for a product or service and launch it together in the market (Shen et al. 2017). Helmig et al. (2008, p. 60) define co-branding as “a long-term brand alliance strategy in which one product is branded and identified simultaneously by two brands”. This type of co-branding alliance is usually a long-term partnership (Helmig et al. 2008) because the companies invest their resources such as R&D and manufacturing in a new brand or product development rather than a short-term advertising or marketing activity (Cao and Sorescu 2013). Similar to the other types of brand alliances, brands use co-branding to build and maintain a competitive advantage by reducing costs, increasing the scope and influence of partner brands and refreshing their brand images in a newly established co-brand (Kippenberger 2000).

A subset of co-branding is when brands collaborate for marketing activities to promote complementary products or services. In this type of co-branding, brands commit their core skills and competencies to provide customers products or services that are “more than the sum of the parts” (Blackett and Boad 1999 p.15). Instead of choosing between substitutable products or services, customers need to consume both brands’ products or services to achieve the full utility of complementary brands. As a result, both brands benefit from each other’s sales at the end of the brand alliance (Yue et al. 2006). This type of brand alliance is common in technology and information categories where each brand’s product or service is indispensable or complementary part of the partner brand’s product or service like in the case of Intel processor’s brand alliance with computer brands (Rao et al. 1999). Brand alliances for complementary competencies can be for short-term marketing activities such as promotions at the retailer shops or long-term partnerships such as camera lens producer Leica’s partnership with Huawei smartphones (The New Nation 2018).

There are also other sub-types of co-branding which are ingredient co-branding when the ingredient brand is part of the manufacturer brand’s product (Blacket and Boad 1999), joint venture co-branding when brands are in a partnership to launch their co-brand and same company co-branding when two brands of the same company collaborate to form a brand alliance. For example, a fashion brand can cooperate with a zipper brand for its products (ingredient co-branding). Another fast-fashion brand can collaborate with a luxury fashion brand to co-brand a new product line (joint venture co-branding). In some cases, the sub-brands of a corporate fashion brand cooperate (intra-company co-branding) to form a brand alliance (Shen et al. 2017).

While the brand alliance between complementary products has the potential to bring extra sales to both partners (Yue et al. 2006), the brands which have substitutable products also collaborate to form a brand alliance despite the risk of a decrease in their combined sales (Yan and Cao 2017). One example is the brand alliance between substitutable food brands Taco Bell and Doritos, which started in 2012 (nrn.com). Instead of cannibalizing each other's sales as a fast food alternative; the co-branded product named as Doritos Locos Tacos resulted in 1 million daily sales and helped the parent company "Yum! Brands" to create 15.000 new jobs (Cao and Sorescu 2013). This example shows that financial and market share value can be co-created in the brand alliances between the same category brands as well.

Competitor brands can also collaborate and form brand alliances which are called as coopetition (Chiambaretto et al. 2016; Bouncken and Fredrich 2016; Rai 2016). In this type of brand alliance; the competitor brands cooperate to access each other's key resources, to launch a new product, to access new markets while competing with each other on the areas other than the agreed alliance purpose. They aim to reach a better performance than an alliance with a non-competitor brand (Chiambaretto et al. 2016).

Despite the expected positive result, Chiambaretto, Garau and Le Roy (2016) claimed that coopetition and alliance performance are not linearly related and dependent on two key factors which are the nature of the agreement and the type of partners. They stated that this type of brand alliances is more complex than other types because of the risk of market loss and opportunistic behaviour of the partner brands.

Sponsorship is the type of brand alliance when corporate brands invest in activities with the aim of marketing objective achievement like brand reputation or brand equity enhancement (Ruth and Simonin 2003). This type of brand alliance is common between the corporate or global brands and sports events such as Olympic Games (Biscaia and Rocha 2018), World Cup, sports organisations such as football, basketball clubs or sports players such as tennis players or Formula 1 drivers (Ruth and Simonin 2003; Farrely et al. 2005; Gross and Wiedmann 2015). Although it is a powerful tool for brands to build brand value by increasing market share and by reaching new markets, the high failure rates create significant challenges for the brands (Farrely et al. 2005).

While the brand that is sponsored is mostly one brand, the number of sponsors might be one or more in most of the cases (Ruth and Simonin 2003; Gross and Wiedmann 2015). Thus, the value co-creation during a sponsorship brand alliance not only occur with the brand that is sponsored but also with the co-sponsor brands in some cases (Gross and Wiedmann 2015). That is why it is critical for the brands to identify the co-sponsor brands of the partner brand according to their product categories and brand values (Gross and Wiedmann 2015; Cornwell and Charlton 2016).

Same category brand alliances are the alliances in which the brands from the same product category collaborate to form a new brand or alliance to gain market power by extending the existing distribution channels and achieving a wider network of services (Kuzminykh and Zufan 2014). This type of alliance is commonly seen in the airline category when the airline brands from different countries form an umbrella brand such as Star Alliance, SkyTeam and Oneworld to provide shared services to their customers (Chun and Feng 2016).

The same category brand alliances between airline brands are also an example of resource utilisation in a network environment (Casanueva et al. 2014). In addition, the brand alliances between airline brands influence the purchase intention of the customers (Wang 2014). Wang (2014) claimed that the influence of brand alliance between airline brands on brand equity, brand preference and purchase intention is significant among highly involved customers. Thus, the brand alliances between same category brands is another way of value co-creation between partner brands.

Coalition loyalty programs are another popular example of same category brand alliances in which brands from the same or different product categories mostly in the retail sector come together under an agreed loyalty program scheme and provide the shared loyalty benefits for their customers (Moore and Sekhon 2005; Schumann et al. 2014). While the partner brands aim to influence the behaviour of a larger customer base by the coalition loyalty program (Moore and Sekhon 2005), there is a risk of a spillover effect to the other partner brands if one of the partner brands fail to provide good service in the brand alliance (Schumann et al. 2014).

Cause-brand alliance is a particular type of brand alliance in which brands collaborate with charitable causes to establish a deeper relationship with the customer (Lafferty et al. 2004). Brands can make a partnership with different types of causes which range from health causes (e.g. cancer charities, lung associations) to animal protection (e.g. wildlife funds, nature protection charities), from environmental causes to human services (Lafferty 2007). While the brands and causes aim to benefit from the partnership mutually, Lafferty (2007) states that the success of the alliance depends on the fit and logical bond between the brand and the cause. In the cause-brand alliances in which a celebrity is included as an endorser, the cross-category brand alliance takes a triadic partnership form that features the celebrity as a brand on its own, the cause and the brand itself (Ilicic et al. 2019). In addition to the aim of developing a deeper bond with the customers, brands use cause-brand alliance strategy to enhance the brand image and improve sales of the brand (Lafferty 2009).

According to the study conducted by Lafferty (2009), the logical fit perception is a less relevant criterion than the importance of the cause on the purchase intent of the customers. Lafferty (2009) points out the need for further research on the brand alliances between brands from different product categories and different causes. This type of brand alliance is another example of the cross-category brand alliance in its nature as the brand and the organisation that supports the cause are from different product categories (i.e. brand alliance between profit and non-profit organisations).

In this research, the focus is on the cross-category type of the brand alliances because of (1) the rare research on this type of brand alliance with the value co-creation perspective compared to the other types, and (2) its applicability to the other types of brand alliances such as co-branding, sponsorship, complementary products and cause-related brand alliances. Like the Smarandescu et al. (2013) paper, the product type of categorisation is used for the research and analysis purposes of this research. Cross-category brand alliance can be defined as the “brand alliance that links brands from different product categories that share a common goal” (Smarandescu et al. 2013, p. 133). The category in this definition specifies the product category of the brand such as food, technology or fashion rather than the conceptual category of the brand (Lanseng and Olsen 2012) such as functional or expressive brands.

Even though it is one of the rare papers about the cross-category brand alliances; Smarandescu et al. (2013) investigated how consumers perceive the brand attributes when they confront the cross-category brand alliances. However, they did not evaluate the value creation process between the partner brands during the brand alliance. They have studied imaginary brand alliances in experimental design and conducted surveys with university students. The authors pointed out the need for research on various brand pairings of different strength. A more detailed review of cross-category brand alliances is provided in the "Cross-Category Brand Alliances" section (2.3.4) of this chapter.

2.3.2. Aims and Expectations of Partner Brands in a Brand Alliance

In this section, the aims and expectations of the brands to form a brand alliance are listed by reviewing the articles about different types of brand alliances. These aims and expectations can be summarised as gaining competitive advantage (Blacket and Boad 1999; Smarandescu et al. 2013; Rai 2016; Ahn et al. 2009), maintaining or increasing the market share (Smarandescu et al. 2013, Vranešević et al. 2017), increasing the speed of product development (Blackett and Boad 1999) and reducing the risks of brand building (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007), increasing firm value (Swaminathan and Moorman 2009), accessing new markets and customer segments (Hao et al. 2013; Vranešević et al. 2017), achieving better customer satisfaction (Gundlach and Murphy 1993), leveraging brand attributes (Rao et al. 1999), enhancing brand equity (Washburn et al. 2004; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009), and improving brand image (Lafferty 2009). Although the brand alliances are formed to achieve the aims and expectations listed, it should be noted that these values are not created at all times according to the high failure rate of the brand alliances (Whitler 2014; Schumann et al. 2014; Baynham 2016).

The brands aim to achieve more than they can do on their own by forming an alliance with another brand (Lewis 1999). Moreover, the brands look for partner brands because the net value creation potential of a particular project is not justifiable enough to develop a new brand on their own (Blacket and Boad 1999). Besides, the brands use alliances as a strategic instrument to achieve and maintain sustained competitive advantage and increase their market share (Rai 2016; Smarandescu et al. 2013).

According to Blacket and Boad (1999), the competitive advantages that a brand alliance can bring to the partner brands can be classified as (1) increased sales by expanding in the existing market or accessing new sectors/markets, (2) decreased cost of market entry, (3) price premium compared to the competitors, (4) enhanced customer trust, (5) accessing latest technology, (6) improved customer benefits.

The brand alliance is a form of symbiotic marketing between the firms that are at the same level of the value-added chain (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993) which makes the nature of the relationship different than the producer-distributor and seller-buyer partnerships. Inter-organisational exchange behaviour perspective suggests that companies exchange resources for mutual benefit to decrease environmental uncertainty, given that they have specialised functions and scarce resources (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). However, management challenges in the brand alliances might occur due to resource dependence among partner brands.

In an alliance where companies exchange resources, resource dependencies start to appear during the alliance. Because of the emergence of power issues that are sourced by resource dependencies, the behaviours of the firm begin to change (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). Unbalanced resource contribution to the brand alliance by the partner brands causes power imbalances. That is why some brands prefer to make partnerships with the partner brands with similar powers which can contribute equal resources to the brand alliance (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). While mutual resource dependence is a key driver to form alliances, power imbalances between partner brands create an obstacle, especially in the formation stage of alliances (Casciaro and Piskorski 2005). Bucklin and Sengupta (1993) conclude that alliance success depends on the ability of the firms to control power imbalances between them. Therefore, the partner match and partner brand selection are important decisions in brand alliance formation to reveal which competencies and resources the firms use to collaborate.

Kunitzky (2010) claims that there is an increasing need for collaboration between brands because of the reduction of marketing resources and human resources under the pressure of economic changes and market conditions. Consequently, brands come together to leverage their core competencies and give more importance to brand alliances in their marketing mix (Kunitzky 2010). That is why it is crucial to understand which resources and capabilities the brands contribute to the brand alliance for their marketing activities to create value collaboratively.

Because of the changes in the market circumstances, the brands cooperate to form brand alliances to protect their market position and attract new customers who are in the new market segments (Vraneševic et al. 2017). Forming cross-category brand alliances is a way the brands use to reach these aims because (1) partner brand is not a rival of the brand in the market and (2) the partner brand potentially has new customers that the brand cannot access through its marketing activities.

In their early study, Bucklin and Sengupta (1993) claimed that brand alliances provide additional prospects for strategic advantage. Their research on 98 alliances revealed that the alliance effectiveness could be improved by decreasing power and managerial imbalances, careful project selection and better matching of potential partners. Bucklin and Sengupta (1993) point out that it is difficult to track the benefits of the alliance quantitatively. It is not only the joint marketing efforts of the alliance that lead to an increase in sales but also the other managerial efforts and environmental factors such as economic conditions. They adopted the "perceived effectiveness of the alliance relationship", which is the extent of commitment by partners to the alliance, as a qualitative measure of alliance performance. As a result, it is important to identify the power relations and interactions between the partner brands and map which resources they contribute to the brand alliance to create value in the brand alliances.

The brand alliances can also be used to leverage specific brand attributes such as brand quality, credibility (Rao et al. 1999), brand equity (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009), brand image (Lafferty 2009) by benefiting from the partner brand's existing brand reputation. During a brand alliance, the partner brands do bring not only their products and services but also their brand concepts and related brand associations into the alliance (Lanseng and Olsen 2012). The managers of partner brands aim to increase the value proposition of their brand by integrating the meaning and value of the partner brand (Koschmann and Bowman 2018). Therefore, the contribution of brand-related marketing resources and capabilities into the brand alliance value co-creation process should be investigated to understand how they shape the types of value created.

While there are several expected positive outcomes of brand alliances, there are also some disadvantages and risks of brand alliances that partner brands can encounter. Blacket and Boad (1999) summarise the risks of brand alliances, and they start with the risk of attempting to pool brand and corporate personalities that are not compatible. To prevent these risks, the partner brand selection criteria for the brand alliances should be investigated. Secondly, they point out the risk of overextending the brand alliance to the product categories that are far from the brand reputation of the partner brands. The third risk they mention is the impact of partner brand's original brand repositioning. Another brand attribute related risk they state is the feature loss or attenuation of one of the partner brands.

The impacts of these brand-related risks can be identified by exploring the brand resources and capabilities the partner brands commit to the brand alliance. Other risks they emphasise are the possible financial difficulties of any partner and failure of meeting brand alliance targets (Blacket and Boad 1999). That is why it is important to identify how the partner brands' resource contribution influence the outcome of the brand alliance.

2.3.3. Brand Alliance Partner Selection

Regardless of the brand alliance type, brands consider several factors for choosing the partner brand or brands to form a brand alliance. In the case of brand alliances, the success of each firm is dependent in part of the other firm (Anderson and Narus 1990). Partner selection is a critical part of the brand alliance strategy, and it is challenging to select the right partner to achieve the expected outcomes (Van der Lans et al. 2014). Understanding the factors to select partner brands and their impacts on the brand alliance attitudes helps managers to form successful brand alliances (Lanseng and Olsen 2012).

Several studies (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Bierly III and Gallagher 2007; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Samuelsen et al. 2015; Gross and Wiedman 2015; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017; Yan and Cao 2017; Lee et al. 2018) claimed that these factors play a critical role in the evaluation and outcome of the brand alliance. According to the studies in the brand alliance literature; the factors that are critical in the partner brand selection are product category fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Norman 2016), brand image fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Riley et al. 2015; Gross and Wiedmann 2015), brand quality difference (Yan and Cao 2017), country-of-origin fit (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2018), strategic fit (Bierly III and Gallagher 2007), and the broad term of brand fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017).

The studies about the fit between partner brands mostly focus on the consumer attitudes towards the brand alliance (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Blemelhuber, Carter and Lambe 2007; Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Van der Lans et al. 2014). Despite the extensive research about the partner brand selection in the brand alliances, there is a need to investigate the partner selection criteria in different product categories from a business perspective. Investigating partner selection criteria would help to analyse the influences of partner selection on the value co-creation process in the brand alliances.

One of the most researched criteria for the partner brand selection in brand alliances is the broad term brand fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2016) which consists the subattributes such as brand image (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Riley et al. 2015; Gross and Wiedmann 2015), brand quality (Yan and Cao 2017) and brand concept consistency (Lanseng and Olsen 2012). In one of the early studies, Simonin and Ruth (1998) claim that brand fit and product fit between the partner brands significantly influence the consumer attitudes toward the brand alliance. Their study points on the spill-over effects of brand attitudes toward a brand on the other brand when they are in a brand alliance. The authors state that the product fit and brand fit do not moderate the partner brands' contribution to the brand alliance or spill-over effects of the alliance on the partner brands. Besides, they emphasise the need for further research on the brand alliances, which involve more than two partner brands and on the underlying dimensions of product category fit in the brand alliances.

Building upon Simonin and Ruth (1998) study, Bluemelhuber et al. (2007) analysed the transnational brand alliances and examined the significance of country of origin fit in the brand alliances. They found out that the findings of Simonin and Ruth replicate in a cross-border alliance setting and the relationship between country of origin fit and the brand fit is significant to predict consumer attitudes towards cross-border brand alliances.

Furthermore, the country of origin fit's positive impact on the consumer attitudes toward the brand alliance increases when the brand familiarity decreases and the impact of brand familiarity are more significant than the brand fit's influence on the consumer attitudes toward the brand alliance (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007). They stated the need for future research in countries other than the US and on other types of brand alliances than the one type they have used, which was a physical brand alliance. Although their research showed the influence of country of origin fit and brand familiarity on consumer attitudes, it does not investigate the impact of these attributes on the value co-creation process in the brand alliances.

Riley et al. (2015) explored the studies about the impact of the brand image fit between the partner brands on the brand alliance perceptions and proposed a multi-dimensional treatment for the brand image fit with the additional dimensions of economic, symbolic, sensory, futuristic and utilitarian elements. The authors found out that multi-dimensional definition of brand image fit has more explanatory power than the one-dimensional definition of the brand image fit and the dimensions of economic, futuristic and utilitarian elements have a significant impact on the perceptions of brand alliances. They point out the rare research on the partner brand characteristics and their influence on the brand alliance outcome (Riley et al. 2015). While they attempted to propose a study on the influence of additional partner brand characteristics on the brand alliance perceptions and outcome, they used a small number of brands and product categories which limits the generalisability of the study.

The study of Riley et al. (2015) used a hypothetical pairing of two real brands rather than the real-life examples of brand alliances. Therefore, further studies that investigate different product categories and attributes such as hedonic and utilitarian are necessary to examine their results. In addition, their study is another example of brand image fit research on consumer perceptions, and the authors have not examined the partner selection process of partner brands in the brand alliances (Riley et al. 2015).

Lee et al. (2018) extended the research on the country of origin fit's impact on brand attitudes in cross-border alliances by adding the dimension of consumer product knowledge about the brand. Their study shows that the cross-border brand alliance effectiveness is influenced by consumer product knowledge. According to their findings, high and low-knowledge consumers give more importance to the high country of origin fit than moderate-knowledge consumers.

Lee et al. (2018) explain that this is due to the different engagement types of high and low-knowledge consumers in the product-related information process. When customers have more knowledge about the product, they have less motivation to spend more time thinking about specific product-related information. According to the study, the high-knowledge consumers accepted the high country of origin fit as a hint to have a positive attitude towards the partner brand without the need of more product-related attribute information. In the case of low-knowledge consumers, while they did not have much information about the products of the brands in the alliance, the high country of origin fit between the brands turned into a characteristic to influence their attitude. Thus, the country of origin fit between the partner brands provided an influential role for low-knowledge consumers as they did not have enough information about the quality of the products.

Conversely, moderate-knowledge consumers' attitudes are more influenced by low country of origin fit than the high and low-knowledge consumers. This finding can be explained through their further information search to understand the reasons for the low country of origin fit between the partner brands. When the country of origin fit was low, moderate-knowledge consumers wanted to understand the reasons for the low fit between the partner brands before making the final decision about the product. Although Lee et al. (2018) study provided important insights about the impact of country of origin fit in the alliances, the authors state that the study is limited to one type of brand alliance which is the ingredient branding type of co-branding. Other types of brand alliances should be investigated to improve its external validity and generalisability.

In addition to the product category and country of origin fit, Lanseng and Olsen (2012) proposed that brand concept consistency between the partner brands also influence the consumer evaluations of the brand alliance. They defined the brand concepts according to the consumer functional needs, which are caused by external problems and expressive needs, which stem from internal desires such as self-enhancement or ego identification.

According to their classification, functional brands (e.g. Jif and ProActive) are categorised as objective, instrumental and utilitarian while the expressive brands (e.g. Cartier and Harley Davidson) are characterised as symbolic, subjective, experiential and hedonic in the literature. Their study revealed that product category fit's influence on consumer evaluations is only significant for the functional and mixed-brand alliances rather than the expressive brand alliances. Despite showing the importance of brand concept consistency on the brand alliance success, Lanseng and Olsen (2010) point the need for future research to include other types of brands other than functional and expressive such as experiential brands (e.g. Lego).

The study made by Ahn and Sung (2012) added the symbolic fit dimension to the functional fit between partner brands in the brand alliances. Ahn and Sung (2012) claimed that the impact of the functional fit on the brand alliance evaluation is an inverted U-curve relationship while the impact of the symbolic fit on the brand alliance evaluation is a positive linear relationship. The findings of Ahn and Sung (2012) study shows that symbolic fit is more influential than the functional fit on the brand alliance perceptions of consumers and the similarities between partner brands' symbolic meanings have a more important role on improving the brand alliance success. They define the functional fit as the fit between the partner brands when the problem-solving capacity of the brands with their products for the same needs are similar (i.e. product category fit). The symbolic fit is defined as the fit between partner brands when the symbolic brand meanings (e.g. prestigious, upscale) are similar to each other (Ahn and Sung 2012).

The findings of Ahn and Sung's (2012) study can be explained by the larger impact of similarities in the symbolic meaning of the brands than the functional fit of the brands on the evaluation of the alliance by consumers. When the functions of the brands are very similar or dissimilar, the consumers tend to spend more effort to process the partnership cognitively. The moderate difference in the functions of the brands leads consumers to think that the brands would complement each other. That is why an inverted U relationship occurs for functional fit conditions of brand alliances. In the case of different symbolic meanings, the consumers perceive that the partner brands do not have any complementary value to each other when they have low symbolic fit. Conversely, consumers consider symbolic meanings as a fundamental trait and tend to favour the partnerships when the partner brands have higher similarity in their symbolic meanings. Therefore, there is an increasing linear relation in the symbolic fit conditions of the brand alliances (Ahn and Sung 2012).

Like other studies on the fit between brand alliances, the authors used fictitious brand pairings in their research and stated the need for future research to examine the results on the real brand pairings. Furthermore, they recommended that further studies should investigate more product and service categories (e.g. from function-oriented categories) to identify the generalisability of the results (Ahn and Sung 2012).

Another study that investigated the brand fit concept in the brand alliances is conducted by Van der Lans et al. (2014). In their research, they examined the brand fit in terms of similarity between the partner brands, and they have described the brand personality dimensions as Sincerity, Competence, Excitement, Sophistication and Ruggedness to compare the similarities between the partner brands. Their study revealed that positive evaluations of the brand alliances are nurtured by the similarity of partner brands in the extrinsic dimensions of Sophistication and Ruggedness and by moderate dissimilarity in the intrinsic dimensions of Sincerity and Competence. Even though they used real brands rather than the fictitious brands in their study, they randomly paired the brands in various brand alliances to examine their model. Furthermore, they only studied the brand alliances in a co-sponsorship setting. They pointed out that the similarity between the partner brands cannot be limited to the brand dimensions they studied, and the brand fit research can be extended to investigate other drivers of brand fit such as brand equity (Van der Lans et al. 2014). Thus, further research is necessary for the real brand alliance settings with different brand alliance types to investigate the similarity influence of different brand personalities and brand equity on the partner selection process.

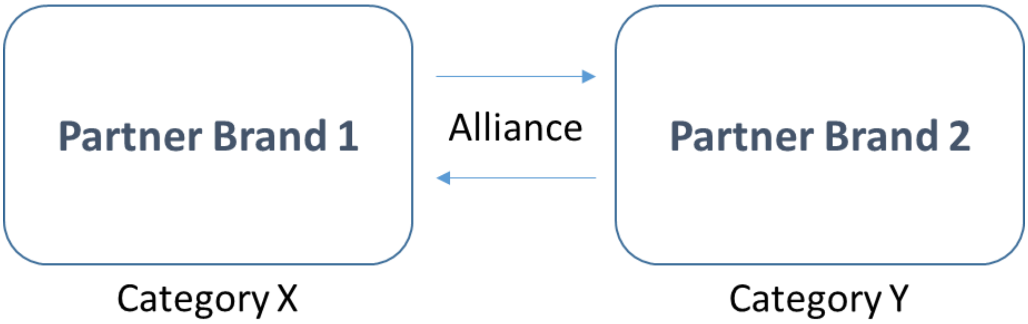
While most of the studies about the fit between partner brands in terms of brand fit and product fit focus on the consumer's evaluation of the brand alliances, Norman (2017) investigated what fit means for the consumers and how they evaluate the brand alliances. The findings of the study show that consumers facilitate a higher-order categorisation process during brand alliance evaluation and brand alliance fit includes multiple dimensions of fit (Norman 2017). Their findings are in line with Riley et al. (2015) study, which proposed a multidimensional definition of brand fit to explain the influence of brand fit on the brand alliance outcome.

Norman (2017) classifies the hierarchical categories of the brand and product fit as lower-order (concrete such as "airline service of American Airlines") and higher-order (abstract such as "services useful for travel" in American Airlines example). Although the study explored how consumers evaluate the fit between the brands, it did not investigate its implications on the partner selection process from the business perspective. As a result, the categorisation of brand fit should be studied in a real brand alliance setting to understand its implications of the partner selection process of brands in the cross-category brand alliances.

2.3.4. Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Brands also come together for a cross-category brand alliance to increase their market share and obtain a competitive advantage in the market by associating themselves with another popular but not rival brand partner (Smarendescu et al. 2013). Smarendescu et al. (2013) define this specific form of brand alliance as the marketing brand alliance that brings and relates brands from different product categories for a shared goal. The authors examine the factors influencing the brand attribute inferences after contracting a cross-category brand alliance to show that brand attribute judgements are influenced by attribute knowledge and personal differences in information processing motivation. Although very interesting, this study relied on fictional alliance experimental examples and was tested using a sample of students. Hence, there is a need for further research about the influence of other factors such as product category fit, generalisation and discrimination goals and brand attribute relevance to the alliance goals (Smarendescu et al. 2013). Besides, their work is one of the rare studies on cross-category brand alliances; however, they did not look at the business side of the alliance formation and relations between the brands. The following diagram (Figure 5) is a simple depiction of a cross category-brand alliance where the partner brands have similar power in the alliance. The power balance between the partners is not always equal, and this imbalance might cause relational conflicts between alliance partners during the period of the partnership (Taek Yi et al. 2010).

Figure 5 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Diagram



(Adapted from Smarandescu et al. 2013)

Cao and Sorescu (2013) researched the consumer-packaged goods industry about the impact of the co-branding type of brand alliances on the market value of parent firms. They found out that the brand image consistency between the brands, the innovativeness of the co-branded product and the co-branding relationship exclusivity between the partner brands are important factors that have an impact on the market reaction of the co-branding alliances. While their work is one of the first to investigate the stock market reaction to the co-branding alliances, they have focused on one category of products. Besides, they have examined one type of value created in the brand alliances, which is the financial value. They have also pointed out the need for research from other industries where brand alliances are increasingly applied. Although their research is critical to identify the determinants of positive financial value, it should be investigated whether those determinants would create other values in the cross-category brand alliances.

Investigating the topic in cross-category brand alliance context will bring insights about how brands from different product categories integrate resources to create value. When the brands are from the same product category, they have a similar type of customer bases who expect a product fit between the brands (Moon and Sprott 2016; Koschmann and Bowman 2018). However, the brands from different product categories have different customer bases. Also, the customers might be surprised to see the brands from different product categories in an alliance because of the little similarity between the product categories (Smarandescu et al. 2013). Exploring value co-creation between brands from different product categories will reveal how the integration of different types of resources and customer bases contribute to different value outcomes other than the financial value such as innovation (Xu et al. 2013), and learning (Lambe et al. 2002).

While there are articles in the literature that have investigated the brand alliances from different categories, they have mostly researched the consumer perspective or perceptions of the brand alliances by using signalling theory. One of the examples is the research by Decker and Baade (2016) about the consumer perceptions of brand alliances between dissimilar brands. Decker and Baade (2016) analysed the dissimilarity dimensions of firm size, firm age, industry scope and country of origin to understand how they influence the brand fit perception of consumers by using a quasi-experimental design. They found that firm size, industry scope and country-of-origin dissimilarity have a significant negative impact on the brand fit perception. However, the firm age dissimilarity does not have a significant influence on the brand fit perception according to their research. Despite the originality of their research about the brand alliances between dissimilar partners, they have used brand alliance scenarios to test their model rather than real brand alliance examples. In addition, their research is based on two brand categories that are consumer goods and media industry, and they point out that further studies should investigate other brand categories as well.

A recent study by Nguyen et al. (2018) explored the assumption that the advertisement that features two brands from different categories benefit both partner brands. They have tested the assumption on consumer-packaged brands paired with retailer and charity brands in three different markets which are the USA, UK and Australia. Their findings show that contrary to the expected benefits, the pairing of two brands in an advertisement have a neutral impact on advertisement memorability and negative impact on brand memorability because of the influence of dual-brand processing in the consumer mind.

Nguyen et al. (2018) proposed that the brands should clearly identify the advertisement cost sharing to calculate return on investment of cross-category brand alliance for advertising. Despite the critical implications of the study, it only studied the cases of online advertising for hypothetical brand pairings from the consumer perspective. In addition, the product categories in the study were limited to consumer-packaged goods, retailer and charity brands. Thus, other types of marketing activities other than the online advertising and additional product categories should be studied to understand whether the cross-category brand alliance benefits the partner brands or not.

2.3.5. Why Do Firms Enter Cross-Category Brand Alliances?

Firms contract cross-category brand alliances as part of their growth strategies. The growth strategies of the firms should be understood to identify the rationale for creating cross-category brand alliances. Marketing has become part of the growth strategies of the firms after the 1980s. (Anderson 1982; Howard 1983). Anderson (1982) addressed the role of marketing in a firm's strategy and Howard (1983) successfully developed a marketing theory of the firm and gave insight for practitioners and scholars about the place of marketing in the growth strategy of the firms.

Building on existing theories of the firm, i.e. the market value model, the behavioural theories, the resource dependency, and constituency-based model; Anderson (1982) states the need for external coalitions to ensure the long-term survival of the firms. However, this early study does not evaluate the role of marketing resources and capabilities in the external coalitions of the firm.

A significant shift is given by the transaction cost theory pioneered by Williamson (1975) towards the explanation of the reasons why firms contract alliances. Firms use alliances or “hybrid organisation” when the market or the organisation is not able to minimise the sum of production and transaction costs (Doz and Shuen 1987). Doz and Shuen (1987) point out that specific cost considerations dictate the firm’s structure and strategies, such as contracting an alliance. Alliances are used as a solution to optimise production and organisational costs when the partner decides to make a partnership in support of that aim (Doz and Shuen 1987). The transaction cost theory addresses the motives for contracting inter-firms’ alliances, i.e. the cost minimisation but does not address how partner firms’ resources are utilised to co-create value during the alliance.

Furthermore, Howard (1983) proposes a marketing theory of the firm which tries to utilise the marketer’s resource of customer understanding as part of management strategy. The strategy of the marketer depends on the market structure as well. The tactics to achieve goals and maintain the industry welfare will change according to the degree of competition and monopolistic structure of the market (Howard 1983). Howard’s model is important to show how marketing connects the functions of a company’s growth strategy. However, while it shows how marketing relates to value creation for shareholders, suppliers and customers, it does not explain how value is created in a marketing alliance.

Originating in Schumpeter’s (1935) work, the evolutionary theory of the firm (Nelson and Winter 1982) claims that inter-firm alliances are an organisational innovation resulting from the integration of existing organisational routines and new routines developed by other firms which determine the real boundaries of the firm. Nelson and Winter (1982) explain that inter-firm alliances enable new ways of development and renewal of skills through shared learning during the alliance. Their work is a vital step to state the flow of resources between partners as an essential part of an alliance.

The resource-based view further explains the firm’s capabilities contribution to competitive advantage in the growth strategy. The resource-based view is derived from the economics and strategy literature in the 1950s (Hooley et al. 2005). Barney (2001) claims that resource-based view theory plays a bridge role between three theoretical traditions, e.g. the SCP-based (structure–conduct–performance) theories of firm performance, the neo-classical microeconomics, and the evolutionary economics. The unifying structure of the RBV allows explaining the nature of strategic alliances through the lenses of these three theoretical traditions. The resource-based view focuses the attention on the firm rather than the market or sector, which turns it into a preeminent step in the strategic management and business strategy field (Mele and Della Corte 2013). Although the RBV is a unifying approach for resource advantage, agency and transaction cost economic theories; it is criticised as being static and tautological (Kozlenkova et al. 2014).

Fahy et al. (2006) bring two core questions about the resource-based view of the firm:

- What constitutes a resource?
- How are resources deployed in the marketplace?

According to Fahy et al. (2006), the firm's resources cover all the assets and capabilities that are available to the firm, which is a definition that resembles the older definitions of firm resources. Hofer and Schendel (1980) categorised a firm's resources as financial, physical, human, organisational, and technological. Barney (1991, p. 101) defined the firm's resources as "all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge". However, Kozlenkova et al. (2014) offered the use of the word “capabilities” to refer to the subsets of firm’s resources which are mostly information-based, tangible or intangible processes. It can be argued that marketing activities of a firm can be interpreted under “capabilities” concept as they help to improve the productivity of other firm resources as defined by Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatler (2014).

While the value issue has always been central to the RBV issue, the ways to create value differs between companies and context (Fahy et al. 2006). According to Barney (1991), an advantage-generating resource should be valuable or make it possible to create value in the product-market. Although some resources can be more critical and create value in one business environment, it might not be crucial for another industry context (Fahy et al. 2006). That's why brands from different categories might create synergy with their valuable resources from different business environments and industry contexts. It is crucial to understand which resources and capabilities affect the process of synergy and value co-creation.

When different theories of the firm are taken into consideration in literature, the RBV approach is considered as an explanation for how to obtain competitive advantage

(Oliver 1997; Liu and Liang 2015), and as a foundation for companies to form strategic alliances with other companies (Park et al. 2004; Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1996; Das and Teng 2000). The RBV became very popular in marketing research in the past decade as a framework to explain the basis of a firm's competitive advantage and performance outcome (Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatler 2014).

In their research on secondary data from 81 multinational companies by using RBV theory; Wang and Sengupta (2016) showed that there is a positive relationship between the quality of stakeholder relations and brand equity. They also stated that brand equity acts as a mediator between stakeholder relations and firm performance. However, they did not check the relationships between alliance partners and their link with the alliance outcome. They point out the need for research on the stakeholder relations in the brand network (Wang and Sengupta 2016). In this study, RBV approach is used as the basic theory in the research framework to explain the quest of partner brands to co-create value by making cross-category alliances to utilise each other's unique resources and capabilities.

2.4. Marketing Resources and Capabilities

There is an increasing acceptance by marketing scholars and practitioners that marketing resources and capabilities have a critical role in developing competitive advantage, achieving better firm and brand performance levels (Morgan et al. 2009; Davcik and Sharma 2016; Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016; Qureshi et al. 2017; Chang et al. 2018). In addition to the marketing resources, marketing capabilities of a firm significantly influence the marketing strategy implementation effectiveness and the firm's overall performance (Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016). Despite the increasing number of studies that show the impact of marketing resources and capabilities on firm performance, there is a need to investigate how these resources and capabilities are deployed to achieve competitive advantage (Qureshi 2017). While every firm develops procedures to boost their reputation, brand image and brand assets via marketing activities such as promotions, sponsorship, or alliances; it is critical how the reputation is used to grow the business (Fahy et al. 2006).

Marketing capability of a firm is part of the dynamic capabilities of a firm, and it is the combination of mid-level marketing activities and higher-level marketing capabilities (Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016). Dynamic capabilities framework that is introduced by Teece et al. (1997) is a complementary view of the static focus of RBV (Katkalo et al. 2010). Teece et al. (1997, p.516) define dynamic capabilities as "the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments". Applying dynamic capabilities approach to the marketing capabilities of the firm, the capabilities of a firm to develop, price, promote, place a new product, and the ability to manage the marketing function are defined as the company's marketing capabilities (Qureshi et al. 2017).

Even though there are studies that show the positive impact of marketing resources and capabilities on the firm performance (Morgan et al. 2009; Cacciolatti and Lee 2016; Takata 2016; Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016), there is little research about the relation between the marketing resources and capabilities of brand alliance partners, and the brand alliance outcomes.

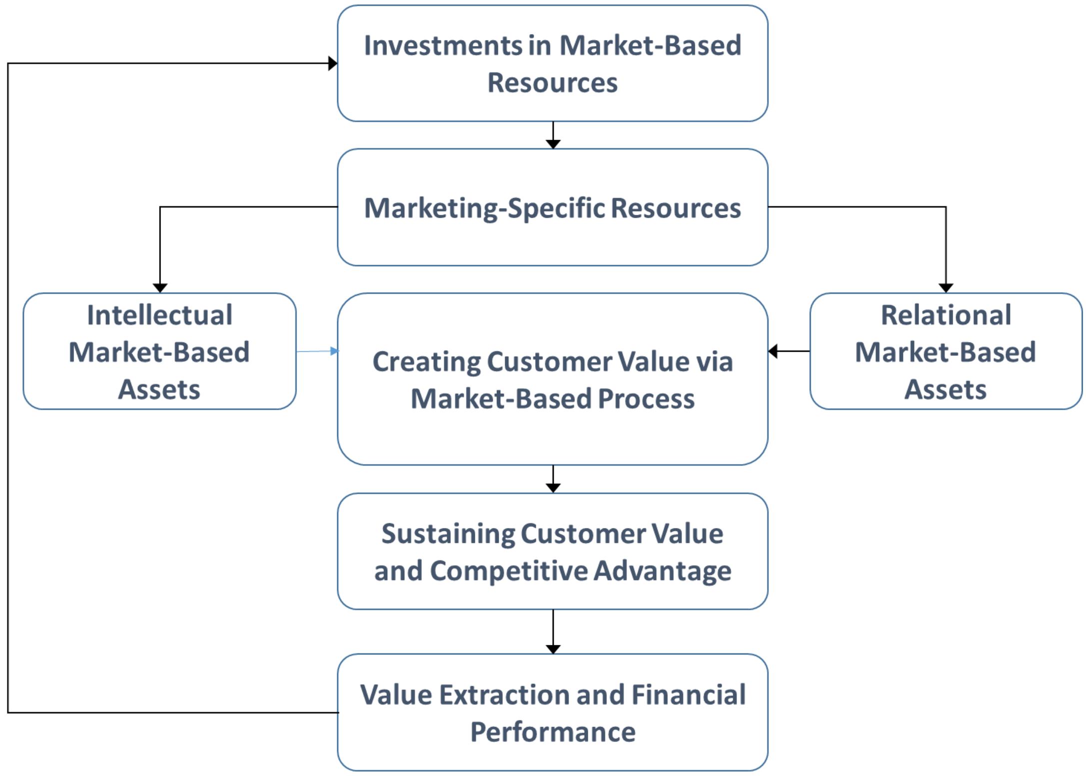
Davcik and Sharma (2016) point out that despite the usage of different theoretical perspectives about the marketing resources; there are not enough studies about the theoretical fundamentals and empirical implications of marketing resources and their relationship with the competitive advantage. They indicate the need for studies that use research-based theory as the framework for the integration of resources and providing a convincing explanation about the relation between marketing resources and competitive advantage. This research aims to cover this gap by using a resource-based approach to build a framework that explains the relations between a brand's marketing resources and capabilities, and the outcome of the cross-category brand alliance.

In parallel to the resource-based view in strategic management, it is claimed that the firms will have a stronger position in the market if they leverage their marketing resources (Hooley et al. 2005). Marketing resources include both tangible such as physical or human resources and intangible value propositions such as intellectual or relational properties. Hooley et al. (2005) categorised market-based resources as customer linking capabilities, market innovation capabilities, human resource assets and reputation assets. Their impact on the competitive advantage might be direct like the effect of the instantly deployable market-based resources, or indirect as the influence of marketing support resources which act as support activities (Davcik and Sharma 2016).

According to Cao and Yan (2017), the critical resources of the brand alliances are the partner brand's brand value that is expected to generate cash flows in the future for the brand alliance as the most critical resource among the intangible resources. Besides, the brand value differential is defined as the difference in the brand value of partner brands.

In one of the early studies that link the RBV and market-based assets to competitive advantage, Srivastava et al. (2001) proposed a framework to show the relations between marketing-specific resources, customer value creation, competitive advantage and financial performance. The market-based assets and capabilities are grouped under two main categories which are relational and intellectual. Relational assets are the external intangible assets which are not owned or fully controlled by the firm and consists of external stakeholders such as customers, channels, strategic partners, and networks. On the other hand, the intellectual market-based assets are internal intangible assets within the firm and include knowledge-based resources such as know-how and process-based capabilities (Srivastava et al. 2001). Although the framework is developed for one company context, it is helpful to understand the relations between the marketing resources, customer value creation and the competitive advantage. Still, there is a need to explore the relations in the brand alliance context to investigate the impact on the value co-creation process from a dyadic perspective. Their framework is depicted in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Market-Based Resources Analysis Framework



(Adapted from Srivastava et al. 2001, p. 782)

Hooley et al. (2005) state that; although there is an increasing interest in marketing resources' role in competitive advantage creation and firm performance, there is not enough empirical research about the nature and impact of marketing resources on performance. Their study shows that marketing resources have an indirect impact on financial performance by building better market performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty. To test the impact empirically, they first categorised marketing resources and developed test scales and a framework (Hooley et al. 2005).

Some resources are more critical than others to create competitive advantage. While the contribution of market orientation is mostly studied in the empirical literature, there is little empirical research about the impact of other marketing resources (Hooley et al. 2005). Competitive advantage sustainability depends on the isolating mechanism of advantage imitation (Hooley et al. 2005). When it is more difficult for other companies and brands to copy the strategy or resource that brings a competitive advantage, the company can sustain its competitive advantage in the market for a longer-term. Hooley et al. (2005) summarise isolating mechanisms as follows:

- Casual ambiguity (it should be difficult to identify how the advantage is created)
- Complexity (it occurs when multiple resources are used)
- Tacitness (intangible skills and knowledge from experience help to form it)
- Path dependency (necessity to follow critical limited time stages for advantage creation)
- Economics (imitation's cost)
- Legal barriers (Patents and property rights)

Cross-category brand alliance partners should follow these isolating mechanisms to protect their competitive advantage that is brought by the brand alliance resource portfolio (Lambe et al. 2002). When the partners have a unique alliance resource portfolio in the market, it can bring a competitive advantage to create value for both partners during the alliance period before rivals imitate it.

Along with the marketing resources, marketing capabilities of a firm are also critical to achieving competitive advantage in the market (Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016). Building upon the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities theory, Morgan et al. (2009) explored the role of market orientation and marketing capabilities as firm performance drivers. In their study, they used the components of the marketing mix (i.e. pricing, product management, distribution management, marketing communications, selling, marketing planning and marketing implementation) as the marketing capabilities of a firm. Their findings show that market orientation and marketing capabilities are complementing each other to achieve better firm performance. Despite being one of the early studies that revealed the value-creating potential of marketing capabilities, the study used one developed country data (i.e. data about firms in the U.S.A.) with a singular marketing information view. The topic needs to be studied in other country contexts for generalisability. (Morgan et al. 2009). Besides, Morgan et al. (2009) state the need for further research to explore the compatibility of other types of resources and capabilities with market orientation and its relationship with firm performance.

In line with Morgan et al. (2009) study, the study by Najafi-Tavani et al. (2016) investigates the relation between marketing capability, market orientation and new product performance. Their findings state that the marketing capabilities of a firm have a positive relationship with new product performance. They state that marketing capabilities are needed not only to achieve customer connected advantages such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer relationship but also better firm performance as in the case of new product performance.

Although their study supported the previous articles in the marketing literature about marketing capabilities, the study examined the influence of marketing capabilities only on the new product performance in one firm context. Consequently, there is a need to study the influence of marketing capabilities on the other aspects of firm performance in a brand alliance context. In addition, the complementary influence of marketing resources and capabilities on both the customer-related outcomes and firm performance should be investigated from a value co-creation perspective.

Brand alliance specific capabilities are also critical for the success of the brand alliance. For instance, Cao and Yan (2017) propose that the main brand's brand alliance experience have a positive impact on the financial performance of the partner brand as an outcome of the brand alliance. The authors state that brand alliance experience is a learned capability that helps the main brand not only to manage the brand alliance's operation effectively but also to maximize the partner brand's utility. The brand alliance experience of the brand is measured by the number of brand alliances over the past five years in their study. It expresses the scope of dynamic capability of the brand to manage the brand alliance (Cao and Yan 2017).

Furthermore, Lambe et al. (2002) include alliance experience as one of the important facets of alliance competence which contributes to alliance success. Authors consider alliance competence as a higher-order resource that consists of lower-order resources which are alliance experience, alliance manager development capability, and partner identification propensity. Alliance experience is an operant resource that companies can utilise as it generates knowledge of managing and using alliances (Lambe et al. 2002). Developing the arguments of Cao and Yan (2017) and Lambe et al. (2002), in this study, brand alliance experience is proposed as a marketing resource and capability that brands utilise to create value in a brand alliance.

Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) examined how different types of marketing capabilities influence firm performance by applying resource-advantage theory to firm performance and competitive advantage theories. According to resource-advantage theory, intangible resources have a critical role in building a competitive advantage (Hunt and Morgan 2005). In their study, Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) classified marketing capabilities under the categories of accountability, customer connection, creativity, innovativeness, and inter-departmental collaboration. To measure the firm performance, additional dimensions such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are used in addition to the financial measures of turnover, profitability, market share and cost level.

Their findings propose that not all companies should attempt to develop both tangible and intangible capabilities to achieve better performance and competitive advantage. It is a critical finding that supports the motive to form brand alliances to integrate partner brand’s resources and capabilities to gain competitive advantage and achieve better firm performance instead of developing them within the company. Still, Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) investigated the resource-advantage theory in the intra-firm context. Therefore, inter-firm alliances should be studied to explore the marketing capability – performance relation from a resource-advantage perspective.

Another study by Takata (2016) showed the stable and direct impact of marketing capabilities on firm performance by studying three-year data of Japanese manufacturers. The findings of the study propose that the marketing capabilities are the most important performance driver compared with the industry forces and market orientation. In the study, marketing capabilities of the firm are listed as new product development, pricing, channel management and marketing communications which are the components of the marketing mix as in the other studies about marketing capabilities.

Takata (2016) stated that new product development and pricing are the prominent firm performance drivers among different marketing capabilities. Despite this, the study supports the positive relationship between marketing capabilities and firm performance in a different country context, and it does not explore the dyadic relation between partner brand marketing capabilities and its impact on the brand alliance outcome. The relation between the integrated marketing capabilities of partner brands and the brand alliance outcome should be investigated to understand if the positive relation between the marketing capabilities and firm performance replicates in the brand alliance context.

In addition to the positive impact of marketing capabilities on firm performance, Vorhies and Morgan (2005) proposed that benchmarking another company's valuable marketing capabilities is an important source of sustainable competitive advantage. Their proposition stems from RBV theory which claims the differences between the firm performances are sourced by the heterogeneity of firms' resources and capabilities. By benchmarking other company's marketing capabilities, the company can improve its level and value of marketing capabilities and achieve competitive advantage (Vorhies and Morgan 2005).

In their study, they used market effectiveness, profitability and customer satisfaction as the measures of overall firm performance. Their findings reveal that benchmarking a top-performing firm's marketing capabilities can lead to competitive advantage for the worse performing firm. Benchmarking other brand's marketing capabilities can also be used as a way of achieving competitive advantage for partner brands in a brand alliance (Vorhies and Morgan 2005). Thus, the relations between partner brands can be explored to understand how they use benchmarking marketing capabilities to achieve competitive advantage in the value co-creation process.

Joensuu-Salo et al. (2018) compared the impact of market orientation and marketing capability on firm performance between domestic and internationalised firms. In their study, they examined 101 small and medium-sized enterprises in Finland from the wood-product industry. According to their findings, market orientation and marketing capability play a significant role in the success of internationalised firms in foreign markets. Joensuu et al. (2018) indicated the limitation of one country and one industry study and pointed out the need for further studies in other countries and industries. Despite showing the generalisability of the influence of marketing capability on firm performance in an international context, the study does not explore the inter-firm alliance context from a marketing perspective.

Another study that showed the impact of marketing capability on brand orientation and brand performance is conducted by Chang et al. (2018). The study among Chinese industrial firms revealed the positive influence of entrepreneurial orientation and marketing capability on brand orientation which leads to the encouragement of customer value co-creation activities and brand performance. While their study investigates the impact of marketing capability on firm performance and customer value co-creation process in the B2B context, Chang et al. (2018) did not explore the impact of marketing capability on the inter-firm relations and the value co-creation process between partner brands.

The previous studies (Morgan et al. 2009; Takata 2016; Joensuu-Salo et al. 2018) revealed the importance of marketing resources and capabilities to create competitive advantage in one firm context. Still, it is necessary to investigate the impact of integrated marketing resources and capabilities on the value co-creation process and how they are deployed to co-create value in the brand alliance context.

While there are some studies (Mowery et al. 1998; Ahuja 2000; Vorhies and Morgan 2005; Fang and Zou 2009; Trez and Luce 2012; Xu et al. 2018) that investigated marketing capabilities and resources in an inter-firm context, the focus of these studies is not the integration of marketing capabilities and resources in the brand alliances. Fang and Zou (2009) explores the marketing dynamic capabilities in international joint ventures and concludes that marketing dynamic capabilities influence the competitive advantage and performance of international joint ventures. The authors claim that the influence depends on resource magnitude, resource complementarity, organisational culture, and organisational structure of the companies in the joint venture. Furthermore, these studies do not explore the impact of the integration of marketing capabilities and resources on the value co-creation process between the partner brands.

In their study about the firm value creation in marketing alliances, Swaminathan and Moorman (2009) point that investigating the interactions of marketing capabilities and the influence on value creation in the alliance context is a valuable topic for future research. Exploring the role of marketing resources and capabilities in an inter-firm context is crucial because it will help to reveal how the integrated marketing resources and capabilities of the brands influence the outcomes of the brand alliances.

2.5. Brand Equity

From a brand perspective, the marketing resources and capabilities can be evaluated under the term equity. In marketing, the term equity is used to "describe the value of marketing assets such as brands, customers, channels and other marketing relationships" (Baker and Saren 2016, p. 344). Early definitions of brand equity focused on the assets and liabilities attached to the brand such as brand loyalty, awareness, quality, brand associations, patents, trademarks (Aaker 1991) or the customer-based brand associations such as brand knowledge and brand image (Keller 1993). The brand equity is closely linked to the value creation both for the customer and firm (Aaker 1991). The relation between brand equity and value creation is shown in Figure 7 below. Later, the term adopted more financial meaning to depict the financial value of the brand assets and used as a connection between marketing and finance (Brodie et al. 2002).

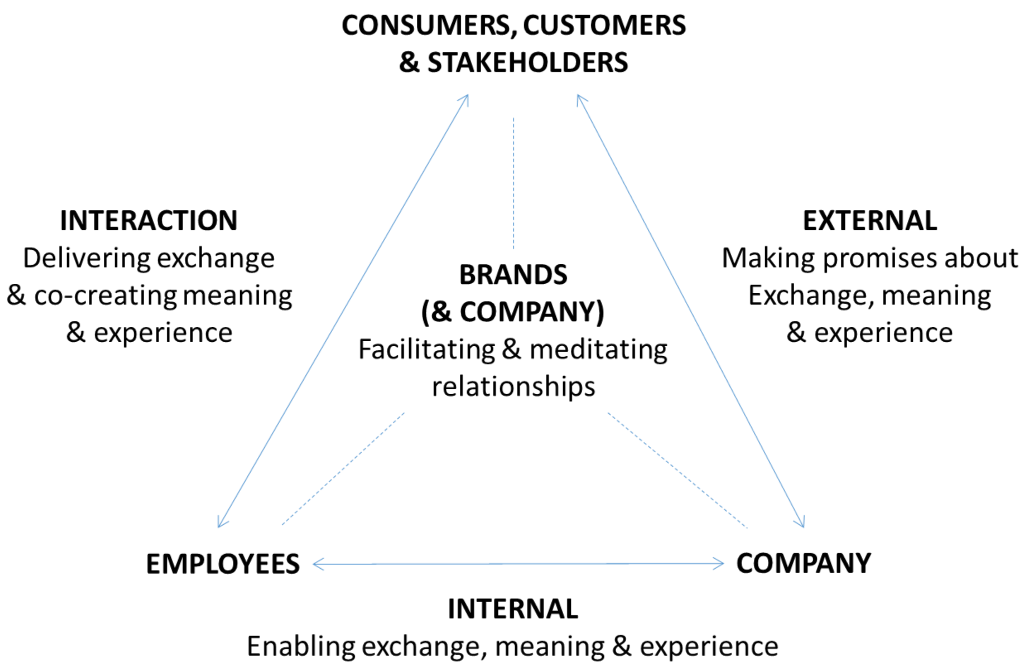
Figure 7 Brand Equity Model

(Adapted from Aaker 1991)

Baker and Saren (2016) propose five different categories of brand equity which are entity-based, financially based, process-based, network-based and service-based perspectives of brand equity. The focus of entity-based brand equity is on the effects of marketing activity on brand image building and customer loyalty development. While financially based brand equity deals with the financial value of the brand to the organisation; process-based brand equity emphasises the value of relational and experiential branding aspects. On the other hand, network-based brand equity takes a process-based approach and focuses on marketing partnerships such as brand alliances and networks.

According to this perspective, brand equity is sourced by a network of associations with other brands. Besides, the brand value is co-created by the relations and activities between the brands in the alliance. Lastly, service-based brand equity integrates the four perspectives of brand equity by using the S-D logic as the basic theory. The focus of service-based perspective is the brand's integrating role in creating added-value, learning, customer experience and interaction (Baker and Saren 2016). The service-based perspective is suggested by Brodie et al. (2006) and depicted in the framework (Figure 8) below.

Figure 8 The Service Brand-relationship-value Triangle



(Adapted from Brodie et al. 2006)

2.6. Service-Dominant Logic

In this section, key articles about the service-dominant logic are reviewed. The reasons for using S-D logic as one of the underpinning theories of the study and the relationship between S-D logic and value co-creation are explained.

In 2004, Vargo and Lusch suggested that the dominant logic in marketing is evolving from the exchange of goods into the exchange of services. The authors stated that the focus of marketing on tangible resources, embedded value, and transactions are moving to the focus on intangible resources, value co-creation, and relationships. This convergence to service-dominant logic changed the content of many perspectives in marketing. While the primary unit of exchange is goods (operand resources) in the traditional goods-centred logic, it converged into the exchange of services, i.e. knowledge and skills (operant resources) in the service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Table 3 below summarises the differences in the content of perspectives in goods-centred dominant logic and service-centred dominant logic for marketing.

Table 3 Differences between G-D and S-D Logic in Marketing

	Goods-Dominant Logic	**Service-Dominant Logic**
The primary unit of exchange	Goods (operand resources) are exchanged.	Knowledge and skills, services (operant resources) are exchanged.
Role of goods	Goods are end products.	Goods transmit operant resources. They are utilised by other operant resources as intermediate products to create value.
Role of customer	The customer is an operand resource; it receives the goods. The customers are segmented by marketers; the products are	The customer is mainly an operant resource; it is the co-producer of the service. Marketers interact with customers.

	promoted and distributed to the customers.	
Determination and meaning of value	Producer determines the value. Value is within the goods (operand resource), and exchange-value defines the value.	The consumer perceives and determines the value in terms of value in use. Value propositions are made by the firms.
Firm-customer interaction	As an operand resource, the customer is triggered to make transactions with resources.	As primarily an operant resource, the customer actively participates in coproduction and relational exchanges.
Source of economic growth	Surplus tangible resources and goods create wealth. The ownership, control and production of operand resources contribute to wealth.	Utilisation and exchange of specialised knowledge and skills generate wealth. The right to the future use of operant resources contributes to wealth.

(Adapted from Vargo and Lusch 2004, p.7)

Vargo and Lusch (2004, p.2) define service as “the application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of entity or the entity itself”. The application of this definition to the brand alliance context in which partner brands contribute their unique resources and capabilities to the brand alliances, i.e. “services” in S-D logic, to co-create value is an appealing area to investigate. In S-D logic, value is not limited to tangible objects; exchange of services generate utility as well. The inclusion of services in the exchange process converted the definition of value from exchange-value to value in use in S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

Building on the concepts introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004), Grönroos (2008) proposed that companies can interact with their customers’ value creation process to be co-creators of value. In this view, value is seen as value-in-use. It is generated when the customer uses the goods or services of the company. The companies provide customers with a value foundation (goods or services) and the customers utilise the goods and services of the company by adding other resources (e.g. information) and skills they have (Grönroos 2008).

Later, S-D logic is extended into a B2B perspective. Vargo and Lusch (2008, p.257) proposed that “all actors are resource integrators” and stated that each party contributes their unique resource accessibility and integrability to the value co-creation process. Applying this logic to the brand alliance context, the integration of unique resources which generate competitive advantage to the brands (RBV) is investigated to understand their role on the value co-creation process of brand alliance partners. Moreover, it will be an important contribution to the brand alliance literature to identify which type of resources (operand or operand) are exchanged during a brand alliance to create value. This examination of resources is possible when S-D logic is applied as the dominant logic to analyse the relationships in the brand alliance cases of the study.

Merz et al. (2009, p.328) proposed the adaptation of S-D logic to branding literature. They suggested that brand is not anymore conceptualised as “firm-provided property of goods” but as “a collaborative, value co-creation activity of firms and all of their stakeholders”. In this view, the brand is a dynamic and social process. The stakeholders behave as resource integrators and create brand value collectively; thus, brand value is the perceived use-value by all stakeholders (Merz et al. 2009). Merz et al. (2009) point out the need for future research to explore the relationships between the stakeholders (firms, brands and others) in the brand value co-creation process. In line with this need, the stakeholder in focus is the brand alliance partner, and the collective value creation between the partner brands is investigated in this study. In the next section, further studies about the value co-creation concept are reviewed.

2.7. Value Co-Creation

This section explores the articles on value co-creation and starts with the definitions of value co-creation. In the second part of the section, studies about value co-creation in the B2B context is elaborated. The final section about the value co-creation reviews the types of value that are co-created and links the topic to the next section of brand alliance outcome.

2.7.1. Value Co-Creation Definition and Theories

While theories of the firm explain why firms exist and how they behave to obtain a competitive advantage, there is a need to elaborate on the ways they deploy in marketing to co-create value with other stakeholders. Value co-creation concept has attracted interest since Vargo and Lusch (2004) article which revealed the limitations of goods-dominant logic. The article started a new marketing approach of service-dominant logic by focusing on the interactions between different stakeholders (Jones 2005), resources integration and the role of customers (Bharti et al. 2015).

Vargo and Lusch (2004) conceptualised marketing as a combination of processes and resources in which the company seeks to create value propositions with the customer in a co-producer role. Due to the progress in information, technology, and globalisation; customer's participation in marketing-related activities is inevitable (Bharti et al. 2015). Both for the marketing theory and practice, value co-creation is accepted as an integral approach to creating a positive customer experience and better long term inter-organisational relationships (Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016).

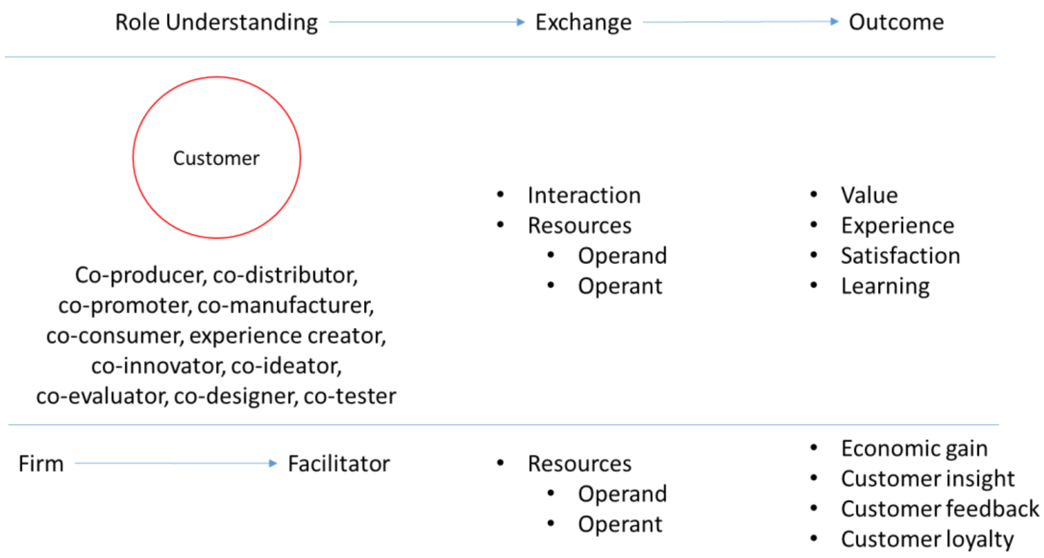
The first definitions of value co-creation included only company and customer as the actors that create value together (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Vargo et al. (2008) emphasised the role of resource integration from different services to contribute to the system well-being, which is defined by the system's environmental context. Spohrer and Maglio (2010) go beyond company and customer as the only actors of value co-creation and define the value co-creation as the preferred change, which is realised by multiple entities with their communication, planning and determined interactions. However, Grönroos (2011) keep the value co-creation definition in customer scope and indicates that the purpose of value co-creation is to increase the customer's well-being after a process where the user becomes better off.

Furthermore, Ballantyne et al. (2011) refer to value co-creation as the involvement of customers in the creation or delivery of products or services. Grönroos and Ravald (2011) state a broader view of the definition and include all joint activities by different parties involved in direct dyadic interactions that aim at contributing value in the value co-creation process. Their definition is a reasonable basis to explain value co-creation efforts of alliance partners which are not in a customer-seller relationship. Choi and Burnes (2013) indicate value co-creation as a collective process in which various stakeholders, such as consumers and businesses, contribute to developing the value over time.

After reviewing past studies on value co-creation, Agrawal and Rahman (2015) present a conceptual framework of value co-creation process (see Figure 9 below). According to their study (2015 p.145), the value co-creation can be categorised into forms of co-production, co-innovation, co-development, co-ideation, and experience creation. In addition to these forms of value co-creation; the customer can also take the role of co-distributor, co-promoter, co-manufacturer, co-consumer, co-evaluator, co-designer, and co-tester.

In their research, they claim that the extent of contribution of the actors are determined by customer roles, co-creation environment and expected co-created value. Thus, the customer's role and resource contribution to the value co-creation process is pivotal. However, the study is not adequate to explain the value co-creation process of the actors which do not have buyer-seller relation. Agrawal and Rahman (2015) point the need for additional research to define the roles and contributions of firms in the value co-creation process.

Figure 9 Value Co-Creation Process Framework



(Adapted from Agrawal and Rahman 2015, p. 147)

In their research on value co-creation definitions; Bharti et al. (2015) categorised the elements of co-creation into five pillars of process environment, resource, co-production, perceived benefits and management structure. They point out that all pillars are interdependent to each other and facilitate together in the value co-creation process. Value co-creation will not be possible without the support of top management which has a direct impact on the process environment.

When the operant and operand resources are committed to the co-creation by management, the actors are willing to co-produce and motivated by the perceived benefits. The value co-creation will not reach the expected objectives if any of the pillars is ignored (Bharti et al. 2015). The five-pillar approach to value co-creation process is vital for the alliance partners to utilise collaboration since both partners need to arrange their structure accordingly to reach alliance objectives. The types and process of value co-creation highly resemble the notions of brand alliance development and will be explored thoroughly in the framework development of this study.

To understand the concepts of service and value in the business context, Ford and Mouzas (2013) developed a framework for service and value creation by analysing an example case study of the business process. Ford and Mouzas (2013, p. 9) conceptualise business process as "one of substantive interaction between activities, resources and the actors associated with them”. Substantive characteristic of the business interaction means the interactions can involve different aspects such as adapting, investing, learning, and teaching.

As the value is defined as “the perceived worth in exchange of sacrifices made” (Ford and Mouzas 2013, p. 12) and “the value is determined by the beneficiary of service” (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 8); the focus in the business context is moving towards what the counterparts received after the business interaction. The shift of the focus shows the outcome of the business interaction between partners and stakeholders result in a different positive and negative value for different actors (Ford and Mouzas 2013). While the framework reveals the shift of focus in terms of service and value in the business network, the business interactions are not explored in a brand alliance context but in provider – buyer context. The business interactions between the partner brands should also be investigated from value co-creation perspective to identify the shift of focus in terms of service and value.

2.7.2. Value Co-Creation in B2B Context

Several researchers examined value co-creation concept in buyer-seller context and from the customer perspective (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Gebauer et al. 2010; Ballantyne et al. 2011; Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012). While the customer’s active role is on focus, Vargo & Lusch (2011) emphasised that the value co-creation among collaboration partners is revealed better in networked systems of economic actors. In line with what Vargo & Lusch (2011) proposed networks, recent articles (Lambert and Enz 2012; Ekman et al. 2016; Kohtamäki and Rajala 2016; Lacoste 2016; Reypens, Lievens and Blazevic, 2016; Matinheikki et al. 2017; Chang et al. 2018) started to focus on value co-creation process in business networks. The collaboration in new service development and value proposition co-production has growing popularity in a B2B context (Kohtamäki and Rajala 2016; Möller and Halinen 2018, Waseem et al. 2018). Consequently, the literature on value co-creation in the B2B context is increasing accordingly.

Lambert and Enz (2012) investigated value co-creation in B2B relationships and stated the importance of cross-functional and cross-firm teams to enable value co-creation. The authors found out that cross-functional involvement of two firms in a dyadic B2B relationship is critical to driving financial performance. Their findings show that the value co-creation is enabled through the three stages of joint crafting of value proposition, value actualisation and value determination.

As the value is perceived and determined differently by each stakeholder, Lambert and Enz (2012) pointed out the need for further research to understand how the companies perceive value in the B2B context. Besides, the authors stated the scarce research about the interaction between companies during the value co-creation process. While their research is a critical step to develop a framework to explore B2B relationships in the value co-creation process, the research is made in one industry (restaurant) in a buyer-seller context. The authors pointed out the need for further research in other industries and contexts to improve the knowledge about the value co-creation process in B2B relationships.

Kohtamäki and Rajala (2016) analysed 54 articles about value co-creation in the B2B context and acknowledged that value co-creation explains various perspectives to economic and social exchange among service ecosystem actors. Also, they emphasise that there are research opportunities to explore value co-creation in practice theory perspective. They point out the potential of value co-creation to change entire industries after the institutionalisation of its practices.

As a result of the revolutionary potential of value co-creation, the collaborative innovation networks are frequently formed to move beyond the boundaries of single firm’s expertise, knowledge, and resources (Reypens, Lievens and Blazevic, 2016). Reypens, Lievens and Blazevic (2016) examine the value co-creation in a collaborative network environment and present a multi-level cyclical process framework. They claim that the virtuous cycle of value co-creation starts only after the stakeholders contribute their operant (knowledge, experience, skills, etc.) and operand (tools, infrastructure, etc.) resources for complex problem-solving.

In their recent article; Waseem et al. (2018) investigated the role of behavioural attributes of competent actors in the value co-creation process within the industrial marketing context. Their findings propose that individual actors of the value co-creation process exhibit two competence concepts of behaviours, extra-role behaviour is shown through organisational citizenship behaviour. In contrast, in-role behaviour is presented through an understanding of work and engagement behaviour (Waseem et al. 2018).

While their study contributes to the value co-creation research in the business context, it does not investigate the inter-firm relations between the organisations. Therefore, the competence concepts of behaviours which can be considered as an operant resource that the organisations use (Waseem et al. 2018) should also be explored in the brand alliance setting to understand the influence of the competence resource of the partner brands on the value co-creation process.

Despite the well-established concept of value co-creation in the marketing literature, collaborative value co-creation practices and capabilities are not well understood in "boundary-less inter-organisational, network and ecosystem relationships" (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016, p. 85). While the existing literature explains the nature of value co-creation and related concepts, there are not enough empirical examples of value co-creation practices in inter-organisational context and how to classify those practices (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016). This research on cross-category brand alliances aims to cover the gap by using real-life examples to depict value co-creation practices.

2.7.3. Types of Value

In this section, the types of value that the partner brands aim to co-create during the cross-category brand alliances are explored. It starts with the classification made by the previous studies and continues with a detailed explanation of value types. At the end of the section, the connection to the research aims and objectives are explained. Despite the increasing interest in value co-creation in the B2B context (Reypens, Lievens and Blazevic 2016; Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016; Waseem et al. 2018), the studies that categorised the co-created value types in B2B context are scarce. It is mostly because previous studies in value co-creation focused on the value created between the firms and customers (Smith and Colgate 2007) and the value co-creation in a B2B context has only recently attracted interest (Lambert and Enz 2012; Ekman et al. 2016).

For instance, Smith and Colgate (2007) categorised the types of customer values created as functional/instrumental, experiential/hedonic, symbolic/expressive, and cost/sacrifice. On the other hand, some articles (Sanders and Simons 2009; Ekman et al. 2016; Chowdhury et al. 2016) attempted to classify the value types during the value co-creation process in the business context. Still, the articles do not explore the types of value co-created from a brand alliance perspective. Although the expectation of the value co-creation is creating a positive outcome for the stakeholders in the process, some articles pointed that the outcome of the value co-creation might be negative as well (Chowdhury et al. 2016; Toth et al. 2018). Therefore, the types of value that are created during the value co-creation process in the brand alliances should be investigated and identified from a B2B perspective.

Firstly, it is essential to clarify the definition of value from a business perspective. The definition of value in the customer context is still split into different flows of studies on added value, value perception, stakeholder value, the value of the relationship, value-in-use, and value chain (Agrawal and Rahman 2015). Value can be defined as "one's judgement of what's important in life" (Sanders and Simons 2009) in its broadest explanation. Besides, the value chain in the business perspective is defined as an organisation's functions and activities that are necessary to create or add value to the products and services (Sanders and Simons 2009).

Chowdhury et al. (2016, p. 100) classified the value types of value co-creation in the B2B service networks as "direct value outcomes" and "indirect value outcomes". According to their classification, the direct value outcomes of the value co-creation are financial value, brand growth, creative communications, leadership, quality consistency, time efficiency and cost-efficiency. The authors classify client and supplier learning, improved reputation, competitor tactics awareness and access to different network actors as the indirect value outcomes of the value co-creation process in the business service networks.

Chowdhury et al. (2016) state that the value co-creation process does not only bring positive outcomes but also lead to negative consequences in the business network context. The relational issues between the partners in the network such as "role conflicts, role ambiguity, opportunistic behaviour and power plays" (Chowdhury et al. 2016, p. 97) are the sources of adverse outcomes of the value co-creation process. While their work has significant implications about the reasons for negative consequences in the value co-creation process, it is limited to one sector (which is the advertising sector). Their classification of values should be explored in other B2B settings of value co-creation, such as brand alliances.

Sanders and Simons (2009) classify types of value in 3 different categories which are monetary values, use or experience values and social values. Monetary value type classification of Sanders and Simons (2009) is like Chowdhury et al. (2016) classification as financial value. It refers to the quantitative and measurable economic outcome of the value co-creation, which gets the most interest in the business environment.

Use or experience value is not only the improved customer experience the customers get out of the value co-creation process but also the enhanced brand image or trust a brand receives as an outcome of the value co-creation process. This type of value can lead to the survival and growth of the brand (Sanders and Simons 2009) and can be matched to the brand growth and improved reputation value categories of Chowdhury et al. (2016). The last value category of Sanders and Simons (2009) referred to the humanistic, long-term and sustainable living ways and called as “social value”. Even though Sanders and Simons (2009) proposed different categories for the value types, they emphasise that all types are inseparably related and can lead to the creation of each other.

Ekman et al. (2016) state the scarce research in the business context that investigates the different types of value in the business context and the need for future studies to identify the multiple value types. According to Ekman et al. (2016); the value is perceived differently by the actors in the value co-creation process and uniquely formed by the perceptions, needs and resources of the actors.

Contrary to the monetary values (Sanders and Simons 2009); not all values that are co-created can be measured or monetised such as values in a social context, and that is generated by a multitude of factors (Ekman et al. 2016). Ekman et al. (2016) classify the types of perceived value as economic, sustainability and brand values. Along with their classification, economic values include cost-saving, revenue-generating and performance whilst sustainability values consist of environmental and societal benefits. Furthermore, brand values include brand building and brand association subtypes (Ekman et al. 2016). Even though their study brings a new perspective on the types of value, the types of value that are co-created in different empirical contexts should be investigated to compare and identify the different types of value (Ekman et al. 2016).

Taking the different classification of value types of previous articles into consideration, this research aims to identify the types of values that are co-created during the cross-category brand alliances. The classification of the value types will help to evaluate the brand alliance outcome of the value co-creation process, which will be reviewed in the next section.

2.8. Alliance Outcome

This section summarises the literature about what brands achieve as an outcome of cross-category brand alliances. Alliance outcome is defined as the net present value partners achieve by participating in the alliance (Cristoffersen 2013). Thus, the types of value that are co-created during the brand alliance are closely related to the alliance outcome.

Even though the studies mostly investigate the consumer perceptions of the brand alliances as the brand alliance outcome (Koschmann, Bowman 2018); other types of values co-created such as financial, technology, reputation should also be explored. Despite the expectation of positive results on brand image and reputation (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Baumgarth 2004), the brand alliance might cause the spillover impact of the negative outcome for one partner brand to the other brand (Votolato and Unnava 2006; Schumann et al. 2014).

Several articles in the literature attempted to define and measure the outcome of strategic alliances. However, there is not a consensus for the success criteria of the outcome. As pointed in past studies (Cristoffersen et al. 2014; Lunnan and Haugland 2008), more alliances fail rather than being successful. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the success definition and the measures for cross-category brand alliances. Despite its importance, understanding alliance performance has attracted less attention in research than forming or managing alliances (Lunnan and Haugland 2008; Cao and Yan 2017).

While there are studies that investigate the alliance performance, the performance conceptualisation seems inconsistent and vague (Cristoffersen et al. 2014). Inline to identify how and which types of value are co-created by partner brands, brand alliance outcome and performance are evaluated from a value co-creation perspective in this research.

Lunnan and Haugland (2008) propose that alliance performance is a multidimensional construct. In their research, they examined 100 contractual alliances over five years and explored their performance in terms of an abrupt termination, short-term performance, and long-term performance. They state that strategically important alliances are less likely to finish abruptly. They show that access to complementary and strategically important resources have an impact on short-term performance while specific investments in human capital and partners' capability for alliance development and expansion affects long-term performance.

The result of the study, which shows complementary resources influence short-term performance, helps to understand the motive of brands from different categories to form an alliance. Although their work explains the factors that influence the performance, it does not give a coherent definition for the success and measures of performance. In addition, their research is done among the strategic alliances from Norwegian Engineering Industries, which limits the validity of research in other categories and countries.

To understand why results diverge between research that has investigated the factors explaining performance, Cristoffersen et al. (2014) explored 167 past empirical studies that used different alliance performance measures. They propose four main performance measure types which are accounting, cumulative abnormal return (CAR), stability and subjective measures. For the classification of different measures, they state it is important to define the mode of assessment and the construct assessed. Level of analysis (alliance or partner) and domain (operational, financial or overall) should be determined to identify the construct.

Christoffersen et al. (2014) strongly recommend that further research should use all four types of performance measures for the same independent variable. While the measures they note, such as accounting and CAR cover the performance of the companies in alliance, it is still questionable if they reflect the performance of the alliance itself.

Moreover, the classification should be carefully applied to brand alliances as there are other factors such as brand value and brand equity which differs from standard accounting measures. Yan and Cao (2017) developed an analytical model to understand brand quality's impact on the performance of the firms in a brand alliance. They showed that brand alliance is a useful strategy for the firms which sell substitute products if their products have equal brand qualities. On the other hand, the distribution of profit changes in favour of a low-quality brand when the brands have products of different qualities.

In addition to the impact of other dimensions such as brand fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998), country of origin fit (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007) on the alliance performance; Jiang et al. (2015) examined how trust between the alliance partners influence the alliance performance. According to their study, the goodwill trust between partners has more influence on tangible resource sharing while the competence trust has more influence on intangible resource sharing. Jiang et al. (2015) claim that alliance partners are encouraged by goodwill trust to extensively communicate when they feel the assurance that the other partner will not take advantage of them. Therefore, goodwill trust facilitates resource sharing of tangible resources.

On the other hand, competence trust which is defined as the alliance partners' trust in the partner's competence and capabilities, fosters the sharing of tangible resources more than the intangible resources (Jiang et al. 2015). In their study, the alliance performance is measured as the firm's realisation of financial goals (i.e. goals related to profits) by joining the alliance. Despite the study's contribution to the literature by examining the impact of trust on alliance performance; Jiang et al. (2015) did not evaluate the trust in a dyadic way by collecting responses from both alliance partners. In addition, they have only examined the impact of trust on the financial type of value co-created in the alliance. Therefore, the evaluation of trust by both partner brands during the value co-creation process and its impact on other types of value co-created as a brand alliance outcome should be investigated.

In another study that focused on financial performance, Cao and Yan (2017) examined the financial performances of partner brands in the brand alliance context. Their study shows that each partner's financial gains from the brand alliance are associated with the brand values and brand characteristics of the partner brands. The findings reveal that the firm in the alliance achieve higher returns on stock if the partner firm's brand value is higher than its brand value. On the other hand, the positive influence on the partner brand's financial performance decreases when the difference between the brand values of participating brands is high.

Furthermore, the main brand's experience in the brand alliance has a positive impact on the partner brand's financial performance. However, the partner brand's brand exploitation decreases the positive impact of the partner's brand value on the financial performance of the main brand. Similar to Christoffersen et al. (2014) study, Cao and Yan (2017) use cumulative abnormal return (CAR) as the measure of financial performance.

In addition, Cao and Yan (2017) point out that the study only explored the publicly traded firms to analyse the stock performance of partner brands. Furthermore, Cao and Yan (2017) emphasise the need for research with a focus on the partner firm managers' motivations to form brand alliances. Thus, the impact of brand alliance and product characteristics on the brand alliance outcome other than the financial performance should be investigated by analysing the manager's motivation in the brand alliance value co-creation process.

Koschmann and Bowman (2018) investigated the brand alliance outcome in terms of market share and revenue of 126 brand alliances in 49 consumer packaged goods product categories over 14 years. Their study proposes that each brand's associations influence the brand alliance performance positively. Converse to the other studies (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017) which suggest the positive impact of fit between brands on the brand alliance outcome in terms of consumer perceptions, Koschmann and Bowman (2018) claim that congruent associations between brands (e.g. perceived functional associations) decrease the positive influence on the brand alliance performance in terms of market share and revenue.

While the findings of Koschmann and Bowman (2018) show that the incongruent associations between functional and emotional associations of the brands do not have a significant influence on the brand alliance performance, they suggest that the brands should select a partner brand with more incongruent associations. Although their study explored the financial value as an additional alliance outcome dimension, Koschmann and Bowman (2018) did not investigate the impact of brand associations on the other types of values that are co-created in the brand alliances.

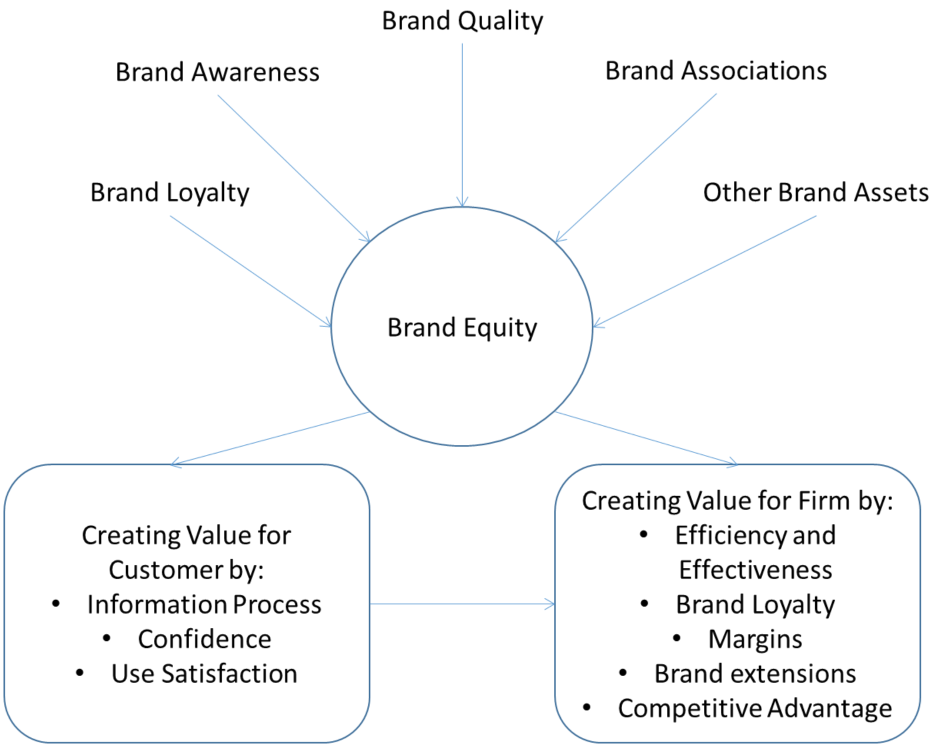
2.9. Theoretical Framework

The next section describes the theoretical framework that is developed based on the literature review and observations of the researcher. The theoretical framework of research helps to identify who or what will be included in the research, descriptions of the potential relationships based on logic, theory or experience, and give the researcher chance to collect general constructs into intellectual pieces (Baxter and Jack 2008). It can be defined as “the set of named concepts that are related to one another" (Woolf and Smith 2017, p. 37). It helps to connect the research questions, aims of the study and literature review in a design that support the operationalisation of the research (Green 2014). Developing the theoretical framework is the second level of the five-level qualitative data analysis method that is proposed by Woolf and Smith (2017) which is applied during NVivo CAQDAS supported the data analysis stage of the study. Thus, the theoretical framework development is a critical part of this study to reach the objectives of the research.

2.9.1. The Underpinning Models

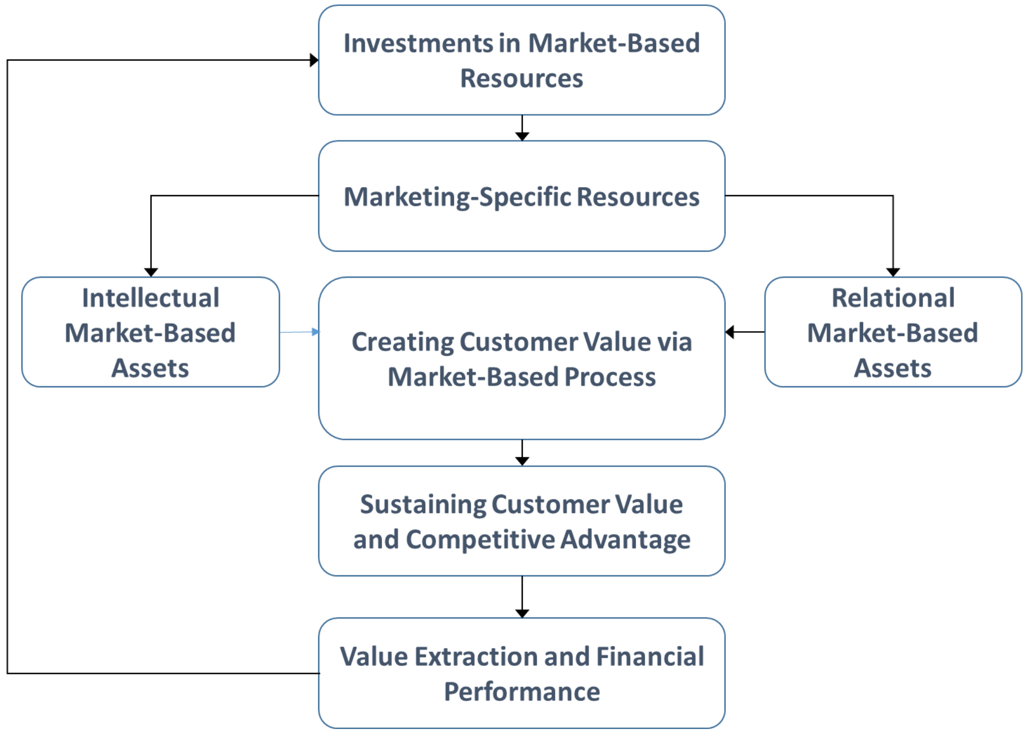
The theoretical framework of this study is inspired by the models developed by Aaker (1991) for brand equity and Srivastava et al. (2001) for market-based resources analysis. Aaker’s model (Figure 10) illustrates how brand equity that is sourced by different brand attitudes such as brand awareness, brand associations and assets influences the creation of value for customers and firms. However, the model is developed for one brand context. Similarly, the model (Figure 11) developed by Srivastava et al. (2001) shows the relation between marketing resources, customer value and competitive advantage in a single brand context. Still, both models provide a basis to develop a framework for brand alliances to show the relations between brand equity, marketing resources and value creation.

Figure 10 Brand Equity Model



(Adapted from Aaker 1991)

Figure 11 Market-Based Resources Analysis Framework

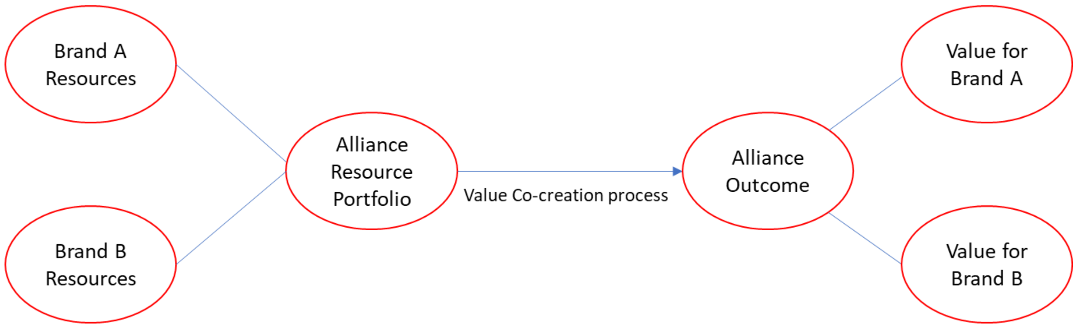


(Adapted from Srivastava et al. 2001, p. 782)

2.9.2. Development of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that is developed after the literature review of studies about the RBV, marketing resources and capabilities, value co-creation and brand alliances is depicted in Figure 12. While the theoretical framework of a study can be in different forms such as diagrams, lists, table, or narrative; using a diagram is an easy way to communicate the concepts of a theoretical framework. Besides, using a diagram of theoretical framework helps to compare the different versions of the model when they are revised in a later stage of the study (Woolf and Smith 2017). The concepts are developed considering the research questions and objectives of the study.

Figure 12 Theoretical Framework of Value Co-Creation Process in Cross-Category Brand Alliances



The first part of the theoretical framework explores the research question of which marketing resources and capabilities that brands employ to co-create value. For the convenience of terminology, the term “brand” is used to label the company in focus and “brand resources” consist of brand equity, brand associations, marketing resources and marketing capabilities of the brand in this research. Table 4 below summarises what the brand resources and capabilities include according to different studies.

Table 4 Brand Resources & Capabilities

Resource Type	**Brand Resources & Capabilities**	**Related Articles**
Tangible / Operand	Physical resources, human resource assets	Hooley et al. 2005
Intangible / Operant	Relational assets (External stakeholders: customers, channels, strategic partners, and networks)	Srivastava et al. 2001
Intangible / Operant	Intellectual assets, knowledge-based resources (know-how, process-based capabilities)	Srivastava et al. 2001
Intangible / Operant	Intellectual, relational properties	Hooley et al. 2005
Intangible / Operant	Brand Value, Brand Alliance Experience	Cao and Yan 2017
Intangible / Operant	Brand Equity (consists of brand assets: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand quality, brand associations)	Aaker 1991
Tangible / Operand & Intangible / Operant	Marketing capabilities as the components of the marketing mix (pricing, product management, distribution management, marketing communications, selling, marketing planning, and marketing implementation)	Morgan et al. 2009, Takata 2016
Intangible / Operant	Marketing capabilities as the combination of mid-level marketing activities and higher-level marketing capabilities	Najafi-Tavani et al. 2016
Intangible / Operant	Marketing capabilities of accountability, customer connection, creativity, innovativeness, and inter-departmental collaboration	Cacciolatti and Lee 2016

Aaker's model (1991) shows that brand equity is comprised of brand assets such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand quality, and brand associations. The brands transfer their brand equity, i.e. brand assets to the brand alliance when they allow each other to use their brand in the marketing communication activities to create positive signals of brand associations in the customer's mind (Washburn et al. 2004). Brand equity not only contributes to the creation of value for the customer but also creates value for the brand (Aaker 1991). In a brand alliance, the brand equities of the brands are integrated into the alliance resource portfolio (Barney and Arikan 2001; Lambe et al. 2002) and the alliance resource portfolio is in relation with the value co-creation process for both partner brands which leads to the competitive advantage.

Similarly, Srivastava et al. (2001) suggest that there is a relation between marketing specific resources and assets with the value creation for the customer. Besides, other studies (Hooley et al. 2005, Cacciolatti and Lee 2016, Davcik and Sharma 2016) suggest the role of marketing resources and capabilities in competitive advantage creation and firm performance. As seen in the table of brand resources & capabilities above, most of the brand resources fall into the category of intangible/operant resources which is in line with Vargo & Lusch studies (2004, 2011) in S-D logic that suggest the importance of operant resources in value co-creation. In Srivistava et al. (2001) model, the value created for the customer that is sourced by the marketing resources and assets leads to the competitive advantage, which creates value for the brand in return.

The theories of the firm exhibit that the brand's major quest is to obtain a competitive advantage. According to the RBV, brands try to utilise their internal resources and capabilities to achieve competitive advantage (Mahoney and Pandian 1992; Hooley et al. 2005). When their internal resources and capabilities are not unique enough to bring competitive advantage, they start to look for partners who have the supportive resources to achieve a competitive advantage to achieve more than they do on their own (Rai 2016; Lewis 1999). The brands come together to co-create value with their integrated brand resource portfolios for short or long-term brand alliances. They aim to create a synergistic collaboration to achieve a sum greater than the parts (Rodrigue and Biswas 2004). In the brand alliances, the partner brands have access to each other's markets and bring their brand associations to the alliance (Beverland 2018).

However, they do not contribute all their internal resources to the brand alliance. In addition, the resources the partner brands have might not be at the same level, i.e. one brand's brand equity might have greater value than the other brand or the financial resources of each brand might differ. The resources that are committed to the brand alliance comprise the alliance resource portfolio concept that is depicted in the theoretical framework. The "alliance resource portfolio" term is based on the resource portfolio phrase used by Oliver (1997), Barney and Arikan (2001) and Lambe et al. (2002). It is used to define the pool of resources that the alliance partners bring into the alliance during the time frame of the partnership.

Furthermore, the level of resource contribution to the brand alliance resource portfolio from each partner brand changes according to their aims and expectations about the brand alliance. The internal resources and capabilities of a brand become external resources and capabilities to utilise for the partner brand. During the cross-category brand alliance, the brands leverage their core competencies and commit them to the marketing mix that is used in the brand alliance (Kunitzky 2010).

The marketing activities during the brand alliance are the source of the value co-creation process in the brand alliance and shown as an arrowed line which leads to the alliance outcome in the theoretical framework. Cristoffersen (2013) defines the alliance outcome as the net present value partners get by participating in the alliance.

While the studies about brand alliances mostly evaluated the brand alliance outcome from a customer perspective with a focus on consumer perceptions of the brand alliance (Simonin and Ruth 1998, Bluemelhuber et al. 2007), the brand alliance outcome in this research is studied from a B2B perspective with a focus on the values created for the partner brands. Reflecting on the model of Srivastava et al. (2001), the value creation process is linked to the outcome as value and competitive advantage.

The value co-creation process during the brand alliance is the period when the relations between partner brands might emerge as potential risks such as "role conflicts, role ambiguity, opportunistic behaviours and power plays" (Chowdhury et al. 2016, p.106). Therefore, the research questions about (1) the relation of marketing resources and capabilities with the alliance outcome and (2) the potential risks that emerge during the VCC process are explored in this section of the theoretical framework.

Table 5 Types of Value

Types of Value	**Related Article**
Direct value outcomes (financial value, brand growth, creative communications, leadership, quality consistency, time & cost efficiency); Indirect value outcomes (client & supplier learning, improved reputation, competitor tactics awareness, access to different network actors)	Chowdhury et al. 2016
Monetary Values, Use of Experience Values, Social Values	Sanders and Simons 2009
Economic Values (cost-saving, revenue-generating, performance); Sustainability Values (environmental and societal benefits); Brand Values (brand building, brand association)	Ekman et al. 2016

The last part of the theoretical framework is related to the research question of how and which types of value is co-created in the cross-category brand alliances as the outcome of the alliance. The types of values according to the studies about VCC are listed in the table above. In the theoretical framework, it is assumed that the outcome of the alliance is related to the values created for the partner brands. Although there are articles that studied alliance performance and outcome (Lunnan and Haugland 2008; Cristoffersen et al. 2014; Cao and Yan 2017; Koschmann and Bowman 2018); they have not investigated the relation between alliance outcome and types of values created for the partner brands.

For instance, while Cristoffersen et al. (2014) suggest performance measures such as accounting, cumulative abnormal return, stability, and subjective measures; Koschmann and Bowman (2018) studied the brand alliance outcome in terms of market share and revenue. However, there are intangible outcomes of the brand alliance such as learning, and reputation as proposed by Chowdhury et al. (2016)

which can be linked to types of value co-created in the brand alliance. In addition, it is crucial to identify the success criteria of partner brands for the brand alliance outcome to understand their aims and expectations of the brand alliance. The potential risks that are specified by Chowdhury et al. (2016) might occur when the success criteria of partner brands for the brand alliance outcome differ from each other. Therefore, the brand alliance outcome concept should be investigated to understand how partner brands assess the success of the alliance.

Srivastava et al. (2001) use the term "value extraction" in the last step of their model in the one company context. In the dyadic context of this study, there are two lines of value extraction for partner brands. The types of values are perceived differently by each partner (Ekman et al. 2016) concerning their aims and the outcome of the brand alliance. The co-created value might be a shared one for both partner brands in the alliance; it might provide more benefit for one brand than the other, or it might even create a negative consequence for the partners (Chodhury et al. 2016).

Although the models of Aaker (1991) and Srivastava et al. (2001) incorporates the value created for the customer in their model, the value co-created for the partner brands during the brand alliance is the focus of this study. Therefore customer value is not included in the theoretical framework. The overall aim of the framework is linking the resource-based view with the value co-creation concept in the brand alliance context from a B2B perspective. The outcome of the brand alliance is evaluated as the co-created value of the value co-creation process during the brand alliance. The theoretical framework is revisited after the data analysis and revised according to the findings of the study.

2.10. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the theoretical background of the study is given by discussing studies about marketing alliances, value co-creation and resource-based view theory. The marketing alliance topic is explained in detail in the following section, and the types of marketing alliances are reviewed. Aims and expectations of partner brands in a brand alliance and the partner brand selection topics are explored by critically reviewing past studies. The specific brand alliance type of cross-category brand alliance is discussed in a separate section.

Theories of the firm are reviewed to present the rationale of entering brand alliances. The choice of the resource-based view (RBV) theory as the underlying theory of this study is explained. Concerning the RBV theory, the marketing resources and capabilities are discussed in the following section. Value co-creation (VCC) topic is discussed in the subsections of definition and theories, VCC in B2B context and types of value. In the following section, the alliance outcome topic is linked to the types of value, and the studies about the brand alliance outcome are reviewed. The development of the theoretical framework is explained in the following section of the chapter.

3. Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter starts with a reminder of the research questions and explains the research approach of the study. It continues with the section that summarises the philosophical position of the researcher and discusses the dilemmas of being a participant-observer. The following sections explain the details about the research strategy, and how the case study method is used to develop theory.

The information about the data sampling decisions, interview conduct, the development and translation of the interview guide are explained in the data collection section. The data analysis section discusses how thematic analysis is used for analysing data and how NVivo CAQDAS is harnessed to support thematic analysis. Details of the Five-Level QDA method are given in a sub-section. The rigour of the study; i.e. validity, generalisability and reliability issues are explained in dedicated sections before the summary section of the chapter.

3.2. Research Questions and Research Approach

The following research questions guided the choice of the research methodology of the study.

- How and which types of value are co-created by partner brands?
    - What are the potential risks that can emerge during the value co-creation process?
- Which resources and capabilities do partner brands utilise to co-create value?
- How are the resources and capabilities connected to the brand alliance outcomes and co-created value?

The literature review emphasised two main theories; RBV approach, which studies the motives of the brands to obtain competitive advantage and S-D logic which explains the roots of value co-creation in marketing. The literature investigated brand alliances using RBV approach (Park et al. 2004; Kauppila 2015). However, limited studies explored the VCC process in brand alliances.

The literature that focused on cross-category brand alliances (Smarandescu et al. 2010; Smarandescu et al. 2011; Smarandescu et al. 2013) mostly adopted the customer perspective about the brand alliances by quantitative methods. This study aims to analyse the VCC process in cross-category brand alliances and to design a theoretical framework to explain the relationships between brand resources and capabilities and the cross-category brand alliance success during value co-creation process. To achieve this aim, more flexible ways to record data and less control over participants are necessary. Such a requirement is provided by qualitative methods rather than predetermined responses of “Yes vs No” or Likert scale in quantitative methods (Walle 2015). In addition, qualitative methodology comprises methods such as case study which gives necessary tools for researchers to study processes and relations within their contexts (Baxter and Jack 2008).

3.3. Philosophical Position

It is critical to choose the research paradigm that will be applied while conducting research because it has an impact on the researcher's framing way and social phenomena understanding (Wahyuni 2012). The paradigm represents the worldview and fundamental beliefs of the researcher, which deals with the basic principles of the nature of the world (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The researcher’s philosophical position gives the direction of axiology and methodology to investigate the reality (Wahyuni 2012). The main questions that the concepts of a philosophical position, methodology and methods cover; and the researcher’s stance for this study are summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Researcher's Stance

Type	Content	Researcher’s stance
Philosophical position	Includes ontology, epistemology and axiology to justify knowledge	Interpretivism, value-bond
Methodology	Defines how the research should proceed and justifies the method	Qualitative
Method	Practical activities of research	Case Study, Thematic Analysis

(Adapted from Carter and Little 2007; Wahyuni 2012)

Two major approaches to theory development, i.e. deductive and inductive, divide the line between positivism and interpretivism paradigms (Perry 1998). Between the choices of positivism, post-positivism or interpretivism; the researcher defines the way to answer questions of ontology, epistemology and axiology (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Ontology is about how the researcher perceives reality; it is the researcher's position on the nature of reality (Wahyuni 2012).

On the other hand, epistemology is defined as "theory of knowledge" (Carter and Little 2007, p. 1317) and they are the beliefs that are used in the research process to generate valid and acceptable knowledge (Wahyuni 2012). Epistemology has an impact both on the choice of methodology and the implementation of a method. It is a relationship between the participant and the researcher and the quality standards of the research (Carter and Littler 2007).

The axiology is about the researcher's stance on the role of values in research, and the researcher can vary from being value-free to value-bond (Wahyuni 2012). Table 7 summarises how ontology, epistemology, axiology and research methodology vary according to different research paradigms. The philosophical position, the methodology and the method are the three fundamental bases that shape the plan, implementation and evaluation framework of qualitative research (Carter and Little 2007). While the methodology defines a larger picture to guide the research project and helps to choose the methods and tasks, research methods describe the specific details of how a particular task will be completed (Woolf and Silver 2017).

Table 7 Fundamental Beliefs of Research Paradigms in Social Sciences

Fundamental Beliefs	**Research Paradigms**			
	Positivism / Naïve Realism	***Post-Positivism / Critical Realism***	***Interpretivism / Constructivism***	***Pragmatism***
Ontology	External, objective and independent of social actors	Objective, exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs	Subjective, socially constructed	External and multiple, the view is chosen to achieve an answer to the research question best
Epistemology	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. The focus is on causality.	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. The focus is on explaining within a context.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. The focus is on the details of the situation and the reality behind the details.	Both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge. The focus is on practical applied research.
Axiology	Value-free and etic, the researcher is independent of data with an objective stance.	Value-laden and etic, the researcher is biased by world views.	Value-bond and emic, the researcher is cannot be separated from what is being researched.	Value-bond and etic-emic, the researcher adopts both objective and subjective points of view.
Research Methodology	Quantitative	Quantitative or Qualitative	Qualitative	Quantitative and qualitative / mixed or multi-method design

(Adapted from Wahyuni 2012, p. 70)

To achieve the aims and objectives of this research, which consists of analysing the relationship between alliance partners during value co-creation process, the researcher utilised his access to marketing professionals within the partner brands. The researcher takes the interpretivist stance to evaluate the views of those different individuals and marketing professionals. Wahyuni (2012) states that in objectivist or realist researchers' perception, reality's existence is external and not dependent on social actors or their interpretations.

However, subjectivist or nominalist researchers perceive that reality depends on social actors and the individual's actions in the contribution of social phenomena (Wahyuni 2012). There is a tendency in quantitative research to emphasise the frequency, intensity and duration of behaviour. In contrast, the qualitative research focuses on investigating the beliefs, values and motives to explain the reason for behaviours (Castleberry and Nolen 2018).

Wahyuni (2012, p. 71) defines the aim of interpretive qualitative methodology as: *"to uncover inside perspectives or real meanings of social phenomena from its study participants as a good social knowledge"*. He also points out that the axiology stance of interpretivist researchers is an insider perspective where the researcher studies the social reality from the perspective of the people themselves. That is why the experiences and values of not only research participants but also the researchers, have an impact on the data collection and analysis (Wahyuni 2012).

Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon in a better way by analysing the experiences of the ones who experienced the phenomenon (Castleberry and Nolen 2018). In addition to the interviews that are made with the marketing managers who experienced the phenomenon of the study, the researcher is also an insider with the professional experience in the topic area. The researcher aims to reveal the perspectives of other marketing professionals about the real meaning of value in the brand alliance phenomenon.

3.3.1. Dilemmas of Being an Insider Participant Observer

As mentioned in the previous section (Section 3.3), the researcher of this study had a professional role in a company which assists the brands included in the case studies in contracting and managing brand alliances. Thus, the researcher has an insider participant observer role in the case studies. Several authors (Labaree 2002; Breen 2007; Rooney 2005; Unluer 2012) had similar experiences in their research and identified the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider in the case study research. An insider researcher is defined as a researcher who studies a group or field which he/she belongs to (Unluer 2012).

Being an insider provides the advantage of direct access to events, people and organisational culture in the case studies due to possession of existing knowledge. Still, there are ethical and methodological dilemmas about field entrance, disclosure, shared relationships and disengagement that the researcher should be aware of (Labaree 2002). Besides, the researcher's previous knowledge and experience might lead to a loss of objectivity which the researcher should take actions to protect (Breen 2007). To ensure the credible insider research, it is crucial for the insider researcher, at all stages of the research, to be aware of the influence of perceived bias on data collection and analysis, ethical issues about the organisation and individual participant anonymity (Unluer 2012).

The interview guide of this study is developed based on the literature review, the advanced knowledge and experience of the researcher in the brand alliance field. Labaree (2002) indicates that it is vital for the insider observer to maintain the objectivity and accuracy of the study. He points that to achieve these goals; triangulation methods, interviews with multiple members of the study environment and document analysis can be used by an outsider to depict the reality more accurately.

An insider researcher should use professional experience and advanced knowledge as a foundation of understanding reality and creating the moment of objectivity for the study (Labaree 2002). Although experience and knowledge are essential resources and useful sources for exploring participant's ideas, the insider researchers should make a critical analysis of the relationship between themselves and the participants (Holloway and Biley 2011).

As a native in the field, the insider should take the role of the observer to achieve a proper understanding of the social phenomena. It can be done by distancing the researcher introspectively from the phenomena (Labaree 2002). Among the potential cases to be investigated in the study, there were cases which the researcher has direct access and previous experience, and there were cases which the researcher did not have any previous encounter. The cases are chosen to distance out the researcher from already experienced examples of the phenomena under research.

The role of the insider researcher should be to translate everyday meanings of participants' practical reality interpretations into scientific knowledge (Holloway and Biley 2011). In the initial interviews of this study, the researcher started to convey the interpretations of case study practitioners into more abstract and theoretical ideas by finding the connections between real-life examples and literature.

Being an insider researcher has some disadvantages during collecting data such as role duality, early assumptions about participant view before clarification, participant's assumption that the researcher already knows what they mean and the risk of not seeing all dimensions of the bigger picture (Unluer 2012). To remove these risks, the researcher followed the below recommendations of Unluer (2012):

- Informed the participants in detail about the research, how it is connected to the practice and its aims to indicate what will be achieved for theory and practice
- Took continuous guidance from the supervisors to administer the qualitative data collection and initial analysis
- Obtained more insight and information about the topic with clarification questions by further interviews
- Discussed the results of initial data analysis with external academic members in conferences and workshops

Opposed to the authors mentioned above, Breen (2007) claims that the researcher does not need to choose between being an insider or outsider in research. She points out that being a "researcher in the middle" maximises the advantages and minimises the potential disadvantages. To minimise the power differential between researcher and participants, the researchers can define themselves as co-investigators, co-learners, facilitators or advocates (Breen 2007). As a mediator between the brands in the professional role, the researcher has a natural co-facilitator role for the participants of the study.

3.4. Research Strategy

Research method and strategy provide a detailed direction for data collection analysis and interpretation (Wahyuni 2012). To achieve the aims and objectives of this study; the case study method is used as the data collection method, thematic analysis is used as the data analysis method. NVivo 11 is used as the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to support thematic analysis. The choices are explained in the following sections.

3.4.1. Case Study Method

While the importance of empirical data is widely accepted in social sciences, the way to collect data is a debatable topic (Lee and Broderick, 2007). According to Lee and Broderick (2007), three main issues about empirical data collection in business studies and marketing are:

- What exactly is the social world, and what can we know about it?
- How should we obtain information about this world?
- What is the role of a priori theory in shaping the empirical processes?

As mentioned in the "Research Questions and Research Approach" section of this chapter (Section 3.2), the nature of research questions in this study requires flexible approaches to investigate the context-specific nuances. The third research objective of the study, which is to propose/design a framework to depict the relations of partner brands' resources and capabilities with the cross-category brand alliance outcomes implies theory-building after data analysis.

There are two qualitative research inquiry methods that support theory building which are grounded theory approach and case study. Both approaches support understanding of processes and help with answering questions such as "How?" and "Why?". There are many studies (Swanepoel 2019; Lehmann 2001; Fernández and Lehmann 2005) which adopted hybrid research methodologies that combine grounded theory and case study. While grounded theory approach follows specific rules to develop a theory (Patzelt 2020), case study research deals with an individual case (such as an individual society, group, person or event). In the grounded theory approach, the data can be collected through the relevant literature about the study topic, interviews, or content analysis of documents (Patzelt 2020). Case study research seeks to understand the individual case thoroughly in terms of its structure, dynamics and context.

Grounded theory approach and case study research are two different paths of doing research which has distinguishing ways and far-reaching intersections (Patzelt 2020). While case study research can be used to build a grounded theory, in-depth case study research can be used at the start of the grounded theory approach (Patzelt 2020). Grounded theory approach would require interviewing a wider range of people who work in the companies that form brand alliances. However, where specific nuances around a particular process are investigated, expert views and knowledge are required. Thus, interviewing marketing professionals of the companies is vital for an in-depth investigation of the research questions of this study.

Instead of the grounded theory approach, theory building from case studies approach of Eisenhardt (1989) is applied in this study. Although grounded theory fosters creativity and triggers new ideas by removing the bias that is based on assumptions in emergent theories, it has a high potential of methodological error when theoretical sampling is not used (El Hussein et al. 2014). In this study, purposive sampling is used to choose marketing professionals as the interview participants in a case study approach.

Conversely, theoretical sampling could be applied by interviewing participants from other departments of the brands such as sales and finance to reach theoretical saturation in a grounded theory approach (Goulding 1998). Theoretical sampling in grounded theory would help to “develop the theory as it emerges” (Glaser 1978 p. 36 cited in Goulding 1998) while collecting data from different sources throughout the study. It would require the data collection instrument and questions to be continuously revisited and adapted to ensure that each subsequent interview provides answers to questions that emerge from the previous set of interviews.

Moreover, interviewing people with various roles and positions within the companies forming brand alliances can help with investigating broader firm performance outcomes that are visible on the surface. However, knowledge of the employees other than the marketing department can be limited to provide extensive details around the brand alliances. Ultimately, case study research is required to study specific marketing-related types of values co-created before further research can be done to investigate a broader spectrum of values, possibly using the grounded theory approach.

Yin (2009) claims that using case studies in research helps the researcher to explore individuals, organizations, relationships, and communities by supporting the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of different phenomena. Case study approach provides close collaboration between the researcher and the participants by enabling participants to tell their stories which allow the researcher to understand their views of reality and actions (Baxter and Jack 2008). Besides, the data collection process in the case study approach is not only limited to the interviews but also includes additional data collection related to the case studies (Steenhuis and Bruijn 2006). In a case study research, the usage of multiple data can support with understanding the complexity of phenomena (Baxter and Jack 2008) in a better way.

To design the framework about the VCC process by using multiple sources of data such as reports, documentation and secondary data about brand alliances; the researcher has chosen the case study method which provides a substantive meaning that is bounded by the contextual setting (Huberman and Miles 2002). Archives, interviews, questionnaires and observations can be used as data collection methods in case studies (Eisenhardt 1989). Collecting data from multiple sources is necessary in case study research to investigate complex phenomena in its own context (Baxter and Jack 2008). The researcher uses semi-structured interview method which is a standard method in qualitative research (Kallio et al. 2016) and documentation of notes about secondary data about brand alliances and campaigns as the data collection methods of case studies. To ensure validation among the case studies, the same research questions and approach are covered in all case studies in the study (Steenhuis and Bruijn 2006).

It is also essential to determine the unit of analysis in the case study approach as it defines the boundaries of the case. The unit of analysis of this study is “the cross-category brand alliance of chosen brands in Turkey", and five different cases are analysed in a multiple case study approach. Although there are brand alliances in which more than two brands collaborate for marketing partnership, the brand alliances that are analysed in this study are dyadic cross-category brand alliances in which two partner brands collaborate.

Multiple case studies give the researcher the advantage to explore differences within and between cases and the created evidence from this type of study is accepted as more robust and reliable, whereas it might be extremely time-consuming and challenging to conduct (Yin 2009). Yin (2009) indicates that the choice of cases is crucial as the researcher will draw comparisons and predict similar or contrasting results across cases based on a theory. Every case represents a different analytic unit and provides the researcher with a different experiment of the study (Eisenhardt and Grabner 2007).

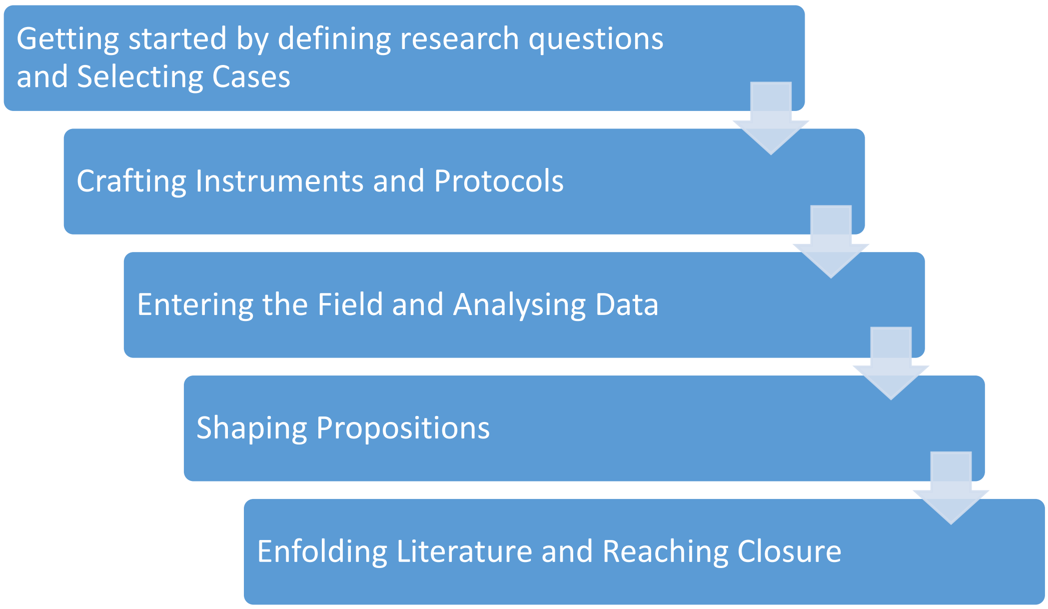
Instead of finding an ideal number of cases while conducting multiple case studies, the researchers are advised to add cases until they reach a theoretical saturation (Eisenhardt 1989, cited in Perry 1998). However, Perry (1998) suggests that the minimum number range is between two and four, while the maximum number range is between 10 and 15. To provide diversity among cross-category brand alliances and increase the external validity of the study, the case studies are chosen from different categories and sectors to show alike and differing relationships in the VCC processes between partner brands. Considering the recommendation of the past studies, five case studies (five case brands) are chosen for this research to investigate different types of cross-category brand alliances. Adding more cases to the study were considered if a theoretical saturation could not be reached. However, there was no need for further cases inclusion as theoretical saturation was emerging after the three first cases were investigated. The decision was made to carry on and complete the research of two additional cases to investigate the impact of different sectors on the value co-creation process. The next section explains the steps of theory building by using case studies in research.

3.4.2. Theory Building from Case Study Approach

Grounded theory approach develops theory dynamically focusing on theoretical sampling as an approach that guides data collection, data analysis and theory building. On the other hand, the aim of using case study research can be to provide descriptions, to test a theory or to generate theory (Eisenhardt 1989) within a much more complex context where research questions are determined before data collection. The research questions in a case study research guide the data collection (sampling), analysis and theory building. The nature of the case study method provides an attached relationship between the topic and contextual setting, which allows contextual boundaries that are well defined (Huberman and Miles 2002). In addition, grounded theory has a vague unity in terms of context and has the risk of discovering existing theory (Perry 1998).

By the analysis of semi-structured interviews data and secondary data about case studies using NVivo 11 software and revisiting the literature, the researcher developed a framework in an approach to depict the VCC process and the relationship between partner brands' marketing resources and capabilities, and the outcome of the alliance. Eisenhardt (1989) summarises the process of theory building from case study research in the following steps (Figure 13).

Figure 13 Theory Building from Case Study Research Process



(Adapted from Eisenhardt 1989)

In the first step, the researcher defines the research questions and tries to ground prior to constructs. The research questions of this study are prepared after evaluating the initial literature review, and the secondary data the researcher collected about the case studies. After defining the research questions, the case studies are selected using a purposive sampling method from a specified population. The cases for this study are chosen in a way to cover the gaps in the literature which pointed to the need to analyse the VCC process in the brand alliances of brands from different product categories. In the next step, grounding of the theory is strengthened by multiple data collection methods and triangulation of evidence.

Triangulation of evidence in this study is ensured by semi-structured interviews, secondary data collection of field notes and information about the brand alliances from public sources. The crafting instruments step is followed by entering the field for data collection with field notes and within-case analysis by looking further than preliminary impressions to see evidence via multiple angles. Before enfolding literature to compare with differing and alike literature, the hypotheses are formed to look for evidence of "why" behind relations by iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct to build internal validity. The hypotheses are developed after the initial analysis of the collected data and reflecting the data on the reviewed literature. The final step includes the theoretical saturation if possible and finishes the process when the marginal improvement is small (Eisenhardt 1989).

Eisenhardt (1989) points out that theories built by using a case study approach have the prospect of generating novel theory. He emphasises that constant concurrence of conflicting realities leads to unfreeze thinking and results in theory generated with less researcher bias than theories generated from self-evident deduction or incremental studies. On the other hand, Eisenhardt (1989) claims that theories that are built by using a case study approach might be detail-rich but in lack of overall perspective simplicity. If the case study describes a particular phenomenon with the inability of raising generality, multiple studies might be necessary for theory building (Eisenhardt 1989). In this study, multiple case studies are analysed to decrease the likelihood of potential weaknesses and researcher bias.

3.5. Data Collection

3.5.1. Sampling decisions

As it is not practical or efficient to study whole populations, it is crucial to choose a representative study sample in any research project (Marshall 1996, Palinkas et al. 2015). The choice of the data sampling method determines the quality of the research and the strength of the evidence (Gibbs et al. 2007; Robinson 2014). The unit of analysis in this study is the cross-category brand alliance of the partner brands in the case studies.

Cross category brand alliances are complex matters where there are multiple decisions to consider for creating contextual boundaries that can support the interpretation of results. Firstly, they are quite often international in nature (see Section 2.3.4). Hence, the country choice of brands that form alliances is an important decision to consider. Secondly, there is a diverse product category range of the brands that form cross-category brand alliances.

Turkey is chosen as the focus country of the study using a convenience sampling method due to easy access to marketing managers of brands through the professional network of the researcher. The choice of the brands is made by applying a purposive sampling method which involves choosing the most efficient sample to answer the research questions, using the practical knowledge of the researcher in the field and initial review of the literature (Marshall 1996; Palinkas et al. 2015). The sampling types and choices are listed in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Sampling Methods

Sampling Method	Aim	Sampling Decision
Convenience	Easy access to marketing managers of brands	Existing professional contacts in Turkey to conduct interviews
Purposive	Covering the gaps in the literature and ensuring a heterogeneous sample	Brands from different product categories of telecommunications, automotive, fuel, retailer and pharmaceutical

3.5.1.1. Sampling decision and method 1: Country

Using a convenience sampling approach, the case studies that are analysed in this research are chosen from Turkey. The researcher's existing professional contacts in the country allowed accessing and inviting marketing managers of different companies for data collection. Turkey is an emerging market with recent economic policy uncertainty because of the failed coup attempt in 2016, parliamentary system changes in 2017 and subsequent events (Jirasavetakul and Spilimbergo 2018). However, it is a growing economy with a 7.4% growth rate in 2017 and the 13th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP according to purchasing power parity comparison (CIA 2019). In the year 2017, there are 374 companies listed on the stock exchange in Turkey (19th in the world) which is an indicator of the size of the economy and the development of the stock market with the advanced use of equity financing (The Global Economy 2019).

In addition to the convenience of choosing Turkey as the sample country thanks to the professional contacts of the researcher, the scarce research in the brand alliance and value co-creation fields in the emerging markets made Turkey an attractive choice for this study. Still, the study can be replicated in other emerging markets or a developed country context by choosing cross-category brand alliances as case studies to increase the generalisability of the results. Table 9 below lists the subject countries of past studies about brand alliances and value co-creation.

Table 9 Subject Countries of Past Studies

Research Topic	**Subject Country / Countries**	**Authors**
Co-marketing Alliances / Computer and semiconductor industries	The U.S.A.	Bucklin and Sengupta (1993)
Advertising Alliances	The U.S.A. and Canada	Samu et al. (1999)
Sponsorship	The U.S.A.	Ruth and Simonin (2003)
Co-Branding, Sponsorship / Sports Industry	The U.S.A., UK, France, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, China	Farrelly et al. (2005)
Complementary products / Information technology industry	The U.S.A.	Yue et al. (2006)
Marketing Alliances / Software industry	The U.S.A.	Swaminathan and Moorman (2009)
Cause-Brand Alliances	The U.S.A.	Lafferty (2009)
Co-marketing Alliances / Fashion and technology industries	South Korea	Ahn et al. (2009)
Value co-creation / Luxury brands	United Kingdom	Tynan et al. (2010)
Co-Branding / Consumer packaged goods	The U.S.A.	Cao and Sorescu (2013)
Coopetition / Medical device industry	Germany	Bouncken and Fredrich (2015)
Co-Branding, Coopetition / Airlines, retail, food and clothing industries	France	Chiambaretto et al. (2016)
Value co-creation / B2B service networks	Bangladesh	Chowdhury et al. (2016)
Coopetition, Value creation / High-technology research-intensive sectors	India	Rai (2016)
Brand Alliance / Retail industry	The U.S.A.	Yan and Cao (2017)

3.5.1.2. Sampling decision and method 2: Brand alliances

Purposive sampling method enables the identification and the selection of information-rich cases that are about the phenomenon of interest in the qualitative research (Palinkas et al. 2015). To cover the gaps in the cross-category brand alliance literature which states the need to investigate partner brands from different sectors (Smarandescu, Rose and Wedell 2013), brands from different product categories and sectors are chosen as case studies using a purposive sampling method. Besides, a heterogeneous sample was aimed to attain generalisable commonalities across the case studies (Robinson 2014).

The number of case studies and interviewees are determined by the time and resource boundaries of the research (Robinson 2014). Each case study includes more than one cross-category brand alliance among partner brands which leads to 11 interviews for 5 case studies which is an acceptable number according to IPA guidelines for qualitative study participant number (Robinson 2014). The interviewees are chosen considering the least cost in terms of time, effort, and money (Marshall 1996).

As the focus of the study is the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances, the employees in the marketing departments of the brands are targeted who are responsible for forming and managing the brand alliances. Although other departments such as finance and sales are also involved in different stages of the brand alliances, marketing departments are managing the brand alliance process from the start to the end. The marketing managers are considered to be the experts within the brand alliance management as they initiate the alliance and measure the performance of the alliance. They are involved in both strategic and day-to-day aspects of the brand alliance management (Decker and Baade 2016). In addition, the companies that are investigated in this study are medium and large size companies which have dedicated marketing departments. Therefore, marketing managers who are responsible for the brand alliance management in the marketing department of the brands are chosen for the interviews of the study.

The brands selected for the case studies, their product category, and representative interviewee are shown in Table 10 below. Alpha1 represents the brand from the telecommunications category, Alpha2 is from the automotive category, Alpha3 is from the fuel and energy sector, Alpha4 is from sports retailer category, and Alpha5 is from the pharmaceutical sector. The pattern of the brand labels is as follows: the names of the case study brands start with Alpha (shortened as α when necessary) followed by a number. If the brand has a sub-brand, the sub-brand is named with a letter at the end.

Table 10 List of the case study brands

Case Study Brands	**Category**	**Representative Interviewee**
Alpha1 (α1)	Telecommunications	Marketing Manager and Marketing Specialist of Alpha1
Alpha1A (α1A)	Sub-brand of Alpha1	
Alpha2 (α2)	Automotive	Marketing Manager of Alpha2
Alpha3 (α3)	Fuel and Gas	Marketing Manager of Alpha3
Alpha4 (α4)	Retail - Sports	Marketing Specialist of Alpha4
Alpha5 (α5)	Pharmaceutical	Marketing Manager of Alpha5

The alliance partner brands of the case study brands are named with Beta (shortened as β when necessary) which is followed by a number. All the other brands and companies that were mentioned in the interviews are named with Delta (shortened as δ when necessary) and a preceding number. Similarly, the sub-brands of any brands are labelled with a letter at the end of the disguised name. The labels of interviewed alliance partner brands (Beta brands) can be found in Table 11 with their product category and representative interviewee. The label list of other brands and companies (Delta brands) that are mentioned in the interviews can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 11 List of the Alliance Partner Brands

Partner Brands	Category	Representative Interviewee
Beta1 (β1)	Entertainment - Family	Marketing Manager of Beta1
Beta1A (β1A)	Sub-brand of Beta1	
Beta1B (β1B)	Sub-brand of Beta1A	
Beta1C (β1C)	Sub-brand of Beta1	
Beta1D (β1D)	Sub-brand of Beta1	
Beta2 (β2)	E-Commerce - Gifts	Marketing Manager of Beta2
Beta3 (β3)	Tobacco	Marketing Manager of Beta3
Beta3A (β3A)	Sub-brand of Beta3	
Beta3B (β3B)	Sub-brand of Beta3	
Beta3C (β3C)	Sub-brand of Beta3	
Beta3D (β3D)	Sub-brand of Beta3	
Beta3E (β3E)	Sub-brand of Beta3	
Beta4 (β4)	Sports - Football	Marketing Manager of Beta4
Beta4A (β4A)	Sub-brand of Beta4	
Beta5 (β5)	Service – Umbrella Brand	Marketing Manager of Beta5
Beta5A (β5A)	Sub-brand of Beta5	

In a total of 11 interviews, marketing managers or marketing specialists of five case study brands (two interviews with Alpha1 including one pilot interview, and one interview each with other Alpha brands), and marketing managers or marketing specialists of five alliance partner brands (one interview with each Beta brands) were interviewed. The same set of questions were used during the interviews with Alpha and Beta brands to collect insights about the value co-creation process from both sides of the cross-category brand alliance.

Two different interviews were done with employees of Alpha1 marketing department at different times. The first interview with a marketing specialist of Alpha1 was used as the pilot interview of the study. Because of the progressive nature of the qualitative data collection and analysis, qualitative researchers tend to use the insights of the pilot data as part of the main research (van Teijilingen and Hundley 2001). The pilot interview of the study smoothly run, which indicated the right focus on the interview questions. One question from the pilot interview guide was removed due to similarity to another question. The sections of two questions were changed in the interview guide because of their better relevance to the themes. Moreover, the pilot interview provided rich data that was important to include in the main study. Therefore, insights from the pilot interview with the marketing specialist of Alpha1 were also used in the data analysis of this study.

For Beta brands, one marketing manager of the brand participated in each interview. In total, five interviews were conducted with five Beta brands. The brands that are labelled with Delta (δ) in this study were mentioned by the marketing managers of Alpha and Beta brands that were interviewed (see Appendix 3 for the list of Delta brands). The marketing managers of Delta brands were not interviewed. Still, the insights into other cross-category brand alliances were deemed necessary to provide a complex picture of the inter-connections between all the brands involved in cross-category brand alliances in a specific country context.

3.5.2. Interview Conduct

As the researcher applied the semi-structured interview method for data collection, interview conduct is prepared before contacting the participants. Considering the busy schedule of the marketing managers, the interview guide and questions are prepared so as the average time of the interview was no more than 1 hour. The researchers should consider the participant's schedule and demands for a healthy data collection process (Harrell and Bradley 2009).

Thanks to the professional access of the researcher to potential participants, the information about the interview firstly shared by contacting the potential participants by phone. The calls are made at times that are convenient for the participants. Further information about the research and appointment date is shared by e-mail. It is essential to share the interview information by a letter or e-mail as the potential participant might need official approval from their workplace to attend an interview (Harrell and Bradley 2009).

The interview time and place were chosen as the most convenient for the participant among the options of the workplace and a suitable place to answer the questions. The interviews were recorded by mobile devices and supported by the researcher's notes during the interview. Introductory questions of the interview included questions about previous and current work that is undertaken together with the researcher to build rapport with the participant. Regardless of the number of interviews conducted, the answers of the participants are listened closely and carefully, which is a crucial aspect to protect for an unbiased research process (Harrell and Bradley 2009).

Although the original interview guide is developed in English, the translated version of the interview guide is prepared for the participants who wanted to answer the questions in their native language. Participant information sheet and participant agreement forms were not translated because none of the participants requested a translated version of these forms when the forms are shared with them before the interview. The translated version of the interview guide is controlled by the independent translators who are native speakers. The participants are asked if they want to answer the questions in their native language or English before the interview started. The researcher clarified the words that were not clear enough in the interview guide when asked.

In some cases, when the participants were not available to meet in person for the interviews, the interviews are conducted over a phone call which is followed by email correspondence. Nine of eleven interviews are conducted face to face while two of them were conducted over a phone call and completed by email correspondence. The follow-up questions after the first interviews are shared by email, and the participants were reminded that they are free to accept or reject further questions. The audio files and transcribed versions of the interviews were shared with the participants after the interviews if the participant requested to listen to or read their answers. The summary of the fieldwork is listed in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 12 Summary of Fieldwork: Case Study Brands

Related Case	**Telecom.**	**Telecom.**	**Auto.**	**Fuel and Energy**	**Sports Retailer**	**Pharma.**
Brand	*Alpha1*	*Alpha1*	*Alpha2*	*Alpha 3*	*Alpha4*	*Alpha5*
Category	Telecom.	Telecom.	Auto.	Fuel and Energy	Retail - Sports	Pharma.
Date of recording	April 2015	August 2016	September 2016	November 2018	February 2018	April 2018
Duration of recording	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1,5 hours	45 minutes
Title of the interviewee	Marketing Specialist	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Specialist	Marketing Manager
Sources of data collected	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Telephone interview and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions
	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes

Table 13 Summary of Fieldwork: Alliance Partner Brands

Related Case	**Telecom.**	**Telecom.**	**Telecom.**	**Telecom.**	**Telecom. & Auto.**
Brand	*Beta1*	*Beta2*	*Beta3*	*Beta4*	*Beta5*
Category	*Entertainment*	*E-commerce-Gift*	Tobacco	*Sports - Football*	*Service - Concierge*
Date of recording	August 2016	January 2018	February 2018	February 2018	April 2018
Duration of recording	1 hour	1 hour	1,5 hours	1,5 hours	45 minutes
Title of the interviewee	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager	Marketing Manager
Sources of data collected	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Telephone interview and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions	Face to face interview recorded by Voice Recorder and email correspondence for further questions
	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes	Additional data collection from: Public sources and field notes

3.5.3. Interview Guide

To conduct pilot interviews for the study, themes that are emerged from the literature review are used to develop the questions for the interview guide. The theoretical framework showed a way of shaping the outline of the interview guide. It is vital to develop a thorough qualitative semi-structured interview guide to enhance the objectivity and trustworthiness of the research and for more reasonable results (Kallio et al. 2016).

A semi-structured interview is a hybrid type of interview that enables not only the usage of predetermined themes as in the structured interviews but also the flexibility for the participant to talk freely about any emerging topic in the interview (Wahyuni 2012). For building a rigorous interview guide for this study, the following five stages are followed as recommended by Kallio et al. (2016):

- Fundamentals for using semi-structured interviews are identified, e.g. the need for studying people's perceptions and opinions on a specific research topic.
- Previous knowledge is retrieved and used after the literature review phase.
- The preliminary semi-structured interview guide is formulated with main themes and follow-up questions.
- A pilot interview is made with Alpha1 Marketing Specialist to correct any ambiguities in the interview guide and to improve the questions for further interviews. The pilot interview is conducted in English. A pilot interview is recommended to reveal any difficulties that might emerge during the interviews, and to minimise the flaws in data collection (Harding 2018).
- The views of the pilot interview participant about the order of questions, the length of the interview, and the wordings of the questions are considered (Harding 2018) to improve the interview guide. After moving two of the questions into more relevant sections and removing one extra question which was very similar to another question, the semi-structured interview guide is finalised after the pilot interview which is presented in Table 14 below.

Table 14 Interview Guide

Part 1 (Theme: The Brand)
• Can you give some information about yourself? • What is the mission, vision and philosophy of your company? • Can you explain your company's size and sector? • What is your current business strategy and activities? • Please provide some information about your marketing activities – what are your objectives and strategies?
Part 2 (Theme: The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Strategy)
• Do you make brand alliances with other brands? • What type of brand alliances do you have? (Within your sector or with other sector brands?) • How do you form a brand alliance with other brands? • How often do you make brand alliances? • How long your alliances last? • Why do you need to make an alliance? (Haksever et al. 2004) • How do you choose your partner brand? • Do your competitors also make brand alliances?
Part 3 (Theme: Nature of the relationship)
• For how long do you know the partner? • How was the firm introduced to the partner? • What do you know about the partner, its needs, resources, strategies, and business context? • How did you develop all that you know about the partner? Through interaction? • Did you invest in order to develop this knowledge about your partner? • What are the assets used in the relationship? • How do you interact with your partner? (face-to-face, through other firms etc.) (Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016) • Do you perceive the common interest for the long term? • How important is to satisfy the needs of the partner? • Who controls the relationship in the alliance? • Who has more power in the alliance? • What is the extent of engagement with the partner? • What is the level of participation from both partners? • Are there any other actors in the alliance other than brand partners? • How do you coordinate your activities during the alliance?
Part 4 (Theme: Value Co-Creation Type)
• What are your activities with the partner in terms of marketing, branding during the alliance? • What are your expectations about these marketing activities? • What are the benefits and impacts of an alliance in your marketing & branding strategy?
Part 5 (Theme: Value Co-Creation)
• What are you willing to pay/give in an alliance? (Porter 1985) • What are the transactions and exchange between two partners? (Zeithaml 1988, Vargo et al. 2008) • What are the benefits expected and achieved? (Zeithaml 1988) • What are the sacrifices made during those transactions? (Zeithaml 1988) • How do you know that you gained a benefit from the alliance? What are your criteria? (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008, 2016)

• What is the contribution of each partner to the alliance outcome? How do you evaluate your contribution? (Dixon 1990, Vargo et al. 2008) • How do you evaluate the experience during the interaction with the partner? Can you mention any examples? What would they suggest making the alliance better in order to have better benefit? Is the interaction planned?) (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016) • What your value proposition for the alliance? How or to what extent your partner intervenes in alliance value proposition? Which actors participate during the interaction? (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016) How is value proposition achieved? Which actors intervene? (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016) • Which type of value is used in the alliance? What value do you co-create with the partner? • How can we define your value co-creation type? • 1.co-producer • 2.co-distributor • 3.co-promoter • 4.co-manufacturer • 5.co-consumer • 6. experience creator • 7.co-innovator • 8.co-ideator • 9.co-evaluator • 10.co-designer • 11.co-tester • Would you like to add any other type of co-creation relation among your alliances?
Part 6 (Theme: VCC Process)
• How is the value co-created during the alliance? • Which processes (human, technology, and procedures) are used in the alliance? • Which roles does your company play in the alliance? • Which resources do you put in the alliance? • Which capabilities do you utilize during the alliance?
Part 7 (Theme: Value Co-Creation Outcomes)
• Do you learn specific skills, ways during an alliance? • What do you learn from your partners? • Did you learn things that developed your skills, the way you do things, the way you operate your activities? • Are they useful for your later relations and operations? (in the network, against competitors, with suppliers, partners)

3.5.3.1. Interview Guide Themes

The themes of the interview guide are determined after the initial literature review and finalised to answer the research questions of this study. In total, 52 questions are developed to be asked in the semi-structured interviews (Table 14). After the pilot interview, one question was removed from the interview guide as it was very similar to a previous question in the previous sections. One question about the "Value Co-Creation" theme was moved to "The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Strategy" theme section. Another question from the "Value Co-Creation" section was moved to "The Nature of the Relationship" theme section because it was revealed after the pilot interview that the question about the interaction was more related to the nature of the relationship theme.

The first five questions of the final interview guide are related to "The Brand" theme and included introductory questions about the participant and the brand the participant worked for. The following eight questions are about "The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Strategy" theme, which aimed to gather insights about the brand's alliance strategy. Fifteen questions are developed about "The Nature of the Relationship" theme to identify the relationship details between the partner brands. To understand the insights about the "Value Co-Creation" theme, twelve questions are prepared. Further insights about the value co-creation are gathered through 3 questions about the "Value Co-Creation Type" theme, five questions about the "Value Co-Creation Process" theme, and four questions about the "Value Co-Creation Outcomes" theme. The interview guide themes and the articles that the questions are based on are summarised in Table 15 below.

Table 15 Interview Guide Themes

Interview Guide Themes	**Related Articles**
The Brand	Samu, Krishnan and Smith (1999); Rao, Qu and Ruekert (1999); Samuelsen, Olsen and Keller (2015)
The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Strategy (One question was moved to this section after the pilot interview)	Smarandescu et al. (2011;2013)
Nature of the Relationship in the Alliance (One question was moved to this section after the pilot interview)	Porter (1985); Rao, Qu and Ruekert (1999); Samuelsen, Olsen and Keller (2015); Smarandescu et al. (2011;2013)
Value Co-Creation (Two questions were moved to other sections after the pilot interview)	Haksever et al. (2004); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Porter (1985); Zeithaml (1988); Vargo et al. (2008); Vargo and Lusch (2004); Dixon (1990); Kohtamaki and Rajala (2016)
Value Co-Creation Process	Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008; 2016); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Kohtamaki and Rajala (2016); Pera, Occhiocupo and Clarke (2016)
Value Co-Creation Types	Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008; 2016); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Kohtamaki and Rajala (2016)
Value Co-Creation Outcomes (One question was removed after the pilot interview)	Cristoffersen (2013); Cristoffersen, Plenborg and Robson (2014); Lunnan and Haugland (2008)

3.5.3.2. Translation of the Interview Guide

The interview guide is translated into Turkish for the respondents who prefer answering the questions in Turkish. Five respondents out of eleven interviews preferred answering the questions in Turkish. McGorry (2000) points out that it is not sufficient to literally translate the measuring instrument to deliver the equivalent of the instrument in multilanguage research. The author adds that cultural translation is essential as well to deliver similar meanings in different languages. Furthermore, Sumathipala and Murray (2000) suggest that translation and back translation of an instrument would not be adequate to provide a culturally appropriate translation. The authors suggest a group translation approach to correct any ambiguities in the translation.

To generate a culturally appropriate translation, the researcher and two independent translators translated the interview guide from English to Turkish. They finalised the questions to convey the correct meanings of the concepts in Turkish. The translators are selected from native Turkish speakers who have an academic background. Two independent translators who completed the translations were working in two different universities as academic staff during the study. While all respondents in the interviews were bilingual who know both Turkish and English, five respondents chose to answer the questions in Turkish. Out of the five participants who completed the interview in Turkish, two of them were from case study brands (Alpha2 and Alpha5) and three of them were from alliance partner brands (Beta3, Beta4, and Beta5). The translation process of the interview transcripts is further explained in the next section.

3.5.4. Transcription and Translation of Interviews

Before performing the final data analysis with the help of NVivo 11, all recorded interviews are transcribed and translated if the recorded version is not in English. To improve the data analysis process in NVivo, the customer support expert of NVivo is contacted about the choice of translation and transcription steps. Taking the advice of customer support expert into consideration, the recorded audios that are not in English are translated and transcribed simultaneously with notes about emotional expressions included as memos.

Back-translation of the translated transcripts are done by the same independent translators who translated the interview guide to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the translation process (Chen and Boore 2009). Back-translated transcripts are translated again to the target language, which is English. The anonymised transcriptions and translations are double-checked by the same translators to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. The transcribed data are then coded in Nvivo by grouping them into major themes.

3.5.5. Ethical Considerations

It is critical to take the necessary precautions for the ethical issues that might arise during case study qualitative research. Any ethical principle aims to protect the participants in a study from potential harm, and it is imperative to reduce the risk of unanticipated harm in any research study (Orb et al. 2001; DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree 2006). The "Research Ethics Code of Practice" of Bournemouth University recommends following the guidelines stated to achieve the highest quality academic and ethical standards while conducting research (Bournemouth University 2017).

The researcher of this study completed the ethical review and approval process of Bournemouth University before starting the part of the research, which includes contact with human participants in interviews. Participant information sheets and consent forms are prepared accordingly before conducting the initial interviews. According to DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree (2006), the following ethical issues that are related to the interview process should be addressed:

- Protection of participant's information
- Giving detailed information about the nature of the study to the participants effectively
- Reduction of the exploitation risk

To reduce these potential risks, all participants of this study are given detailed information sheets about the nature and details of the study to inform them effectively about the aims of the research. Most ethics guidelines propose to mask the personal identities of the participants of research to normalise the anonymity of the participants (Saunders et al. 2015). Written consent is taken from the participants with the promise of protecting their anonymity. Anonymity is a type of confidentiality to keep the identities of the interview participants secret (Saunders et al. 2015). In the data analysis section, the generic job titles of "Marketing Manager" or "Marketing Specialist" are used to keep the confidentiality of the participants. All the interviewed participants work in the marketing department of their companies which is responsible for managing the brand alliances in the organisation. The company names are disguised with the combination of letters and numbers to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

All the candidates of the interviews were free to choose to participate or not after reading the information sheets and consent forms. When a participant was asked to answer further questions after the first interview, they had the choice of participation and the right of disengagement from the study at any time. In one case, the participant did not want to answer further questions in the interview to protect the confidentiality of the brand. The questions are removed from the transcript, as requested by the participant. The participants are not exploited for personal gain, and their contributions are acknowledged (DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree 2006).

3.6. Data Analysis

3.6.1. Data Analysis Process

After following the path of qualitative research methods of case studies for data collection; the researcher of this study analysed data from semi-structured interviews, field data collected during the research, secondary data such as reports and written documents about the case studies. To assist in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews of this study, NVivo 11 is used, which is a powerful computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS).

While the software programs are a great aid in data management and the analysis process; the experience, discipline and expertise of the researcher are the critical elements for the success and excellence of qualitative research analysis (DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Three stages of qualitative analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994) are data reduction of interview transcripts and field notes; display of data in tables for definitions and themes, diagrams to show the relations; and final stage of drawing conclusion and verification is applied during the data analysis stage. The thematic analysis approach is used to identify the patterns in the dataset. (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Coding is the first step in the analysis of the text by selecting text and identifying it with a theme (Harrell and Bradley 2009). After the completion of coding, patterns, and relations between themes will be searched, which helps to understand what kind of situations or examples led to different themes (Harrell and Bradley 2009). Emerged patterns between the themes are used to develop diagrams that depict the relations between brand resources during the value co-creation process.

The analysis of interviews, field notes and secondary data about the cases with the help of NVivo 11 helped to develop patterns and themes, which are the fruit of qualitative research (Patton 2005). For the triangulation of data, field notes collected during the research and secondary data about the cases and brand alliances are used in the data analysis process. In the next section, the steps of data analysis are explained in more detail.

3.6.2. Five-Level Qualitative Data Analysis Method

Woolf and Silver (2017) recommend a five-level qualitative data analysis (QDA) method to reconcile the contradictions between the nature of qualitative analysis and computer software. The method is used in this study to harness the usage of NVivo CAQDAS for thematic data analysis. The authors describe one level QDA as the consideration of qualitative analysis and the operations of the software as a single process. When the strategies and tactics are not differentiated and thought as a single activity, the research progress stops during one-level QDA method (Woolf and Silver 2017). According to the authors (p. 20), the addition of another position as a middle step between qualitative analytic strategies and software tactics is called three-level QDA.

However, the compromise between the emergent style of QDA and cut-and-dried way of CAQDAS does not fully reflect the intentions and weakens the emergent nature of QDA in the three-level QDA method (Woolf and Silver 2017). Therefore, Woolf and Silver (2017) propose the five-level QDA method to surpass the contradiction between the nature of QDA strategies and the nature of CAQDAS tactics. In the five-level QDA method, the researcher harnesses the CAQDAS (e.g. NVivo) rather than just operating it by going back and forth between the QDA strategies and CAQDAS tactics to match the natures of them without compromising any.

In addition to the two levels of strategy and two levels of tactics, the fifth level in the method between other levels is called translation. The authors claim that NVivo strongly provides the tools for the translation level as a bridge between the strategies and tactics. Five levels of the method are summarised in Table 16 and Figure 14. The five-level QDA method that is proposed by Woolf and Silver is used in this study to improve the usage of CAQDAS as an assistant in the qualitative data analysis process.

Table 16 The Five Levels of the Five-Level QDA Method

Two Levels of Strategy ->>>>>>>>>>>		**Translated to->>**	**>>>Two Levels of Tactics**	
Level 1	***Level 2***	***Level 3***	***Level 4***	***Level 5***
Objectives	**Analytic Plan**	**Translation**	**Selected Tools**	**Constructed tools**
The purpose and context of the study (i.e. research questions and methodology)	The conceptual framework and analytic tasks resulted from the conceptual framework	Translation from analytic tasks to CAQDAS tools and translation of the results back again	Choice of individual CAQDAS options	Sophisticated use of CAQDAS by combining operations or performing them in a customised way

(Adapted from Woolf and Silver 2017, p. 27)

At the first level of the five-level QDA method developed by Woolf and Silver (2017), the purpose and context of the study are determined to set the precise objectives of the research. Clarifying the objectives of the study helps to decide on the research methods to be used, which will enhance the usage of NVivo CAQDAS for data analysis (Woolf and Silver 2017). To reach this aim of the first level, the research objectives of this study are determined and revisited for clarification after a thorough literature review, the preliminary interview and the feedback from peers and academics during the conferences and workshops.

Similarly, the methodology and the methods of the study are decided by reviewing the alternatives. At the preliminary stage, a mixed-methods approach was considered to include quantitative data analysis of surveys with end customers. However, after narrowing down the research topic to B2B context; qualitative research is determined as the methodology of the study. Among several alternatives, the case study method is chosen to analyse the value co-creation process in the brand alliances. After considering the use of different tools for qualitative data analysis, NVivo is determined as the CAQDAS to use firstly because of its advanced features and secondly because of the training and customer support it provides. A two-day workshop to learn NVivo was attended by the researcher to develop qualitative analysis skills and perform a better QDA with the support of the software.

The second level of five-level QDA (Woolf and Silver 2017) involves the preparation of an analytic plan by converting the research objectives into a conceptual framework and performing a set of analytic tasks. In the authors' words, "a conceptual framework is a set of concepts that are related to one another" (Woolf and Silver 2017, p. 37). In the five-level QDA method, analytical tasks are derived from the conceptual framework, and they are essential blocks of the method. Although Woolf and Silver use the conceptual framework term to explain the plans of action to complete the tasks of research, the conceptual framework also helps to operationalise the research by connecting the research questions and aims of the study to the literature review in a research design (Green 2014).

The theoretical framework of this study is developed after a thorough literature review about the theory of the firm, brand alliances and value co-creation topics. The research questions are used as a basis in the development of a framework to link the findings of the literature review to the developed concepts. The conceptual framework is like a map that shows the next analytic task to complete in the research, because of the iterative nature of the process, the tasks are the outcomes of the previous one (Woolf and Silver 2017). After developing the conceptual framework; the analytical tasks of preparing the interview guide, determining the data collection method, choosing the participants of the study and conducting a pilot interview are performed before the data analysis stage of this study. After the pilot interview, the interview guide is revisited, and the changes are applied for that specific analytic task.

The iterative cycle continued with contacting the potential participants and arranging the interviews for the data collection task. The data collection task is conducted by semi-structured interviews with the participants. The outcome of the interview task was to transcribe and translate the interviews where necessary. The data is collated with the field notes and secondary data collected through the research as preparation of the data analysis stage.

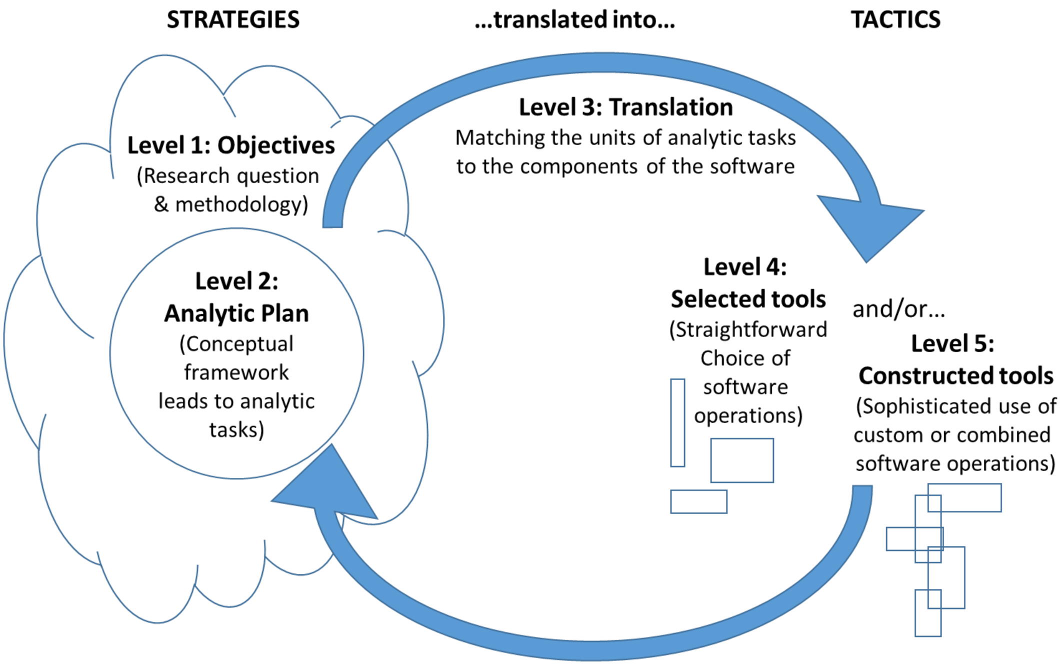
At the third level of five-level QDA, the analytical tasks and strategies are transformed into tactics and matched to software operations which are labelled as "translation"

(Woolf and Silver 2017). As thematic analysis is used in this study as the qualitative data analysis method; the analytical tasks of initial coding, searching for the themes, refining the themes and developing the final report (Braun and Clarke 2006) are matched with the tools in NVivo to conduct these analytics tasks. Two-day NVivo workshop that was attended by the researcher helped to “translate” the analytic tasks into the features of the NVivo software. The necessary tools are matched with the tasks and identified in NVivo software to assist the coding, finding the patterns in the data and developing themes stages of the data analysis process by applying the learnings from the workshop. The fourth level of the five-level QDA method is a straightforward outcome of the third level, in which the tools in the NVivo software are chosen for each analytic task.

At the fifth level, the next action to conduct is developing alternative tools when the existing tools do not match the analytical tasks. The construction of alternative tools by combining operations or finding a custom way to perform necessitates the sophisticated use of NVivo software. The customisation of tools might require using a sequence of software operations in some cases (Woolf and Silver 2017). After the researcher got familiar with using NVivo, the tools of the software are customised to satisfy the needs of analytical tasks. As an example, the researcher used memos feature of Nvivo software to take notes about the facial expressions of study participants while answering a question in the interview. Adding keywords about the expressions on the memo made it easier to analyse what the participants meant (i.e. if it is a positive or negative reaction) in their answers.

Another example is collating the field notes and secondary data about the relevant interview data in the NVivo folders to use the advanced tools of the software for searching keywords. The process of five-level QDA is summarised in the diagram below. The sequence of the steps is not predetermined. It can be repeated or passed depending on the necessities of the data analysis process. Still, the process continues in one-way direction only, which reflects “*the iterative and emergent spirit of qualitative research*” (Woolf and Silver 2017, p. 54). The five-level QDA method is used by the researcher as guidance to enhance the usage of NVivo CAQDAS to support the thematic analysis of the data collected.

Figure 14 The Levels of Five-Level QDA Method



(Adapted from Woolf and Silver 2017, p. 56)

3.6.3. Thematic Analysis

In qualitative research, it is the qualitative researcher's responsibility to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the research by showing how the analysis is conducted via coding and theming the data (Nowell et al. 2017). Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are qualitative descriptive design techniques that are used to analyse textual data and reveal the theme of the content (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). Thematic analysis is mostly used in qualitative analysis because of its accessibility and flexibility (Cooper et al. 2012).

For researchers who conduct a qualitative analysis, thematic analysis is a foundational method (Braun and Clarke 2006). Besides, the thematic analysis is helpful to summarize the significant features of an extensive data set with a well-structured method (Nowell et al. 2017). The thematic analysis is described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.79). The systematic process of coding, investigating the meaning and providing social reality description by creating themes is the fundamental characteristic of thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al. 2016).

To assure confidence in the findings, the thematic analysis should be conducted with extra care and attention to the transparency of the method (Castleberry and Nolen 2018). Despite its straightforward application, the researcher should avoid the pitfalls of thematic analysis, such as lack of analytic narrative or using the interview questions as the themes in the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this research, thematic analysis is used as a method to analyse the data to identify the patterns in the collected data and provide the explanation of social reality through the developed themes.

To understand the other steps of thematic development, it is essential to clarify the meaning and significance of theme in the thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82), "theme captures something important about the data concerning the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set". Vaismoradi et al. (2016) state theme as the main product of data analysis which produces practical results.

The themes are used to address the research or propose something about a topic (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). The themes do not need to depend on quantifiable measures (Braun and Clarke 2006). They can be generated inductively by analysing raw data or deductively by investigating the theory and past studies (Nowell et al. 2017). There are two levels of themes that are classified by Braun and Clarke (2006) which are semantic (i.e. explicit) and latent (i.e. interpretative) levels.

At the semantic level, the researcher is descriptive about the meanings of the data. On the other hand, the researcher attempts to identify the underlying ideas in the data at the latent level (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this study, the themes are developed at a latent level to support the thematic analysis of the data.

For the thematic analysis, the six-phased method of Braun and Clarke (2006) is applied in this research. Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed the steps of thematic analysis as (1) familiarising yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. The details of the thematic analysis phases are summarised in Table 17 below.

Table 17 Thematic Analysis Phases

Phase	Action
1.Familiarising yourself with data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2.Generating Initial Codes	Coding interesting data features systematically, matching all data with relevant codes
3.Searching for Themes	Combining codes and relevant data in the potential themes
4.Reviewing Themes	Reviewing potential themes against the coded extracts and the data set to develop a thematic analysis map
5.Defining and Naming Themes	Refining the themes, and clarifying the names and definitions of the themes
6.Producing the Report	Final analysis and linking the analysis to the literature, research questions and conceptual framework to produce an analysis report

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 87)

In the first phase of the thematic analysis, the interviews are transcribed and read to note down preliminary ideas as reflective notes of the researcher in NVivo 11 software. It is essential to develop the coding strategy before the start of coding after an extensive literature review (Castleberry and Nolen 2018).

In the second phase, the interesting features in all interviews are coded systematically by using NVivo 11 software and the parts of data are matched with the relevant codes. The field notes and secondary data about the brand alliances that are mentioned in the case studies are used to enhance the coding process.

After coding, the codes are combined in the potential themes during the third phase. The potential themes are reviewed against the coded extracts and the data set to develop a thematic analysis map in the fourth phase. After the revision of themes, the themes are refined to clarify the names and definitions during the fifth phase.

The report of the analysis is produced in the final phase as a discussion of the findings by linking the analysis examples to the literature, research questions and conceptual framework. The theoretical framework is revisited and revised based on the findings to develop a final framework as an outcome of the study. Following the six phases of the thematic analysis is also critical to improve the trustworthiness of the research (Nowell et al. 2017).

3.6.4. Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo

In this section, the significance of computer-aided software usage in qualitative data analysis is discussed, and the choice of NVivo is explained. The section continues with the summary of five-level qualitative data analysis (QDA) method to enhance QDA with NVivo that is developed by Woolf and Silver (2017). The details of how five-level QDA is applied to this study are given at the final part of the section. Although the usage of computer-aided software in data analysis is mostly associated with quantitative data analysis (Bezborodova and Bennett 2015), electronic data analysis is increasingly used in qualitative data analysis (Zamawe 2015). The data analysis software helps qualitative researchers to enhance the efficiency, multiplicity and transparency of the research (Hoover and Koerber 2011). However, there is a reluctance in marketing research to use computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) due to the barriers of the learning process and familiarisation with the software (Bezborodova and Bennett 2015).

In its nature, qualitative data analysis is contradictory to computer software as the former is emergent, and the latter is cut-and-dried (Woolf and Silver 2017). Still, use of CAQDAS in qualitative data analysis boosts the speed and accuracy (Zamawe 2015) and the rigour and flexibility of the analysis (Hoover and Koerber 2011; Lu and Shulman 2008) when combined with the traditional methods (Maher et al. 2018). It should be noted that any CAQDAS is used to help the researcher to analyse the data, not to analyse the data itself (Zamawe 2015). It is the researcher who is the main analysis tool and who utilises CAQDAS to support the qualitative data analysis (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011).

NVivo is one of the popular CAQDAS that provides good data management and retrieval features, and support for analysis and report (Maher et al. 2018). In contrast to the rivals of NVivo such as ATLAS. ti, MAXQDA, QDA Miner; NVivo can handle a wider range of data formats and gives a better balance between ease of use and power than the competitors (Hoover and Koerber 2011). On the other hand, the features of the software should be improved to meet the unique needs of marketing researchers

(Bezborodova and Bennett 2015). NVivo supports qualitative researchers with different types of data analysis techniques. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011, p. 70) summarise these techniques as (1) constant comparison analysis, (2) classical content analysis, (3) key-word-in-context, (4) word count, (5) domain analysis, (6) taxonomic analysis, and (7) componential analysis.

The efficiency, multiplicity and transparency provided by NVivo adds depth and rigour to the qualitative research projects (Hoover and Koerber 2011). In addition, Nvivo enhances the accuracy and speed of the qualitative data analysis process (Zamawe 2015). Furthermore, NVivo can be used to support analysis on different types of qualitative data such as interviews, observational data and notes; and for different research design types such as case study, participant observation, and grounded theory (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011). In addition, NVivo has the advantage of advanced data management capabilities and superior visual and kinaesthetic data interaction modes than a basic computer software (Maher et al. 2018).

In this research, NVivo 11 is used as the data analysis tool to support the thematic analysis of case study interviews and field notes because of its superiority to other CAQDAS (Hoover and Koerber 2011) despite its limitations for marketing research (Bezborodova and Bennett 2015). The data analysis techniques that are used during the analysis are stated in the findings chapter of the study.

3.7. The Rigour of the Study

Whether it is quantitative or qualitative; any research should be assessed in terms of reliability of the research method, the validity of the analysis and findings, and integrity of discussion and conclusion by ensuring openness to critique and evaluation (Long and Johnson 2000). While the validity and reliability are the concepts mostly associated with quantitative analysis (Golafshani 2003; Cypress 2017), ensuring the rigour and trustworthiness of the qualitative research is accepted to cover the issues of validity and reliability (Cypress 2017).

Trustworthiness is an important criterion in qualitative studies to evaluate the rigour of the study. It can be ensured by the criterion of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Maher et al. 2018). The trustworthiness of the study can only be demonstrated by conducting precise, consistent data analysis via recording, systematizing and disclosing the analysis methods (Nowell et al. 2017, p.1). Because of the lack of clarity on examining trustworthiness in qualitative research; Morse (2015) suggests the usage of reliability, validity and generalisability concepts of social sciences to determine the rigour of qualitative research.

Furthermore, for the case study method that is used in the qualitative data analysis of this study, Yin (2009) recommends testing construct validity, internal validity, external validity (generalisability) and reliability. The tactics recommended by Yin are summarised in Table 18 below. The methods and tactics that are used to ensure the validity, reliability and generalisability of this study are explained in the following sections.

Table 18 Case Study Tactics for Design Tests

Tests	**Case Study Tactic**	**The phase of Research in which tactic occurs**
Construct Validity	• Evidence should be supported by multiple sources • Chain of evidence should be established • Draft case study report should be reviewed by key informants	• Data collection • Data collection • Composition
Internal Validity	• Pattern matching should be done • Explanation building should be done • Rival explanations should be addressed • Logic models should be used	• Data analysis • Data analysis • Data analysis • Data analysis
External Validity (Generalisability)	• The theory should be used in single-case studies • Replication logic should be used in multiple-case studies	• Research design • Research design
Reliability	• The case study protocol should be used • Case study database should be developed	• Data collection • Data collection

(Adapted from Yin 2009, p. 41)

3.7.1. Construct Validity and Internal Validity

The traditional definition of validity in positivist science methodology is “the degree to which the indicators or variables of a research concept are made measurable, accurately represent the concept (Lub 2015, p.2). However, this definition does not fit to naturalistic research as the emphasis of the qualitative research is not on the measurable variables (Lub 2015). The validity of qualitative research is determined by the level of representation of the actual phenomenon by the research (Morse 2015). The validity of the methods depends on how appropriate the methods are to solve the problems of the research (Maher et al. 2018). For the case study method, testing the construct validity and internal validity of the research is critical to ensure the quality of the study (Yin 2009).

Construct validity of the study is about identifying whether the operational measures used for the concepts in the study are correct or not (Yin 2009). As recommended by Yin (2009) as a tactic to provide construct validity of the case study research design, the evidence of this study is collected from multiple sources which are the primary data from the interviews, field notes of the researcher, and secondary data collected about the brand alliances during the study. The use of multiple sources of evidence not only provides data triangulation but also enables the researcher to address a wider range of issues and therefore improves the quality of the study (Yin 2009).

The second and third tactics for the construct validity, which are maintaining the chain of evidence and reviewing the draft report, are ensured by the external observation of the supervisors of the researcher from the first step of developing initial research questions to the final step of deriving conclusions. The draft reports of the study are reviewed at various stages of the research to improve the quality of the study. Any corrections during the review process improve the construct validity and accuracy of the study (Yin 2009).

The inferences during the research are the main concern for the internal validity of case study research (Yin 2009). Pattern matching is one of the tactics Yin recommended to improve the internal validity of the research. As multi-cases are analysed by thematic analysis in this study, pattern matching is done by identifying patterns and themes in the case study database of evidence from multiple sources with the support of NVivo CAQDAS. A cross-case analysis of patterns also improves the pattern matching process for better internal validity (Yin 2009). Rival explanations of the patterns and themes from different studies are analysed at the data analysis stage. Explanation building tactic for internal validity (Yin 2009) is applied by following the steps of making initial theoretical statements during the theoretical framework development stage, comparing the findings of the collected data against the framework statements, and revising and reviewing the statement of the framework after discussing the comparison of different cases.

In addition to the tactics to improve the validity of case study research, other tactics are used to enhance the validity of other data analysis methods that are used in the study. For instance, reflective notes are written in NVivo CAQDAS during the thematic analysis process, which supports the validity of theme development (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). There are several ways to assess the validity and quality of the coding in NVivo CAQDAS such as viewing the coded-references out of context, viewing the coded-references in context, and extracting and reporting the coded-references (Woolf and Silver 2017). These recommended steps are followed during the qualitative data analysis of the study, which is supported by NVivo CAQDAS to increase the validity of the qualitative research process.

3.7.2. Generalisability (External Validity)

The generalisability component of rigour is also named as external validity. It is the extendibility of the findings to other settings than the ones used in the research itself (Morse 2015). Yin (2009) states that external validity determines the domain to which the findings of the study can be generalised. Some researchers find the concept of generalisability irrelevant to qualitative research. Still, it is important to start with the aim of answering the questions of what is generalised and how the research can be designed to maximise the generalisability. One way of research design to maximise generalisability is by studying heterogeneous cases for the research (Schofield 2002). The choice of multiple case study research design is ideal in terms of enabling comparisons and providing a better understanding of the observed practices (Wahyuni 2012). Yin (2009) defines this concept as replication logic and recommends the usage of a theoretical framework to test literal and theoretical replications among multiple case studies.

In this research, different product categories of brands are used in multiple case studies for data collection and analysis. The aim of using different brand product categories is to increase the heterogeneity of the study for maximum generalisability. The interview guide is developed by reviewing the literature on brand alliances and value co-creation. The theoretical framework helped to compare and contrast the findings of case studies.

Although the research is conducted in one country setting, it can be applied in other country settings by asking the same questions in the interview guide to different participants from other product categories of brands than the categories that are used in this study. Aggregating and comparing the findings from different cases is another way of maximising generalisability (Schofield 2002). The data collected from the interviews, field notes and secondary data are aggregated by the support of NVivo CAQDAS. The emerging patterns are identified by thematic analysis. This process helped to compare the cases simultaneously by using the advanced features of the software for qualitative analysis.

3.7.3. Reliability

The reliability of qualitative research is related to the quality of the study in terms of generating understanding about the phenomenon it investigates (Golafshani 2003). The reliability of research is defined as “the ability to obtain the same results if the study were to be repeated” (Morse 2015, p.1213). Yin (2009) emphasises that the researcher should exhibit the operations of the study (e.g. data collection procedures) can be reiterated with the same findings. It is critical to examine the trustworthiness in qualitative research to ensure the reliability of the study (Golafshani 2003).

Maintaining the chain of evidence during the research not only improves the construct validity of the study but also contributes to the reliability of the information in the case study research (Yin 2009). In addition, Yin (2009) recommends the usage of case study protocol which includes the documentation of procedures and the development of case study database to ensure the reliability of the study. In this study, the procedures of data analysis are documented (i.e. the stages of data collection and analysis, five-level QDA method about the usage of NVivo in the study, development of interview guide and conceptual framework) as a case study protocol so the study can be repeated for further research. The case study database is developed with the support of NVivo which stores the data collected from the interviews, researcher's reflective notes about the interviews, field notes of the researcher and the secondary data collected about the brand alliances related to the case studies. Thus, the reliability of the case study research is enhanced with the tactics that are recommended by Yin (2009).

Furthermore, there are additional tactics that are used at different stages of the study to improve the reliability of research. One of the ways to check the reliability of qualitative coding is comparing the coding done by the researcher with the coding done by other team members (Woolf and Silver 2017). To ensure the reliability of the coding of the study in NVivo CAQDAS, the coding of the interviews was compared with the coding of at least one different researcher at the first level of the coding. The outlier codes were eliminated before moving to the stage of theme development as a result of the comparison. The comparison process not only helps to achieve coder reliability but also enhances the understanding of the qualitative data (Woolf and Silver 2017).

3.8. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the research methodology of the study is discussed in detail. The research questions and research approach are summarised before explaining the philosophical position of the researcher. Data collection and data sampling methods, information about the sample country selection and the selection of brand alliances, interview conduct, and the development of the interview guide are discussed in the data collection section. In the data analysis section, the data analysis method and thematic analysis are explained with more details about how NVivo is used to assist the qualitative data analysis. The five-level qualitative data analysis with NVivo is explained, and the details of how the method is applied to the study are given. Validity and reliability issues are discussed in the rigour of the study section. The next chapter explores the case studies of this research by giving an overview of the cases and by presenting the findings of the case studies.

4. Chapter 4 Findings

4.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the findings of the interviews, field notes and secondary data about brand alliances are presented in detail to identify the answers to the following research questions:

- How and which types of value are co-created by partner brands?
    - What are the potential risks that can emerge during the value co-creation process?
- Which resources and capabilities do partner brands utilise to co-create value?
- How are the resources and capabilities connected to the brand alliance outcomes and co-created value?

The chapter starts with the section, which gives an overview of the cases. It continues with the case by case analysis section. The relations between the alliance partner brands are depicted in the diagrams at the start of each case study section. The findings of the brand alliances between case study brands are analysed separately in the case by case analysis sections considering the alliance from each brand's perspective. After the case by case analysis, cross-case analysis is presented in Section 4.4. Emerging themes are grouped in the subsections and summarised in tables. The similarities and differences between cases are discussed in these subsections. Evidence from field notes and secondary data are used to support the findings of the interviews.

4.2. Case Study Brands Overview

In this section, the details about the case studies are introduced in each relevant sub-section. The categories of the brands, the context and background of the cases with information about the brand category are explained. The aim of the section is forming a clear picture of the case studies before analysing the findings of the data. The names of the brands in the case studies and interviews are disguised to protect the anonymity and privacy of the study participants. The disguised names of the brands and their product or service categories can be seen in Table 19 and Table 20 below. Although the case studies are chosen from Turkey, the country of origin of the brands vary. The information provided in this section is summarised from the interviews made with the marketing department employees of the case study brands and their alliance partner brands, field notes and secondary data collected about the cases.

Table 19 List of the Case Study Brands

Case Study Brand	**Product / Service Category**
Alpha1	Telecommunications
Alpha2	Automotive
Alpha3	Fuel and Gas
Alpha4	Retail - Sports
Alpha5	Pharmaceutical

Table 20 List of the Alliance Partner Brands

Partner Brand	**Product / Service Category**
Beta1	Entertainment - Family
Beta1A	*Sub-brand of Beta1*
Beta1B	*Sub-brand of Beta1A*
Beta1C	*Sub-brand of Beta1*
Beta1D	*Sub-brand of Beta1*
Beta2	E-Commerce - Gifts
Beta3	Tobacco
Beta3A	*Sub-brand of Beta3*
Beta3B	*Sub-brand of Beta3*
Beta3C	*Sub-brand of Beta3*
Beta3D	*Sub-brand of Beta3*
Beta3E	*Sub-brand of Beta3*
Beta4	Sports - Football
Beta4A	*Sub-brand of Beta4*
Beta5	Service - Concierge
Beta5A	*Sub-brand of Beta5*

4.2.1. Alpha1 Case (Telecommunications)

According to the interviews made with the marketing manager and marketing specialist employees of the company, Alpha1 is a telecommunications and technology brand that operates in Turkey. They form several brand alliances with brands from their product category or other product categories every year. The brand alliances are made for different customer segments by the loyalty marketing and marketing partnerships department. While most of the customers of the brand are individual users, the brand also provides service for business and enterprise customers.

In the telecommunications sector in Turkey, three major competitors provide GSM, fixed-line and broadband services with more than 73 million internet users shared between them (BTK 2018). The telecommunications brands in Turkey form brand alliances with mobile phone producers such as Apple, Samsung and Huawei to supply the latest technology to their customers. In addition, they conduct several cross-category brand alliances with brands from different product categories to create benefits for their different customer segments (Finans360 2019).

The competition in the sector increased after the start of mobile number portability in 2011, which allowed customers to use their existing phone numbers when they switch to another mobile operator (BTK 2018). The brands in the telecommunications sector aim to stay competitive by offering various campaigns through the cross-category brand alliances they conduct with innovative campaign methods (Finans360 2019). The customer benefits they provide through cross-category brand alliances are classified according to the customer segments they serve, such as mass, high-value customers, youth and business (Tarhan 2011).

4.2.2. Alpha2 Case (Automotive)

In the interview, Alpha2 marketing manager stated that Alpha2 is an automotive brand that operates and produces automobiles in Turkey for a long time. The brand cooperates with other brands from different product categories for their marketing communication activities. The brand's products range from family cars to cars for small and medium-sized enterprises.

According to the annual automotive sales report of 2018 (ODD 2019), 42 local and foreign automotive brands in Turkey are selling automobiles to end customers. While the number of cars sold in the year 2018 is over 620 thousand, top 5 automotive brands comprise more than 50% of the total sales (ODD 2019). Top brands in the automotive product category in Turkey form cross-category brand alliances with complementary product brands such as fuel & energy (Shell 2018; BP 2019 – see Figure 15), auto service and credit companies (Dogus Oto 2019). In addition, there are examples of cross-category brand alliances with brands from various product categories as part of the customer loyalty programs to stay ahead of the competition and increase customer loyalty (MNG Kargo 2017; Volvo 2019).

Figure 15 Automotive & Fuel Cross-Category Brand Alliance Example from Turkey

(BP 2019)

4.2.3. Alpha3 Case (Fuel & Energy)

Alpha3 is a global fuel and energy brand which operates in more than 70 countries, including Turkey, according to the interview made with the loyalty advisor of the brand. The marketing manager of the brand stated that the brand aims to be a leader in terms of safety in its industry by developing and deploying the best technology.

Despite the high number of distributor brands which is over 100 in the fuel & energy sector in Turkey, the top 5 brands have more than 60% market share in total (Bay Yılmaz 2017). Like the automotive sector; the fuel brands have partnerships with brands that have complementary products which are mostly the automotive brands (Shell 2018; BP 2019). The fuel sector in Turkey was famous with the campaigns which offered many prizes from partner brands such as toys, cleaning products and kitchenware to the customers who purchased fuel from the stations during the 1990s and 2000s.

However; because of the regulations made by the energy regulator institution in Turkey in 2010, the fuel brands can only provide fuel as an incentive to their customers in their customer loyalty programs which brought an end to such brand alliances (Hurriyet 2011). Still, other brands continue to offer fuel-related campaigns to their customers which keeps the cross-category brand alliances in the fuel product category alive. The brand alliances that fuel brands make with cross-category brands in Turkey include the partnerships with credit card companies (Garanti Bonus 2019), retailers (Figure 16), travel brands (Shell 2019), and telecommunication brands (Opet 2019).

Figure 16 The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Example between Fuel and Retailer Brand in Turkey

(Shell 2019)

4.2.4. Alpha4 Case (Sports Fashion Retailer)

According to the marketing specialist of the brand, Alpha4 is a multinational sports fashion retailer that operates in 45 countries, including Turkey. The products of Alpha4 are sold to the end customers in their stores and online shop. The marketing specialist of the brand claimed that the company aims to “make sports accessible” to many by a low price promise.

The sports fashion category in Turkey continues to grow with the increase in the number of stores around the country (Bay Yılmaz 2016). In the sports fashion category, 65% of the customers buy the products from lifestyle fashion brands, and the rest buys the products from active sports fashion brands such as Alpha4 (Ataselim 2016). In addition to the own stores of sports fashion brands such as Adidas, Puma and Nike; there are departmental store chains which sell sports fashion products of other brands (Bay Yılmaz 2016).

While the volume of the sports fashion market reached over 2 billion USD in 2016 in Turkey, the sales of sports shoes comprise almost half of the sales (Ataselim 2016). The partnerships between sports fashion brands and other brands are not common (Nestle 2018 – Figure 17). However, the departmental store chains started to form cross-category brand alliances with other brands, such as credit card and telecommunications brands, to reach new customers and to create benefits for their customers (Turkcell 2011; Garanti Bonus 2015).

Figure 17 The Cross-Category Brand Alliance between Adidas and Nestle Nesfit in Turkey

(Nestle 2018)

4.2.5. Alpha5 Case (Pharmaceutical)

According to the interview made with the marketing manager of the brand, Alpha5 is a pharmaceutical warehouse brand that operates in Turkey. Alpha5 provides B2B service to its customers by selling pharmaceutical products to the pharmacies. Thus, their cross-category brand alliances are aimed towards B2B customers as well. While the brand is strong in certain regions of Turkey, they aim to grow in other regions of the country to compete with the global competitors in Turkey.

Although the total number of pharmaceutical warehouse companies is over 100 just in the city of Istanbul, five major pharmaceutical warehouse brands in Turkey serve pharmacies and hospitals around the country (Abdi Ibrahim 2019). The number of pharmacies the warehouse brands serve in Turkey is more than 25 thousand with sales of over 2 billion packages of medicine in 2016 (Vizyon Ecza 2017) and the top pharmaceutical warehouse brands are among the largest companies in Turkey (Hurriyet 2018b). In addition to the cross-category brand alliances to provide better service for their customers, the pharmaceutical brands form cause-brand alliances with different charities with the aim of improved education and helping people in need in Turkey and other countries (Selcuk Ecza 2019; Inci Ecza Deposu 2019).

4.3. Case by Case Analysis

In the following sections; the findings of the interviews, field notes and secondary data related to each case study are explained under the themes that emerged during the thematic data analysis that is supported by NVivo CAQDAS. The brand alliances of case study brands are summarised in the diagrams, and the types of the brand alliances are listed in the tables at the start of each case study section. The sections continue with the overview of the brand alliances of the case study brand. Emerging themes of the data analysis are explained section by section with the details from the interviews, field notes and secondary data collected about the brand alliances.

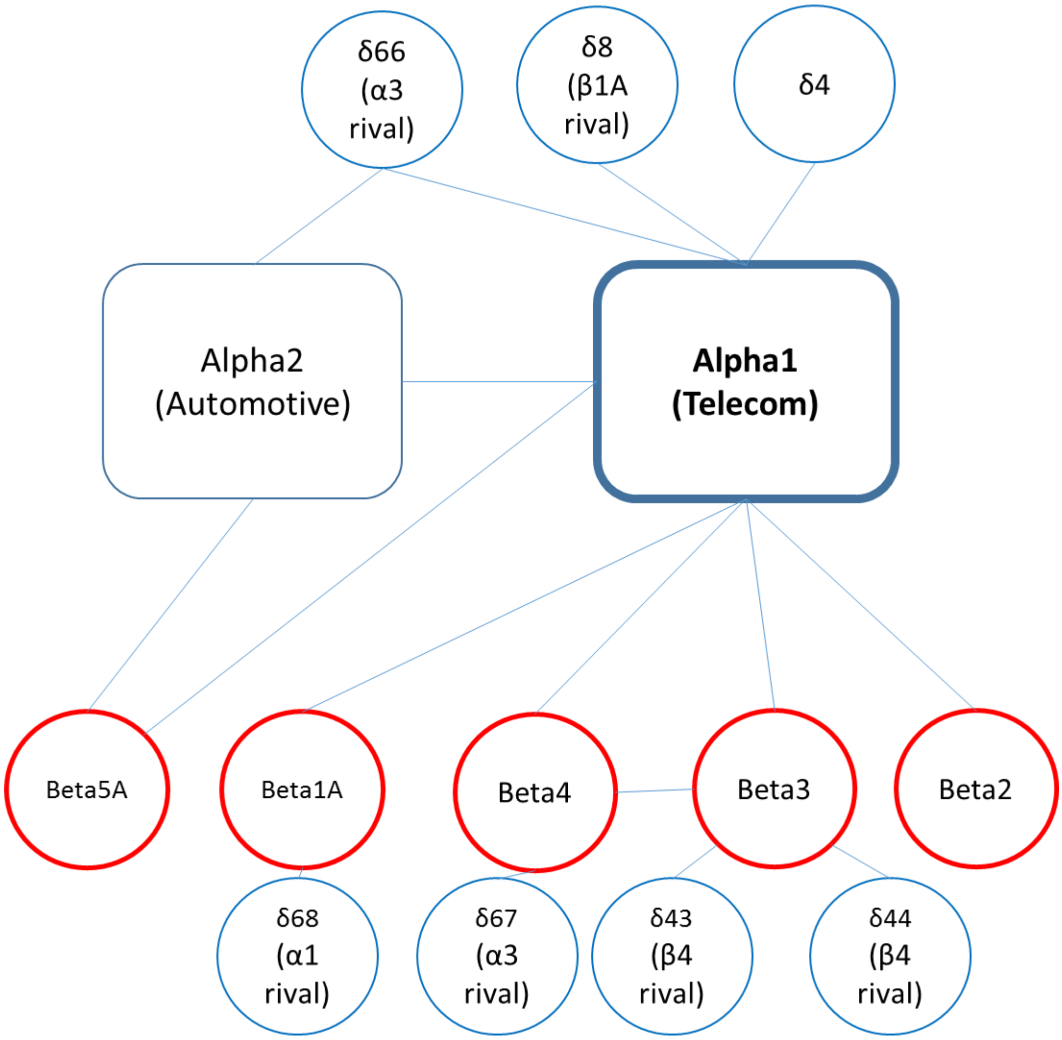
4.3.1. Alpha1 Case (Telecommunications) Analysis

As explained in the case overview section (Section 4.2.1), Alpha1 is one of the three major telecommunications brands in Turkey. Two interviews are conducted with the employees of Alpha1 who work in the loyalty marketing department that manages the brand alliances in the company. In addition to the interviews with Alpha1 employees, further interviews are done with the partner brands of Alpha1, which are the other case study brand Alpha2 from the automotive category, Beta1A from the entertainment category, Beta2 from the e-commerce & gifts category, Beta3 from tobacco category, Beta4 from sports category, and Beta5A from service-concierge category.

Furthermore, there are referrals to the brand alliances with Delta4, Delta8, and Delta66 in the interviews. In the year when the interviews were conducted, Alpha1 was part of around 300 different brand alliances in a year, 100 of them were large partnerships, and 200 of them were mid to small size partnerships according to the interviewed marketing manager of the company. The cross-category brand alliances of Alpha1 are depicted in Figure 18. The types of brand alliances and the categories of the partner brands are shown in Table 21 below.

In the figure, the case study brands (Alpha), represented by the interviewees, are illustrated as rounded rectangles. The alliance partner brands, represented by the interviewees (Beta), are shown in red circle shapes. The alliance partner brands that are mentioned by the interviewees (Delta) are illustrated in blue circles. Each blue line represents a brand alliance between the brands.

Figure 18 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Alpha1



As can be seen in Table 21, Alpha1 forms different types of brand alliances which includes co-branding, advertising, complementary, and sponsorship. The alliance partner brands are from various product categories such as entertainment, tobacco, sports, and fuel. The brand alliances of Alpha1 that are listed in Table 21 are discussed in the following sections.

Table 21 Brand Alliance Types of Alpha1 Partnerships

Case Study Brand	**Category**	**Partner Brand**	**Category**	**Brand Alliance Type**
Alpha1	Telecom. / Technology	Beta1A	Entertainment / Family	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Beta2	E-Commerce / Gifts	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Beta3	Tobacco	Complementary
		Beta4	Sports	Co-Branding & Sponsorship
		Beta5A	Service / Concierge	Complementary
		Delta1	Technology / Mobile	Co-Branding / Same Category (Complementary)
		Delta4	Travel / Rent-a-car	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Delta8	Entertainment / Family	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Delta66	Fuel	Co-Branding & Advertising

4.3.1.1. Overview of the Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Alpha1 is one of the three major telecommunications brands in Turkey. Two interviews with the marketing managers of Alpha1 were conducted at different times for data collection. In addition to the interviews with Alpha1 marketing managers, further interviews were conducted with the brand alliance partners of Alpha1 to have an in-depth analysis of Alpha1 case study. The product categories of the alliance partner brands of Alpha1 and the brand alliance types are listed in Table 21.

Among their brand alliances, their cross-category brand alliance partners Beta1A (Family entertainment category), Beta2 (E-commerce & gifts category), Beta3 (Tobacco category), Beta4 (Sports & Football category) and Beta5A (Service & Concierge category) are interviewed for the data analysis. In addition, their past brand alliance partner Alpha2 from the automotive category (Section 4.2.2) is the subject of another case study. The findings of Alpha1 & Alpha2 brand alliance is analysed in Alpha2 case analysis section (Section 4.3.2). Moreover, Alpha1 made a brand alliance with Delta66 from fuel & energy category, which is a rival of case study brand Alpha3 (Section 4.3.3).

In addition to the brand alliances with same category partners from the technology sector, Alpha1 is making various partnerships with brands from other categories to support their customer loyalty programmes. Alpha1 brand has a customer segment-based marketing strategy and coordinates the brand alliances according to these customer segments which are high-value customers, youth customers, mass customers and its sub-segments, and enterprise customers on the B2B side. The same category brand alliances of Alpha1 are made to provide mobile phones to the customers in a bundle with the telecommunication service packages of Alpha1. These same category brand alliances of Alpha1 are part of complementary product brand alliances.

On the other hand, the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha1 are part of the customer loyalty offers in the segment-based customer loyalty programmes. The marketing specialist of Alpha1 defines the offers from same-category brand partners as “GSM benefits” and offers from cross-category brand alliances as “non-GSM benefits”. Alpha1 customers can benefit from offers at the cross-category brand alliance partner points of sale (physical points or e-commerce) if they are in one of the pre-defined customer segments of Alpha1. The customers use mobile technology solutions such as SMS and mobile applications to get their voucher codes which enable them to redeem the offer at the partner brand POS. To increase the number of vouchers used, both brands in the alliance support the brand alliance with marketing communication activities.

Alpha1-Beta1A Brand Alliance

Beta1A from entertainment category is one of the brand alliance partners of Alpha1, which is part of an entertainment group that operates in Turkey and other countries. As an entertainment group with different brands in the sector, the company forms various brand alliances with brands from telecommunications, banking, retail & supermarket, and airlines categories. Mostly, Beta1A provides a customer benefit for the partner brand customers in the brand alliance period. During the brand alliances, the partner brand promotes the brand alliance through their marketing channels in return. While Beta1A provides exclusivity to one partner brand from the same category during the alliance term, the brand works with other brands from the same category after the brand alliance finishes. For instance, Beta1A started another brand alliance with Alpha1's rival brand once the partnership with Alpha1 finished.

Alpha1-Beta2 Brand Alliance

Beta2 is a brand in e-commerce & gifts category which forms brand alliances with brands from telecommunications, entertainment & TV, and FMCG & food categories. While the partnerships with telecommunications and entertainment & TV brands are in nature, providing customer benefits to the customers of partner brands; the brand alliance with Delta17 from FMCG & Food category is a brand alliance type of complementary goods. Beta2 prefers to have few, long-term partnerships with critical brands for their business by protecting the exclusivity of the brand in its category. Still, the brand does not hesitate to work with the rival brand of the same category once the partnership does not bring the expected outcomes.

Alpha1-Beta3 Brand Alliance

Beta3 has brands in tobacco category which is a highly regulated industry in terms of marketing activities in Turkey including the ban on advertisements or any image of tobacco-related products on TV, movies, video clips, and on the internet (Ntv.com.tr 2018). Still, Beta3 conducts marketing activities at a B2B level to overcome the impact of regulations on marketing and aim to reach the sellers of its products with its sales network and B2B marketing platform. For the marketing activities, they had brand alliances with Alpha1 from telecommunications category, and brands from hotel-restaurant-catering (Ho-Re-Ca) category.

On the B2B marketing platform that works on mobile devices, Beta3 encourages the shop owners or workers that sell their products to engage with the brand with interactive games, quizzes, and offers from brand alliance partners. Besides, their promotional activities for the B2B engagement platform included campaigns with brands from food, sports, and entertainment categories. In their partnership with Alpha1, Beta3 offered customised mobile packages of Alpha1 for their B2B customers on the mobile marketing platform. Although the brand communicates with the sales points and third parties in their marketing activities, the activities initiate questions about marketing ethics which are discussed in the next chapter.

Alpha1-Beta4 Brand Alliance

Beta4 is one of the major sports clubs in Turkey which has a long-term cross-category brand alliance agreement with Alpha1 telecommunications brand in terms of sponsorship. The sports club brand has several brand alliances in sponsorship type with brands from various categories such as telecommunications, banking, FMCG, industrial products, and technology & household electronics. Although the brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta4 started with the sponsorship of Beta4's new stadium in terms of naming rights, the brand alliance turned into a big marketing partnership with several marketing activities including the development of new services, websites, social media accounts, mobile applications, and events. Beta4 gives importance to the exclusivity of its partner brands in their categories and try to maintain a long-term partnership with one brand from each brand category if the partner brand is compatible with their corporate values.

Alpha1-Beta5A Brand Alliance

Beta5A is one of the first service brands in Turkey that provide concierge services for corporate and individual customers. The brand forms brand alliances with brands in the telecommunications category such as Alpha1, the automotive category such as Alpha2, banking category, and construction category. The brand alliances of Beta5A are usually complementary type brand alliances in which alliance partner brand of Beta5A pays for the customised services of Beta5A and promotes the brand alliance to the customers as an additional customer benefit to improve customer experience.

The concierge services of Beta5A consist of residential support services, travel assistance services, health assistance services, and personalised consultancy services. The brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A is a long-term partnership that started with the launch of Alpha1's mobile package for high-value customers (HVC) segment Alpha1A. The scope of the brand alliance comprises a coordinated service for the Alpha1A segment that the customers in the segment can benefit from the concierge services of Beta5A on a free basis. While the partnership with Alpha1 is an exclusive one in its category for Beta5A, the partnerships in other brand categories are not on an exclusive basis.

4.3.1.2. Resources & Capabilities Used

This section elaborates the resources and capabilities used during the brand alliances of Alpha1 and its partner brands by explaining the findings from the interviews, field notes and secondary data. In terms of marketing resources and capabilities, Alpha1 uses several marketing channels to support the promotion of brand alliances. In return, Alpha1 expects the usage of similar marketing resources and capabilities from the partner brand. The marketing channels that are used to promote the brand alliances include mobile (SMS, mobile apps) and digital channels (owned website, search engine and social media ads), TV and radio, outdoor, and the marketing material at the point of sales.

> *We are using all types of marketing communication channels. Basically, the mobile ones heavily, but also we are using outdoor communications, radio communications or banner communications etc. Of course, SMS is the main channel for an operator to communicate its campaign to consumers.*
>
> (Alpha1 Marketing Specialist)

> *…as I said we are communicating our partnership to our customer base through digital channels, SMS, push notification of the applications etc. and also sometimes e-mails. These are the medium that we own. Sometimes we are communicating through other channels, and we call it paid-media channels like digital or radio or another medium of marketing, advertising. These types of activities we are running for our partner. We are also asking our partner to make some communication on their channels, if it is an online partner on their website or if it is a retail partner we are asking them to put our POP materials on their shops or any place of their field area. These types of marketing activities we are asking and looking*.
>
> (Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

One of the critical resources Alpha1 commits to the brand alliances is the human resources that work for the coordination and execution of the brand alliances. The commitment of human resources is critical for the success of the brand alliance process in terms of coordinating a large number of brand alliances simultaneously.

Furthermore, they utilise external resources such as agencies to support the internal human resources for the management of brand alliances.

> *For the coordination, we are working with all the marketing teams of Alpha1 team within the company. For the brand or the communication materials etc. we are working with brand teams. For the production of POP materials, we work with other teams etc. We have an agency for loyalty campaigns and brand partnerships. We are just coordinating all different types of units of the marketing team or maybe the sales team etc. In the partner, we know that they have similar coordination. Three hundred campaigns are in a big calendar to manage but because different units are focusing on different items of the partnership if you coordinate well it works.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Technological resources are another type of resource Alpha1 contributes to the brand alliances. In addition to the technology they use for mobile marketing (e.g. SMS, mobile apps); Alpha1 uses other CRM technologies to target the customers to inform them appropriately about the brand alliance.

> *…we have some alliances where we can bring our technology in place. In one of the cases, for example, we use our location-based communication capabilities to increase one of our alliances' revenue and activeness in their shops so our partner cannot send location-based messages to customers, but we can do it, we put it on the table. In return, our partner put on the table their service and a discounted service for our customers… we are setting integration with our partners to manage the operation so technology is one of the processes that we use…S*ometimes we use our technology to reach customers basically.

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

The exchange of marketing resources in terms of communication and financial resources in terms of customer benefit is used in the brand alliances of Alpha1 with Beta1A from the entertainment category, and Beta2 from e-commerce & gifts category. While Beta1A and Beta2 provide a discount in their services as customer benefit to Alpha1 customers, Alpha1 uses marketing resources and capabilities such as mobile marketing tools to promote the brand alliances. The amount of the discount that is given by the partner brands also depends on the level of marketing resource usage of Alpha1.

> *…the company requests discount, for example, discount rate, for their promotion, but initially, or ideally, we try to understand the communication budget that they are willing to put, their internal and external media power, it could be the website, internally, or externally, it could be the TV, newspaper, how much they are willing to invest. So when we get to understand that, we are deciding upon the discount or the promotional mechanism… so that depends on the communication investment that they are willing to put within their capabilities.*

(Beta1A Marketing Manager)

In the sponsorship brand alliance with Beta4 from sports category, Alpha1 invests a huge amount of financial resources for long-term in the brand alliance. Furthermore, Alpha1 commits marketing resources and capabilities, human resources, technological resources, and external resources to the brand alliance with Beta4. In return, Beta4 provides the marketing resources such as naming rights of the stadium, brand exposure in the marketing communications, and access to customer database through shared marketing activities.

Although the amount of financial resources is much higher than the other brand alliances of Alpha1, the return of the investment is calculated in detail by summing up all the potential costs of the marketing mix as if they would be bought separately without the sponsorship agreement. On the other hand, Beta4 considers the financial commitment of Alpha1 as an important source of income on their side.

> *…the clubs see sponsors as a source of income. There is an agreement that is signed on the table, and there is money transferred into the bank account…this is a sponsorship, the story here starts with the amount we take. They make a loaded investment for us.*

(Beta4 Marketing Specialist)

In some cases, Alpha1 uses financial resources in the brand alliances to compensate for the benefit that the partner brand provides for its customers. This is the type of exchange that is used in the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A from services & concierge category. In the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A, Alpha1 not only promotes the brand alliance using marketing resources and capabilities but also uses financial resources to pay Beta5A for the services that Alpha1 customers use.

> *…in return, we are asking a discount from their services. In some cases, we really need their service, and we would like to pay for their service to bring that service to our customers.*
>
> (Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

During the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A from service & concierge category, Beta5A needed to use external resources for the development of an extra feature Alpha1 demanded during their brand alliance. Firstly, they have used their internal users and coordinated meetings with the external resources Alpha1 used for the feature development. When a global company acquired Beta5A brand, they needed to use external resources for the realisation of the feature development. While the feature was planned to be developed in future, the brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A led to the earlier creation of the value in the form an innovation. In the end, the feature development helped to improve the customer experience of Alpha1 customers and increased customer satisfaction for both brands.

Another reason to use external resources during Alpha1 and Beta5A brand alliance were the regulations of the government regulatory body. While Alpha1 and Beta5A were in a brand alliance, the flow of customer data was limited due to the customer privacy regulations of the government. Moreover, only the approved technology partner of Alpha1 had the right to process Alpha1 customer data. As the flow of customer data was critical for the brand alliance, Alpha1 committed external resources to the alliance, and their technology partner Delta72 developed the technology that is necessary for the brand alliance operational process.

4.3.1.3. Aims and Expectations

Alpha 1 aims to build long-term brand alliances with cross-category brand partners to keep consistent marketing communication and service to its customers. As Alpha1 offers benefits from partner brands to their customers, they expect good customer service from the partner brand. In addition, there is an expectation of marketing communication support from the partner brand during the brand alliance.

> *Most of our expectations are long-term partnerships and also we are expecting the brand should communicate to its base also our campaign. We are the main pillar of the campaign, but in the example of Delta4 again, Delta4 should also communicate our campaign to its customer base. The long-term partnership, communication and also a good service to our consumers. Because our consumers will go to Delta4 points let's say and want to opt-in for the campaign they should give a good level of service to our consumers. It is the most important one actually because we are a customer-centric company.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Specialist)

Alpha1 expects that the brand alliances, which create mutual benefit for both partners, will increase the loyalty of Alpha1 customers to the brand. Furthermore, they expect a reciprocal contribution of resources during the brand alliance. In their brand alliances, Alpha1 states that they are the brand with more marketing resources and capabilities and thus expects additional resource usage from the partner brand to compensate the usage of the strong marketing resources of Alpha1.

> *When we create synergy like this, we believe that the loyalty of our Alpha1 customers will increase… To set a long-term relationship, you have to satisfy the partner first of all. It doesn't mean that we are just giving all our assets and just don't ask for something from the partner. In the relationship with the brand, we like to put our communication skills and communication power on the table. From the company, we ask for their services, their power in the field or their online power etc. It is a kind of relationship, we have that power, we use that power, and we ask for their power to use.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Although the brand alliances are made to reach some shared goals (Smarandescu et al. 2013), the aims and expectations of the alliance partners might differ from each other depending on the resources exchanged during the brand alliance. Alpha1 identifies the type of the alliance aims, such as access to new customers, increasing revenue, providing benefits to customers, driving footfall to stores or increasing number of visitors to online stores.

> *All companies have different targets when setting such an alliance. Some of them try to reach new customers, some of them try to increase their revenue, and some of them try to increase their activeness in their shops or online etc. so it really changes from alliance to alliance. When we are setting an alliance, we are talking about this type of synergies, actually. In some alliances we say okay we can bring you new customers, in return, we are asking for a discount from their services. In some cases, we really need their service, and we would like to pay for their service to bring that service to our customers.*

As the cross-category brand alliances are managed under the customer loyalty programs of Alpha1, the brand expects to increase the loyalty of their customers to the brand and decrease the churn rates. The aim of long-term partnerships of Alpha1 coincides with developing customer loyalty which is a long-term goal for the brands.

> *…to make our customers loyal to our brand… They are made for loyalty initiatives… most of our brand alliances serve to loyalty campaigns…We are making lots of partnerships out of the category in order to make loyalty campaigns basically.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Specialist)

> *For the loyalty of our customers, we create brand partnership alliances to give them some offers at our (brand alliance) partners.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Furthermore, Alpha1 aims to increase brand awareness during the brand alliances by the support of the partner brand's marketing resources and capabilities. In addition, they aim to make the customer feel a bond with the brand through the customer benefit they would get from the partner brand.

Our expectation is to show Alpha1 brand at lots of places. It is a kind of awareness of our brand in the field or online. When our customers say 'okay there is an opportunity for me because I am an Alpha1 customer', it is valuable for us. That's what our expectation is.

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Beta1A, which is one of the alliance partner brands of Alpha1, explains their aim to make brand alliances as to enhance the impact of their limited financial resources for marketing by the support of partner brand's marketing resources. Thus, the limited resources of Beta1A is compensated with the abundant resources of the partner brand.

…we have a small budget, marketing budget we would like to leverage those budgets with promotions and strategy with partnerships with prominent brands. The logic here is mainly as we have a little budget within a year, leverage that budget with communication power and marketing budget power of the partner company.

(Beta1A Marketing Manager)

4.3.1.4. Partner Selection Criteria

Alpha1 starts the process of partner brand selection by preparing a yearly marketing strategy for each customer segment. The brand continues with identifying the customer needs of each customer segment. In addition, they identify the important days and times of the year, such as Valentine's Day, religious holidays or school holidays to match the seasonality of customer needs and demands. After the identification of needs, they determine the relevant product categories and brands that would satisfy the customer needs of each segment.

The Marketing Manager of Alpha1 emphasises the important criteria for partner selection as the customer segment fit, brand awareness, and the reachability of the partner brand in terms of coverage. As Alpha1's marketing strategy is based on customer segmentation, it is critical for Alpha1 to find the alliance partner that would fit its related customer segment. Besides, the brand uses predefined criteria set to classify the partner brands according to the potential brand's fit to the customer segment. On the other hand, the Alpha1 does not consider the brand's country of origin as an important criterion for the brand alliance partner selection.

> …we focus on the sector first, and we try to look at the brand awareness of the company. Can we bring that company together with Alpha1 brand first of all? We look at their target customers – do they intersect or so different? This type of analysis, after that, we decide on the brand...*We look at their customer base; what kind of customers they focus or target. Also, the service quality is another issue. The location of the service or product is another measure. Also, we look at the communication type, style. After that, we say okay, it can be a brand alliance or not. One of the major issues we focus here is reachability because Alpha1 has around 40% market share in all cities in Turkey. When we choose a partner, we need to be very careful about the reachability…In some of our partners, we like to be together with a brand. If it is a strong brand, if it is a valuable brand for the customers especially for a specific segment for example, for youth maybe, for high-value customers, being together or seen together with that brand creates an important impact on the customer.*
>
> (Alpha1 Marketing Manager)
>
> *We have basically a brand index in which we have some key points. If we need a partnership, for example, for our youth segment, we are looking for some other criteria. If we want to work for our business segment, we are looking for other criteria. We make our choices basically based on this brand index and also the related segments…Actually, this (being global or local) is a criterion but not the most important one. The important point is the locations of the brand. Our consumers live in one location and can benefit from the partnership or not. This is a major criterion.*
>
> (Alpha1 Marketing Specialist)

Beta3 from tobacco category, which is one of the brand alliance partners of Alpha1, also emphasises the importance of product fit for the customer segment while selecting the brand alliance partner. Furthermore, the marketing manager of the brand states that the reason to choose Alpha1 as the partner brand among alternatives was the agility and flexibility of Alpha1 to meet the demands of Beta3.

If you ask why Alpha1 was on the foreground at that time? Alpha1 was on the foreground because of their packages for tradesmen and more… more willing and agile than Delta2, because we were thinking about two alternatives then. They were more agile, they both answered our demand quicker; we thought if they answer us quicker, they can also respond quicker to shops' demands. Because of that, for example, Alpha1 emerged.

(Beta3 Marketing Manager)

4.3.1.5. Value Co-Creation Process

During the value co-creation process in the brand alliance, it is critical to keep the interaction with the partner brand continuous to make any changes that would make the brand alliance outcome better. The interaction is conducted with face-to-face meetings when necessary and supported with email and phone call communication. The customers are also part of the value co-creation process with the feedback they provide during the brand alliance at the partner brand sales points or through the customer service of Alpha1. The negative or positive feedback from the customers is evaluated by the customer service teams and transferred to the marketing teams to improve the process during the brand alliance. The feedback from customers also assists the future partner selection process by showing the choice of the customers towards different partner brands.

Before and during the alliances, we like to be face-to-face with the partners. We usually make an introduction meeting, and we are setting the commercial items, we like to be face-to-face, but sometimes we cannot do that because of the time problems…When you are setting an alliance, you are looking at the ideal cases that you can imagine, but when you start to make the alliance in the field, the customers can shape that alliance's items. You imagine that it can be different, but customers can come up with something new and something interesting, so you have to shape the commercial issues, the type of alliance, type of campaign, the campaign's details etc. or the type of transaction can be an issue during the alliance. Interaction should be in place, and you have to change the issues.

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

At the start of the value co-creation process, the inclusion of top management helps to speed up the initiation of the brand alliance. Furthermore, the fit between the vision of upper management and strategies of the brands are critical for the formation of major partnerships like the sponsorship brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta4 sports club.

> *…as Beta4 is the biggest and the main project in terms of sponsorship for Alpha1, they also made it flexible as much as they can and actually time to time we were free from the time-consuming stories quicker that would take much longer normally because as I said the managerial process was involved and they made the process quicker by the approval of upper management… In terms of what it was corresponding highly, globally, the visions of the managers are corresponding to each other, the managers at that time are looking at the same side in terms of philosophy, it was a sponsorship that can be met in direction with the expectations.*

(Beta4 Marketing Specialist)

Alpha1 considers that the exchange of resources during the brand alliance is critical to get the intended win-win outcome. In terms of power relations, Alpha1 sees the power balance weighs towards them because of their communication power which is an indication of marketing resources, and capabilities contribute to the brand alliance. On the other hand, Alpha1 expects the partner brand would also use their resources to the limit. The resources that the partner brand would commit during the brand alliance include the knowledge about the brand's product category, marketing communication capabilities, and customer database.

> *Alpha1 is a big company, so mainly we like to use our power of course…It is a kind of relationship, we have that power, we use that power, and we ask for their power to use…In the relationship with the brand, we like to put our communication skills and communication power on the table…from the company (partner brand) we ask for their services, their power in the field or their online power etc…we have power on communication so we say we can communicate all the campaign details to our customer base. The partner, we*

are asking okay there is a cost for this campaign to give the cost. We like to use that power in our relationship with the brands and sometimes it works.

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Alpha1's marketing resources help partner brands to create value in terms of financial support. When Alpha1 promotes the brand alliance with its abundant marketing resources, the partner brand has the opportunity to use the marketing budget for other marketing activities than the brand alliance. Thus, the utilisation of marketing resources by the brand that has more opportunities in terms of marketing assists the value co-creation process for the partner brand.

It helps us not to spend more than our budget because above the line and below the line communication is covered by our partner; so for example, if our budget is only limited to only one time TV advertising within a year, so that increase to three so that triples our above the line communication in a year; also it decreases our POP production costs, it also decreases our online marketing budget so that I have the ability to communicate my attraction promotion for example.

(Beta1A Marketing Manager)

During the interview with Beta5A marketing manager, the cross-category brand alliance with Alpha1 is discussed in detail. While Beta5A marketing manager states that the cooperation between Alpha1 and Beta5A is a brand alliance in the end customer's eyes, there is a B2B supplier and buyer relation between the brands. That's why it was important for Beta5A to ensure the cooperation is progressing without any problems. They were producing reports and preparing recommendations to Beta5A to improve the results of the brand alliance. While the outcome of the alliance aimed to create value for Alpha1 customers, Beta5A also used their resources to create value for the partner brand Alpha1 based on their feedback and demands.

In addition to the changes in human resources, the change of ownership of a partner brand may result in unexpected outcomes of a brand alliance. According to Beta5A marketing manager, despite the successful results of the brand alliance between Beta5A and their banking partner brand Delta73, the new owner of the Delta73 brand (which is another bank, Delta74) decided to end the brand alliance with Beta5A.

Once upon a time, we were working with Delta73…they were one of the first that sees this in Turkey, and they also had the advantage of being a foreign company. They had different loyalty programs they have provided themselves. For specific segment members, let's say. You know they were incorporated by Delta74. When they were under Delta74 management, this business was in chaotic stance. The contacts who work there left the company…they said we will not provide this service anymore. It was like Armageddon. Really, it was Armageddon.

The end of an alliance despite its success indicates the significance of top management in the alliance partner brand selection. After the global economic crisis in 2008, Delta74, which is an international bank, took over the international bank Delta73 in all the markets they operate. The ownership change influenced the ownership and management structure of Delta73 in Turkey as well. In the interview, Beta5A marketing manager stated that the new managers of Delta73 did not continue the past partnerships which conflict with the global partnerships of the new owner Delta74. Thus, Beta5A partnership was one of the brand alliances they needed to cease because of the global partnerships of Delta74.

As the brand alliance between Beta5A and Delta73 continued over five years which is a long term for a brand alliance, the customers got used to the benefits of the brand alliance. After the end of the brand alliance, the customers of the Delta74 bank gave their negative feedback to the bank's branches and asked them to continue the brand alliance with Beta5A. Even though the Delta74 did not continue the brand alliance with Beta5A on a national level, Delta74 branches made their regional agreements with Beta5A to provide the services at a higher cost than the Beta5A and Delta73 brand alliance agreement conditions. As a result, Delta74 needed to use more financial resources to create customer satisfaction which was already in place if they continued their brand alliance with Beta5A.

4.3.1.6. Competitive Advantage

The competitors of Alpha1 have similar brand alliances with cross-category brands in Turkey. The competition forces Alpha1 to be innovative in the way of communicating or providing the benefits of the brand alliances to their customers.

...Basically, it is a little bit of a hygiene factor in Turkey. Our competitors are also offering lots of brand partnerships to Turkish market...

(Alpha1 Marketing Specialist)

...all the competition focus on these type of brand partnerships. For some segments they are active, some segments they are not but generally operators sector in Turkey look at these opportunities because they also have some corporate customers, so these type of alliances are, you can say these type of opportunities are a lot.

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

When the brands from the same sector made brand alliances with Beta5A, they wanted to differentiate the service that is provided by Beta5A for their customers. While they have worked with the same brand Beta5A, they demanded changes in the content of service packages Beta5A provided. Beta5A designed new product packages after the feedback and demands from the partner brands. The partners in the cross-category brand alliances played a co-designer role to create value during the cooperation. The partner brands of Beta5A aimed to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals by differentiating the service they provide to their end customers.

The brand alliance of Alpha1 with Beta5A helped them to gain a competitive advantage over their competitor Delta2 in the high-value customer segment. Thanks to the usage of resources together, the brand alliance resulted in good customer service, increased customer loyalty and customer satisfaction for Alpha1 customers. In return, Beta5A received increased revenue and brand awareness. Alpha1's competitor Delta2 tried to provide the service of Beta5A brand with their internal resources, but they stopped the project after 1.5 years because of unsatisfactory results and financial costs.

...Alpha1 promoted it too loudly, and the services it provided was not provided by other telecom operators in the market. While we were doing this for a period, Delta2 tried it for some time... they hired some people from assistance service companies and made them insource...it didn't last for 1.5 years. That team was abolished. You cannot do it. When you say, I will do everything it turns into something else.

(Beta5A Marketing Manager)

The values that are co-created during the brand alliance helped Alpha1 achieve competitive advantage over Delta2 thanks to resources Beta5A contributed to the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A. The data that Beta5A provided about the services Alpha1 customers used helped Alpha1 gather more information about their customers' lifestyle, behaviour and choices thanks to the CRM reports supplied by Beta5A about the brand alliance. The value they have co-created with Beta5A about the customer insights gave Alpha1 a competitive advantage for developing new campaigns and choosing new partners. About the co-created values, Beta5A marketing manager states that;

> *…the first thing is making business and making the company earn money. Eventually, all the commercial companies are established to earn money and make profits. Surely this is important. However, to make it continuous and sustainable, it should add value for both sides, for both companies, for both brands we can say. In the end, Alpha1 was adding value to Beta5A by making it known more, but Beta5A…already had an awareness, Alpha1 showed the brand more to the ones that do not know about the brand. When Alpha1 considers its side, they could create a different segment for them and grow in that segment. They promoted it very loudly, and the services it provided were not provided by other telecom operators in the market.*

The success of the partnership between Alpha1 and Beta5A relies on the customer segment fit between the brands, which lead to the satisfaction of customer needs. Alpha1 chose to provide the services of Beta5A only to the high-value customer segment, which potentially needed the concierge services of Beta5A. With the limited marketing budget of Beta5A, it was not easy for the brand to reach the target customer segment. The partner alliance with Alpha1 provided the opportunity to Beta5A to tell more about their services which meet the needs of high-value customers of Alpha1. The positive feedback from the customers of Alpha1 about the services of Beta5A turned a partnership into long-term success with increased customer satisfaction. Furthermore, additional concierge services of Beta5A helped Alpha1 to improve customer service for the high-value customer segment, which in turn created cost efficiency with fewer investment needs in their customer service channels.

4.3.1.7. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

When the brands achieve the synergy they aimed for during the brand alliance, it influences the success of the brand alliance and thus turns into a longer-term brand alliance.

> *The success of the campaign, the synergy created let's say. In some companies, I mentioned that we try to create a win-win situation; sometimes, this win-win situation continues because as I said, we are one of the leading operators in Turkey. We have communication power in Turkey. Also, some companies have a presence in their sector. When you bring these two items together, it creates synergy. When we create this synergy, it continues we can say it lasts around 3 to 4 years.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

To understand the success of the brand alliance, Alpha1 measures the changes in certain metrics for the brand such as customer churn and retention rates which is an indication of customer loyalty. Also, they measure the net promoter score (NPS) of the customers to understand the impact of the brand alliances in a certain period on the customer's level of the recommendation of the brand to others.

> *What we gain from the alliance is, first of all, we are looking at the churn and retention of our customers regularly. When we look at the customers that are engaged in this kind of alliances, the churn rates are lower than the average customers. So this is what we are looking after. What we gain is loyalty and retention of the customer. It is one of the major focus areas. We are looking at the NPS (net promoter score) levels of our customers. NPS is a survey or market research type of benefit we can gain; that's what do you need to make an alliance.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

As a telecommunications & technology brand, co-innovation also takes part in the brand alliances of Alpha1 as a way of co-creating value. The insights from the partner brand assist the innovation process of Alpha1 for the new technology. Besides, the partner brand provides customer benefit to Alpha1 customers to create a win-win environment. As an outcome of co-innovation, the partner brand enjoys increased revenue thanks to the co-innovated technology that is co-created during the brand alliance.

> *…we have some alliances where we can bring our technology in place. In one of the cases, for example, we use our location-based communication capabilities to increase one of our alliances' revenue and activeness in their shops so our partner cannot send location-based messages to customers, but we can do it, we put it on the table. In return our partner out on the table their service and a discounted service for our customers so this bring a win-win situation because we can bring them really high-end technology to increase their revenue.*

(Alpha1 Marketing Manager)

Another example of the value that is co-created during the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 Telecommunications Company and Beta4 Sports club is the innovation of a new marketing communication channel. A new social media account that is created during the alliance helped the sports club to manage the customer's expectations and prevented the negative feedback.

While the social media account was managed by the partner brand Alpha1, Beta4 gave the directions in the marketing communications to be in line with the main marketing strategy of Beta4. The social media account has also won marketing communication awards which is a signal of the value created during the cross-category brand alliance resulting in several positive outcomes for the partner brands. The values co-created can be listed as (1) innovation of a new communication channel on social media, (2) better customer engagement, (3) better customer expectation management, (4) preventing negative customer feedback, (5) increased brand reputation for both partners by the awards.

…we have climbed to top 5 after the biggest global companies of the world not only Turkey as a sports club with the most prestigious awards in marketing World…as a corporate company which won the most number of awards. I believe it was a revolutionary success in Turkey for a sports club. It is satisfactory for us to see the communication we have made is realised and attracted attention from other sectors and in the marketing world seriously.

(Beta4 Marketing Specialist)

Although it is a brand alliance that is formed as sponsorship, the increased engagement between the partner brands led to the co-creation of more values that intended. The values co-created have provided not only benefits for the partner brands but also created benefits on the customer side. As a result, the companies continued their increased engagement with each other during the cross-category brand alliance. In addition to the values co-created in terms of marketing, the cross-category brand alliance in the form of sponsorship brings significant financial value for Beta4 thanks to the innovative marketing strategy of Alpha1.

After analysing the target customer segment in detail, Alpha1 decided to create three different donation packages for Beta4 sports club fans. The packages are priced according to the buying power of different customer segments, and the packages are supported by the mobile services, and partner brand offers of Alpha1 depending on the package price and customer needs. The revenue of these monthly mobile packages are transferred to Beta4 as part of the brand alliance agreement and reached the annual targets in the first year of launch. Thanks to the packages, Alpha1 increased the number of its customers who support Beta4 as a sports fan. Therefore, the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta4 created value for partner brands not only in terms of marketing but also in financial terms. Besides, the successful marketing strategy about the mobile packages received international awards which brought a positive reputation for each brand.

By making a cross-category brand alliance with a partner in the service sector, Alpha1 had the opportunity to learn more about its customers' behaviour and habits. Thus, the collected data during the Beta5A brand alliance is an important value that is created

for the telecommunications brand Alpha1. The length of the brand alliance also helped to build a brand alliance that resulted in the beneficial values for both partners.
While Beta5A was supplying services for Alpha1 by selling them to Alpha1, they also improved their services after getting the feedback from Alpha1 and customers they serve together. The feedback improved the interaction and relations between the partners and resulted in a longer brand alliance. The synergy between the brand partners turned into a virtuous cycle rather than a simple buyer-seller relationship. The value co-created in the cross-category brand alliance does not only provide benefit for the stakeholders in the alliance but also provides further benefits for the brand's future operations. The knowledge gathered by Beta5A during the brand alliance with Alpha1 in Turkey enabled them to transfer the knowledge to their global owner company Delta78 and helped Delta78 to secure a new brand partnership with a telecommunications company in another European country.

> *When you make a brand alliance, firstly, when you work with a big corporation, you are writing it as a reference in terms of Beta5A. It is important for you to open doors for new opportunities. In Beta5A example this was important, I will tell it because it is something very important. Beta5A was bought by another company three years before I left there…We were going to presentations two times a year, all Delta78 sales teams from all around the world were coming there. It is like what everyone does; you can think it like the classic periodic meeting. In Delta78, before us there are no telecommunications, there are several alliances made but, there is nothing sold to telecommunications. That's why Alpha1 was a case. They were coming to us and asking "what you have done and progressed it to this point". We were really transferring know-how.*
>
> (Beta5A Marketing Manager)

4.3.1.8. Potential Risks

Due to the power relations during the brand alliance in favour of Alpha1, Alpha1 took the marketing actions without informing the partner brand in some cases. The vast customer database of Alpha1 creates a huge demand on the partner brand side and lead to the risk of worse customer service when the partner brand is not informed about the planned marketing activity. One example is the brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A in which Alpha1 pays for the services of Beta5A for their high-value customer segment. When Alpha1 makes a marketing communication to promote the brand alliance, the activity causes a surge in demand for Beta5A services and lead to the usage of extra resources for crisis management.

> *…in the service sector, you need to remind it all the time as the service is intangible. The technology is at such a point; you make a pop-up. I can give an example from Alpha1 – Beta5A. We have made great effort to make a pop-up; they have not done it. They have done it once, at that time you know…our call centre was jammed, exploded. We have said that the call centre has a capacity. We know how many calls our call centre can receive. We were making a boutique work in terms of the market. The call centre cost was high; the quality of the guy sitting there was high as well. What happened later; they have seen there are good returns; they have decided to do it.*
>
> (Beta5A Marketing Manager)

4.3.1.9. Level of Resource Allocation and Influence on Value Outcomes

In this section, the allocation level of the resources to the brand alliances in Alpha1 case is discussed. Moreover, the influence of the resource allocation levels on the co-created value outcomes is elaborated. The resource allocation levels are categorised as low, medium and high according to the analysis of interview findings. The categorisation is made in terms of comparing the allocation level of one type of resource to another. Co-created value outcomes for Alpha1 and alliance partner brands of Alpha1 during the cross-category brand alliances are included in Table 22.

Table 22 Resource Allocation Levels and Value Outcomes of Alpha1 Brand Alliances

Alpha1		***Direct Value Outcomes***				***Indirect Value Outcomes***			
Resource Type	**Resource Allocation Level**	*Financial*	*Customer Acquisition*	*Customer Satisfaction*	*Brand Awareness*	*Brand Image*	*Customer Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Marketing Resources	High	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Human Resources	Medium							✓	
Financial Resources	Medium	✓							
Technological Resources	High			✓		✓	✓	✓	
External Resources	Medium							✓	
Brand Alliance Experience	High			✓			✓		
Physical Resources	Low								

Overall, Alpha1 makes a high level of contribution to the brand alliances in terms of its marketing resources and capabilities, technological resources, and brand alliance experience. While the contribution of human resources, financial resources, and external resources to the brand alliances of Alpha1 is at a medium level, the contribution of physical resources to the brand alliances is low compared to the other case study brands.

Contribution of brand alliance experience at a high level to the brand alliances shows its impact on the number of brand alliances Alpha1 conducts at a time. Many brands are eager to form brand alliances with Alpha1, being aware of the brand alliance experience of Alpha1. Another reason why brands want to form brand alliances with Alpha1 is the high level of marketing resources and capabilities contribution.

The partner brands utilise the higher level of marketing resources and capabilities allocation of Alpha1 as the direct value outcomes of brand awareness and brand image thanks to the strong brand equity of Alpha1. However, the high level of marketing resources contribution by Alpha1 does not result in increased brand awareness for Alpha1 as an outcome of the brand alliances. It is due to the diversity of brands Alpha1 forms alliances with which have different levels of brand equity.

Although brand alliance experience of Alpha1 does not have a direct impact on customer acquisition, the capability of Alpha1 to resolve issues during the brand alliances thanks to brand alliance experience co-creates the customer satisfaction value outcome with the alliance partner brands. Besides, the brand alliance experience resource contributes to customer loyalty value outcome as the customers have improved customer experience during several brand alliances.

High level of contribution in terms of technological resources by Alpha1 leads to not only innovation but also improved brand image as an outcome of brand alliances. Being a telecommunications company, the customers of Alpha1 expect the latest technology in Alpha1's services. It is also reflected on the brand alliances Alpha1 forms; the customers expect the application of cutting-edge technologies in the process of brand alliances.

For example, Alpha1 works with its research and development teams to improve the customer experience while the customers use the mobile application dedicated to brand alliances of Alpha1. Also, partner brands contribute to the development of the technologies by sharing their know-how about their customers' experience. When the customers receive the benefits through the application of newest technologies in the brand alliances, Alpha1 co-creates not only the direct value outcome of customer satisfaction but also indirect value outcomes of improved brand image and innovation of new technologies.

4.3.2. Alpha2 Case (Automotive) Analysis

Alpha2 is an automotive brand that operates in Turkey with automobiles for different customer segments such as families, small and medium-sized companies, and outdoors lovers according to the marketing manager of the brand. The brand makes partnerships with several brands from different categories during the year for different reasons which will be discussed in the following sections. The findings from the interview with the marketing and business development manager of the company are supported with the interview made with the other case study brand Alpha1 from telecommunications category and partner brand Beta5A from service & concierge category.

The other cross-category brand alliances that are mentioned in the interviews are formed with Delta2 from telecommunications category, Delta66 from fuel & energy category, Delta83 from retail & home improvement category, Delta84 from technology category, Delta85 from retail & supermarket category, Delta86 from retail & shoes category, Delta87 from restaurant category and Delta88 from service & delivery category. The brand alliances of Alpha2 that are analysed in this study are depicted in Figure 19. The types of brand alliances are listed in Table 23.

Figure 19 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Alpha2

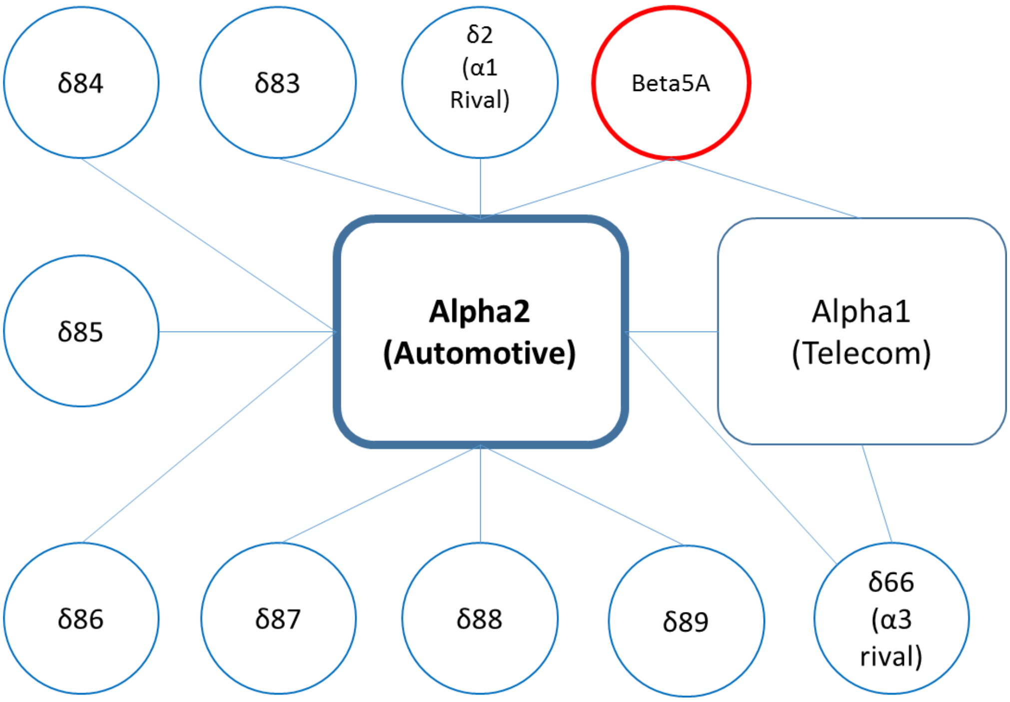


Table 23 Brand Alliance Types of Alpha2 Partnerships

Case Study Brand	Category	Partner Brand	Category	Brand Alliance Type
Alpha2	Automotive	Alpha1	Telecommunications	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Beta5A	Service / Concierge	Complementary & Advertising
		Delta2	Telecommunications	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Delta66	Fuel & Energy	Complementary
		Delta83	Retail / Home Improvement	Co-Branding & Complementary
		Delta84	Technology / Household	Co-Branding & Complementary
		Delta85	Retail / Supermarket	Co-Branding & Complementary
		Delta86	Retail / Shoes	Co-Branding
		Delta87	Restaurant	Co-Branding & Complementary
		Delta88	Service / Delivery	Co-Branding & Complementary
		Delta89	Restaurant / Coffee	Co-Branding & Complementary

4.3.2.1. Overview of the Cross-Category Brand Alliances

In addition to the brand alliances with the brands that complement the sales or services of cars such as the partnership with Delta66 from fuel category or banking brands for financial credit; Alpha2 conducts brand alliances with telecommunications brands such as Alpha1 in the form of advertising partnerships, service brands such as Beta5A in the form of complementary competencies, or retail brands in the form of co-branding partnerships (Table 23). As the product of the brand is not an impulse purchase product, the brand makes brand alliances to improve the offering of the product with complementary or additional services. Besides, the brand aims to increase sales or awareness by making partnerships with brands from different product categories.

In their brand alliance with Alpha1, Alpha2 offered exclusive prices for Alpha1 customers at different times for varying customer segments of Alpha1. In return, Alpha1 promoted the brand alliance by marketing communications support on various marketing channels. The brand alliance between Beta5A from service & concierge category and Alpha2 was one of the first in Turkey in terms of additional concierge assistance services for car owners. The brand alliance inspired other brands in different product categories to cooperate with Beta5A for their services.

4.3.2.2. Resources & Capabilities Used

During the brand alliances, Alpha2 contributes to different types of resources to co-create value with the alliance partner. The resources and capabilities that Alpha2 uses during the brand alliances can be grouped as the marketing resources, financial resources, internal resources such as sales network, and external resources such as 3rd party agencies. The resources that the partner brands of Alpha2 contribute to the brand alliances are classified as the marketing resources, human resources, internal resources, technology, physical resources, and knowledge in forms of brand alliance experience, know-how and shared customer database usage.

In their brand alliances with Alpha1 (the telecommunications category), Alpha2 makes a financial resource contribution by offering special discounts on their car models for the relevant customer segment of Alpha1. Alpha1 commits its marketing resources and capabilities concerning the amount of customer benefit that Alpha2 provides to its customers. In some cases, Alpha1 used marketing resources such as TV and radio advertisement, newspaper ads, and digital marketing campaigns.

In addition, Alpha1 uses its technological resources and brand alliance experience for the smart targeting of its customer database to improve the outcome of the brand alliance. To inform the sales network about the brand alliance details, Alpha2 uses its internal marketing resources such as an intranet. Similarly, Alpha1 informs its customer services by using internal communications to prevent any customer complaint about the brand alliance.

For the co-branding partnership with Delta86, Alpha2 committed its marketing resources and capabilities such as brand rights, and financial resources in the form of the automobile presentation in the shopping mall. In the brand alliance, the brands cooperated to produce a shoe line to target female drivers for the new car model of Alpha2. While Delta86 also used its marketing resources such as its owned channels, they committed the shelves in the sales points for the placement of co-branded shoes. Alpha2 considers the contribution of its resources to the brand alliance as an exchange between the brands. The brand calculates the possible financial resources they would use for a similar marketing event in the shopping malls and evaluates the balance of their resource contribution with the potential costs.

> *If we consider the resources we have used in Delta86 case, I am giving just one car but also I am using all my sales point organisation…When I think about Delta86, the added value for me is the number of guests in the shopping mall. We look at the case like this: if I try to exhibit a car in a shopping mall today, what would I spend? How many visitors would come there? On the other side, Delta86 sets up a stand which is specific for my brand in more than 30 shopping malls. It is like you are buying those shelves for the campaign. If you try to buy shelves from any retail shop, you need to spend money. I don't spend money, and they set up that exclusively for me…The number of visitors in a shopping mall is an important channel for us...*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

In the co-branding partnership with Delta87, Alpha2 used financial resources to convince the restaurant brand to place a car in their restaurant as part of the brand alliance. The brand uses the brand alliance with Delta87 to reach the target customers of the restaurant to promote its new car model as in the case of Delta86.

> *For example, at* ***Delta87*** *restaurant in the shopping centre, we made a visualisation on the car. We put fruit visuals on a car model. We presented car models hanging from the roof. The target group who is going to* ***Delta87*** *matches with our target group.*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.3. Aims and Expectations

One of the aims of forming cross-category brand alliances that the marketing manager of Alpha2 emphasised in the interview is increasing the sales and revenue of the brand. The way of increasing the sales in the sales-focused brand alliances is accessing new customers through the partner brand. In the sales-focused partnerships, their expectation from the partner brand is to support the brand alliance with the marketing resources and capabilities. In return, the partner brand uses the benefit that Alpha2 provides to increase customer satisfaction. Thus, the aim is creating mutual benefit for both partner brands in the alliance.

> *They are out of sector brands mostly, but we cooperate within the sector or out of sector brands very often. What kind of partnerships are they? One of them is sales focused; we make partnerships to increase car sales…* we also have more group type of partnerships for sales purpose*… In that kind of sales-focused partnerships, we provide the benefit and the partner creates value for us with their communication support… (we) try to get incremental new customers…(the partner brand) increase their customer's satisfaction, try to make them feel special and privileged… It is a win-win situation for both partners.*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

Another aim that Alpha2 expects to achieve by forming cross-category brand alliances is improving the brand image and increasing brand awareness of Alpha2. Also, there are partnerships which aim to improve the bond between the brand and the customers. By providing customer benefits from partner brands, Alpha2 aims to improve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

> *In addition to sales-focused partnerships, we also have partnerships to leverage our brand image… It is totally a project (the partnership with Delta86) to have an impact on brand image… These are important projects to create awareness among that group to make them say 'Alpha2 also has that kind of car models'. We will have that kind of partnerships soon as well… Besides that, to increase the emotional bond, we have a partnership with a coffee chain, Delta89 and give them a coffee as a gift, as a small special favour. These are the brand partnerships that we make to increase our customers' satisfaction and loyalty.*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.4. Partner Selection Criteria

Before deciding on the criteria for partner selection, Alpha2 conducted market research to understand the habits and needs of their customers. As a result, Alpha2 considers the partner brand's potential to meet the customer needs and match with the lifestyle of customers as an important criterion for partner brand selection. Other important criteria for partner brand selection Alpha2 pointed are the customer segment match between the brands. The marketing manager of Alpha2 states that the customer segment fit between the brands is more important than the country-of-origin fit in the brand alliances they form.

> *We researched with our customers before setting up the programme about their lifestyle. We did further research like that. We visited them and observed them at their place. We asked them to take photos at their houses, work and in their car about how they spend their day by sending their address a kit. We also asked them their favourite brands, and we are trying to make partnerships*

with those brands which are in their lives. The brand selection is more about the customer's consumption habits…It is more about target group match. To what extent that brand's customer group match with my customer group? The brand can be (from that country) or not. What is important is, for Turkey case, how much each brand's customers match with each other? We look at it like this…it is important if my target customer group consumes that brand or not.

(Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.5. Value Co-Creation Process

For the success of value co-creation process in the brand alliance, Alpha2 emphasises the importance of information flow between the headquarters and sales points. It includes the commitment of additional resources for internal communications where necessary. Alpha2 was one of the first brands in Turkey that invested its resources in a cross-category brand alliance with Beta5A with the expectation of supporting their product launch by giving customer benefits for their new customers. They have invested their financial resources and prepare marketing materials specifically for the campaign. They have developed a system that uses their customer database to inform their new customers about the benefits and posted them a package that communicates the benefits of Beta5A brand alliance.

With the support of marketing communication and usage of technology to inform customers by call service, Alpha2 created the value of improvement in customer loyalty thanks to the brand alliance with Beta5A. Although the brand alliance resulted in initial positive outcomes, the change of management at Alpha2 caused the cancellation of the project. Contrary to the cases where the inclusion of top management led to the quick formation of brand alliances, the change of management in the brands may halt the brand alliance even though they create value for the brands. Thus, the tenure of the brand alliance is not only affected by the value it creates but also vulnerable to the changes in human resources and management structure.

There was a project that is done with Alpha2 in 2007 at Beta5A. They made a great investment at those times…they agreed with Beta5A for additional benefits to catch up with the market after the Alpha2 launch, for a model that was just launched…It was almost everything you could get by paying for an over average Beta5A package…Anyway, all in all, they have created a significant benefit and the usages were at a significant level. However, what happened later? As it is always when the manager of the project changes if the new manager does not give importance, the project goes out. It went out. Alpha2 made it in 2007 before the loyalty programmes were newly developing in Turkey, they have seen it and made it. What happens in the end? You are paying a little more money, but you give this service in return, you need to make the communication and explain it correctly. When you make this, you create an abnormal loyalty in the customer. Alpha2 also had this kind of advantage, to connect it with the question you have asked, it was a big corporation, under those conditions they would be over us, but they have always listened to our suggestions.

(Beta5A Marketing Manager)

The type of the brand alliance shapes the value co-creation roles the brands share in the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha2. When Alpha2 aims to increase the sales through the brand alliance, the marketing communications are targeted towards sales, and the brands share the role of co-promoter. In the brand alliances that aim to leverage brand image and reach new customer segments, Alpha2 contributes to the design of the campaign and innovation of new products as in the examples of Delta86 (Shoe retailer) and Delta87 (Restaurant). Besides, Alpha2 states that co-distribution and experience creation is part of the value co-creation process during its cross-category brand alliances.

For sales-focused ones, it would be co-promoter. However, for brand side, brand image; it can be co-innovator, co-designer, co-distributor would also fit. For test-drive events, it has an experience creator side.

(Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.6. Competitive Advantage

Alpha2 states that the number of brand alliances they have is more than their competitors in the market. The cross-category brand alliances help Alpha2 to influence the customers in their buying decision. In addition, the innovation during the cross-category brand alliances gives a first-mover advantage to Alpha2 in the marketing activities of its product category. Still, Alpha2 indicates that the competitive advantage can only be measured if it influences the sales numbers.

> *I can give an example of sales; we had a campaign in the past. When the customers spent 500 liras at Delta66, Delta85 or Delta83, they received 1.000 liras discount for Alpha2 car sales. We made a measurement after that campaign. We surveyed the customers who bought cars by using that campaign. We asked them whether they only considered Alpha2 brand when they decided to buy a car or other brands as well. We put the ones who say they only considered Alpha2; it would not matter for them if I made a campaign or not. They would buy Alpha2 anyways.*
>
> *On the other hand, some customers said they considered (other brands) as well which our competitors are. When we asked to what extent that campaign influenced their decision, %36.4 said it was highly influential which are incremental customers for us. If I did not bring that campaign to them, there was a possibility that they would choose rival brands. That is something alliance added me as a value against the competitors… When you consider the driving shoe alliance, there is not an example in Turkey among the brands in my class. There is not any such project; we can call it a first. I cannot say yet it brought a competitive advantage, but it was a first.*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.7. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

Alpha2 evaluates the outcome of the cross-category brand alliances by measuring the customer benefits the brand alliance created for its customers. The demand from the customers for the campaign influences the decision of further brand alliances with the partner brand. In addition, the number of incremental sales is critical for the performance of the brand alliance when the partnership is sales focused. When the brand alliance aims to leverage the brand image, Alpha3 measures the impact by tracking social media analytics and the change in brand awareness.

> *In an alliance, I can measure if it converted into sales or interest from the target customers…If it is a sales focused partnership, it is much easier to measure…However, it is not that easy to measure when it is a partnership for brand image…We are looking at if we make people talk about the partnership, what is the extent of social media shares, how much likes we get from work without an advertisement. This kind of things shows if people were aware of it if they liked it…*
>
> *On the measurement side; if I provide a benefit for my customers, I am looking at how often my customer uses that offer. How many times did they demand and how many times did they use? I decide about the success after looking at those figures. Sometimes you are providing an offer, and the customers do not demand it at all, and you really believe that they would demand it. In that case, we are looking at what might be the problem. Is there a problem in our internal process? Or was it a brand that was not in the customer's interest area? We evaluate like that…*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

For Alpha2, the tenure of the partnership depends on the outcome of the brand alliance. If the customers received the expected benefit out of the brand alliance, Alpha2 tends to collaborate again with the same partner brand for a longer-term alliance. On the other hand, if Alpha2 had problems with the partner brand that would influence the outcome negatively, they prefer not to collaborate with that partner brand in the future brand alliances.

If it is really a brand that the customer did not demand it is nonsense to try it again. But if it is a brand that the customer demanded we try to make that partnership a long-term one or we are trying to make one more collaboration with them…For example, Alpha1 was very willing to make partnerships for their loyalty programme. My willingness was about to reach Alpha1 customers and make them Alpha2 customers. When both sides have that willingness and commit themselves for the partnership, when I provide the correct offer which will give an added value for the customers and when the partner communicates that offer in a correct way to their customers; then the partnership results in a good way.

(Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

To sum up, Alpha2 co-creates financial value in the sales-focused cross-category brand alliances. Furthermore, this type of alliance helps Alpha2 access the partner brand's customer database, as in the case of Alpha1 (Telecommunications) partnership. The changes in brand image, brand awareness, customer benefit, and customer satisfaction are the other values co-created during the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha2.

There is also one more thing, and they say they have their existing customer database and they can provide a special offer for those customers. That is also an extra value for us. If I try to access that data without an alliance, you should pay money for that. When you are in that kind of alliance, you do not pay extra money for that and just use the existing communication budget and create extra value from this kind of things.

(Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.8. Potential Risks

According to Alpha2, the information transfer about the brand alliance from the headquarters of the partner brand to the point of sales is critical for the value co-creation process in the brand alliance. When the internal communications about the brand alliance are not done properly, there is a chance of dissatisfaction of customers. The marketing manager of Alpha2 points this risk as follows;

> *…my goal is to provide customer satisfaction and to make them feel privileged. I give them an expectation. They get that expectation, go to the sales point to get the benefit, and the seller says 'I do not have information about that'… That is why it is very critical for us how efficient our partner brand communicated about the partnership to its sellers. If not, it can turn into complaints while I am trying to provide satisfaction for my customers…It is not sensible to make partnerships with that kind of brands.*
>
> (Alpha2 Marketing Manager)

4.3.2.9. Level of Resource Allocation and Influence on Value Outcomes

Alpha2 is like Alpha1 in terms of the high level of marketing resources and capabilities contribution to the brand alliances. However, the contribution of technological resources is lower than the contribution of Alpha1 or Alpha2. It can be explained through the difference of technological resources Alpha2 has, the know-how in their product category (automotive) is not adaptable to the nature of brand alliances they form with partner brands from different categories. To overcome the low level of allocation in terms of technological resources, Alpha2 contributes a medium level of financial resources to the brand alliance they form. The financial resources Alpha2 allocates to the brand alliances help the alliance partner brand to co-create innovative outcomes such as special shoes that are suitable to use in Alpha2 cars in the brand alliance with Delta86 from the shoe product category. The resource allocation levels and the relationship between the value outcomes in Alpha2 case are summarised in Table 24.

Table 24 Resource Allocation Levels and Value Outcomes of Alpha2 Brand Alliances

Alpha2		*Direct Value Outcomes*				*Indirect Value Outcomes*			
Allocated Resource Type	**Resource Allocation Level**	*Financial*	*Customer Acquisition*	*Customer Satisfaction*	*Brand Awareness*	*Brand Image*	*Customer Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Marketing Resources	High		✓						
Human Resources	Medium			✓					
Financial Resources	Medium			✓				✓	
Technological Resources	Low								
External Resources	Low								
Brand Alliance Experience	Low								
Physical Resources	Low								

Co-creation of innovation with partner brands results in customer satisfaction as well, which is one of the aims and expectations of Alpha2 from the brand alliances they form. The medium level of human resources allocation of Alpha2 to the brand alliances improve the customer service quality, which results in customer satisfaction. However, Alpha2 marketing manager states that the insufficient level of human resource allocation by alliance partner brands in some of the brand alliances they had increased the risk of customer complaints. It is another validation of the relationship between human resource allocation and customer satisfaction value outcome.

Although Alpha2 aims to increase brand awareness and improve brand image through the brand alliance by contributing a high level of marketing resources and capabilities, it only co-creates the value outcome of customer acquisition with partner brands. The reasons for the indifferent impact on brand awareness and brand image might be due to the choice of partner brands. Alpha2 is a known brand in the country which already achieved a high level of brand awareness in its category. Still, the image of its products is difficult to change due to usage habits of the past consumers of its products, such as taxi drivers as stated by Alpha1 manager. When Alpha2 forms a brand alliance with a brand that has lower brand equity than Alpha2, improving the brand image turns into a challenge due to limited market reach of the partner brand. In the future, Alpha2 should target brands that have higher brand equity and reach to co-create value outcomes of increased brand awareness and improved brand image.

However, a high level of marketing resources and capabilities allocation by both partner brands such as the brand alliance with Alpha1 (Telecom) results in good results in terms of customer acquisition for Alpha2. That is a good example of realising mutual benefit aim of Alpha2 from a brand alliance. While Alpha1 provides customer benefit and satisfaction to its customers by providing a discount from Alpha2, Alpha2 increases the number of its customers in the database thanks to the data-sharing agreement between the partner brands during the brand alliance. Although Alpha2 does not generate financial value because of the discount they provided, the customer data they collected helps the brand acquire new customers with cross-selling and upsell opportunities.

4.3.3. Alpha3 Case (Fuel&Energy) Analysis

Alpha3 is a fuel & energy brand that operates in Turkey and makes brand alliances with various brands from different categories. The cross-category brand alliances of Alpha3 include the partnership with telecommunications brands, banking brands, technology brands, and automotive & service brands. The brand alliances of the brand mostly aim for individual customers and small and medium enterprises.

Regulations in the fuel & energy sector in Turkey mean Alpha3 can only provide fuel as a benefit to their customers in the promotional campaigns they make with other partner brands. However, the partner brands can provide fuel-related products as a benefit to the customers in the promotional campaigns during the brand alliance. Their partnership with technology & mobile brand Delta90 enables them to provide benefits to the customers of other brands thanks to the brand network of Delta90. The brand alliances of Alpha3 that are explored in this study are illustrated in Figure 20. The categories of the brands are listed in Table 25 below.

Figure 20 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Alpha3

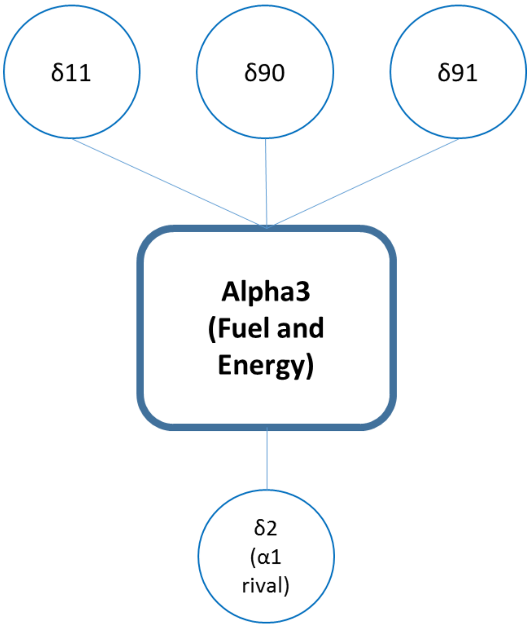


Table 25 Brand Alliance Types of Alpha3 Partnerships

Case Study Brand	**Category**	**Partner Brand**	**Category**	**Brand Alliance Type**
Alpha3	Fuel&Energy	Delta2	Telecommunications	Co-Branding & Advertising
		Delta11	Banking	Co-Branding & Advertising (Complementary)
		Delta90	Technology / Mobile	Co-Branding (Complementary
		Delta91	Automotive / Service	Co-Branding (Complementary)

4.3.3.1. Overview of the Cross-Category Brand Alliances

As a fuel & energy brand, the brand has a card-based customer loyalty program which is a common practice to track customer activities in fuel & energy product category (Allstar 2019). The brand facilitates its brand alliances through its loyalty program in which the customers can collect points to buy fuel from the brand's sales points. Thanks to the cross-category brand alliance with technology partner Delta90, the customers can use their loyalty cards in a digital format instead of the necessity of physical cards. Before the regulations in the fuel sector in 2010, the brand was able to provide benefits from several brand categories such as telecommunications, entertainment, gifts, and FMCG.

However, the regulations by the government regulatory institution that do not allow benefits from other brand categories within the loyalty program limited the scope of brand alliances. On the other hand, the brands that complement the services of Delta90 continued to make cross-category brand alliances with the brand. For instance, credit card brands from banking category conduct several brand alliances with Delta90 during the year to enable Delta90 customers ease of payment with additional financial benefits when they use the credit cards. In addition, long-term partnership with the telecommunications brand Delta2, which is the rival of case study brand Alpha1, allows having increased reach and awareness thanks to the marketing communications made by Delta2.

4.3.3.2. Resources & Capabilities Used

For the cross-category brand alliances, the resources that are mostly used by Alpha3 are technological and financial. The technological resources are used to develop specific integrations with the partner brands for the brand alliance. Moreover, they use external resources such as agencies to manage the brand alliance process and prepare reports about the outcome. The amount of the resources they contribute to the alliance depends on the marketing budget allocated for that financial year. Because of the low-profit margins in the fuel industry, Alpha3 limits the resources in financial terms to the 2% of the revenue that the brand alliance would generate. The time spent by the human resources of the brand to develop and manage the transactions is also seen as a cost for the brand alliances. Alpha3 contributes to the brand alliance with its marketing resources and capabilities such as brand image, and the market reaches thanks to its widespread retail network in Turkey.

In addition, they use their CRM capabilities and customer database to reach the customers effectively during the brand alliance. The brand alliance experience Alpha3 has thanks to the long-term loyalty program is also utilised for value co-creation in the brand alliance. The partner brands allocate their marketing resources to the brand alliance with their marketing communication power. In some cases, the financial commission is paid to the partner brands for the incremental revenue they bring during the brand alliance. The personal knowledge of the marketing manager about the partner brands and the brand alliances is another resource Alpha3 commits to the cross-category brand alliances. In short, Alpha3 devotes technological resources, financial resources, marketing resources, human resources, knowledge (e.g. customer database and brand alliance experience), and external resources to the cross-category brand alliances.

> *As I have previously worked at the primary competitor of this partner, I have good insights about its strategy and context. I also observe past campaigns done with them.*

(Alpha3 Marketing Manager)

4.3.3.3. Aims and Expectations

Primarily, Alpha3 aims to increase the number of customers in its customer database, which the brand uses efficiently to communicate with its customers thanks to its advanced CRM system. In addition, Alpha3 expects that the cross-category brand alliances would help the brand to reach its brand positioning strategy targets. Like the other case study brands, Alpha3 aims to achieve synergy during the brand alliance, which would enable the know-how transfer between the partner brands at an expected level. Alpha3 believes the cross-category brand alliances help the company to create awareness among the customers thanks to the tech-savvy and trendy image the partner brands add to the Alpha3's brand positioning. Therefore, Alpha3 has cross-category brand alliance goals which are related to the overall business strategy and marketing strategy of the brand.

4.3.3.4. Partner Selection Criteria

Alpha3 states that the brand positioning of the partner brand is one of the important criteria for their partner brand selection. The brand fit between the positioning of Alpha3 and the potential alliance partner brands is a factor that Alpha3 looks for in the selection of alliance partners. Like Alpha1 and Alpha2, customer segment fit is a common criterion for the brand alliance partner selection. In addition, Alpha3 uses its negotiation power to convince potential partner brands to form a brand alliance. Still, the partner brands that complement the service of Alpha3 such as the banking partner Delta11 is selected more because of the market share of the partner brand rather than the customer segment fit.

4.3.3.5. Value Co-Creation Process

To form brand alliances, Alpha3 contacts other potential brands through their marketing agencies or by direct contact. In some cases, the partner brands contact Alpha3 to offer a brand alliance. After the initial contact, the brands have meetings and business case workshops to discuss the details of the proposed brand alliance. Because of the exchange of resources such as financial commission or marketing resources; there is a negotiation process between the potential alliance partners at the alliance formation stage. Although the interactions at the negotiation phase are planned, Alpha3 points out that the partner brands should be well prepared to convince Alpha3 to form a brand alliance. After the parties agree on the conditions of the brand alliance, the interaction between the partner brands continues through emails, phone calls, and periodic meetings.

According to Alpha3, frequent communication between the brands is critical to prevent any issues that would harm the brand alliance process. External stakeholders, such as agencies that the brands work with have some execution, communication, and reporting related duties during the brand alliances. However, the brands are the main actors of the value co-creation process in the brand alliance. According to Alpha3, there is an exchange of marketing resources between the partner brands. While Alpha3 allows the partner brand to use its brand image in the marketing communications, the partner brand utilises its marketing communication power to promote the brand alliance. The financial resource allocation is part of the exchange process and determined according to the level of resource allocation of partner brands.

> *…we offer our brand image and national retail network. The partner can ask for different commission rates according to the campaign type, the strategic reason for the marketing activities in question. The partner has a large communication power; they use it in the alliance.*
>
> (Alpha3 Marketing Manager)

Alpha3 aims to form at least one alliance each month with the partner brands from the banking category and long-term alliances with the brands from other categories. The partners conduct joint marketing communication activities by planning the media spending and designs of the marketing material together. In the marketing activities, there is a co-branded promotion of both brands of the alliance. Thus, co-promoter role is primarily shared with the partner brands in the value co-creation process. As mentioned in the competitive advantage section, Alpha3 shares the role of co-innovator with the partner brands by enabling the innovation of new technologies that would improve the customer experience. Therefore, experience creator is another role partner brand shares in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha3. In addition, Alpha3 stated that the brands share the role of co-tester because of the testing process of new technologies before they are launched to the market for the usage of customers.

4.3.3.6. Competitive Advantage

The brand alliance with the banking partner Delta11 assisted Alpha3 to innovate a solution to compete with rival fuel & energy brand Delta93 (which is in cooperation with Delta90's rival technology brand Delta92) to enable customers to make payments in the gas stations by using their mobile phones without leaving their cars. Without the brand alliance partner that excelled in the technology and finance, it would be difficult for Alpha3 to stay competitive against the rival brand in terms of the technological solutions.

On the other hand, the partnership with Delta2 telecommunications brand is a counteract to the partnership between the rival brand Delta66 in fuel category and Alpha1 in the telecommunications category. The communication power of telecommunications brand in Turkey encourages other brands to form brand alliances with one of the three major telecommunications brands. When Delta66 forms an alliance with Alpha1, it is inevitable for Alpha3 to find a partner from the telecommunications category to stay competitive in terms of marketing activities.

Similarly, the brand alliances with the credit card brands from banking category is a common practice for the fuel brands in Turkey. Instead of long-term partnerships with one brand, the credit card brands, and fuel brands form monthly or quarterly brand alliances to access different customers. According to the website of Alpha3, Alpha3 brand had alliances with four different credit card brands in the 12 months between February 2018 and February 2019 which last between 30-45 days on average. Forming a brand alliance with the credit card brands is another way to stay competitive in the fuel market by providing the holders of the credit card brand a customer benefit through the credit card brand.

4.3.3.7. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

Alpha3 evaluates the outcome of the cross-category brand alliances by analysing the results of the promotional campaigns, conducting marketing surveys, and preparing customer database reports. Before the start of the brand alliance, Alpha3 sets KPIs which are specific to the brand alliance by forecasting the results. The results are compared with the KPIs at the end of the alliance to identify the brand alliance's performance. The accuracy of the results is critical for the partner brand when Alpha3 pays a commission for the transactions the partner brand initiated.

Thanks to the co-promotion with the partner brands, Alpha3 gets incremental value as an outcome of the cross-category brand alliances. On the other side, the partner brand earns commission and gets increased profits out of the brand alliance. Therefore, financial value is a direct value outcome of the brand alliances of Alpha3. Besides, partner brands can access the customer database of Alpha3 because of the marketing communications Alpha3 conducts through its advanced CRM system.

Customers do not only enjoy increased benefits thanks to the partner brand's offer but also have a better customer experience thanks to the co-innovated technology, which allows customers to make payments without leaving their cars. As a result, improved customer benefit and customer experience are co-created by the brands in the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha3. Furthermore, Alpha3 states that the know-how and insights that are collected during the brand alliances are important assets for the brand for further market analysis.

> *Yes, skills that can benefit both now and later… Financials and transactional forecasting skills, data and performance analysis skills, negotiation skills, marketing innovation skills… useful to analyse market trends, competitor actions, suppliers' mindset and expectations*.

(Alpha3 Marketing Manager)

4.3.3.8. Potential Risks

Alpha3 states the risk of customer data sharing with 3rd parties during the cross-category brand alliances due to the usage of customer data in the marketing communication activities and campaigns. Both because of the general regulations about personal data protection and specific regulations in the fuel sector, the issue of data sharing is sensitive for Alpha3. The cross-category brand alliances with the banking and technology brands create a risk of data sharing with other parties because of the external stakeholders the brands work with. To minimise the risks of data misuse, Alpha3 includes legal conditions in the cross-category brand alliance contracts about the usage of customer data.

Besides, extra resources are used to provide the security of data during the transactions between the stakeholders of the cross-category brand alliance. Another risk Alpha3 pointed about the cross-category brand alliances is the dependency on the partner brand because of the long-term contractual commitment. Also, the abrupt end of an alliance before the expected time creates the risk of revenue loss due to the difficulty of finding another partner to replace the partner brand, which exited the alliance. Therefore, Alpha3 states the need for contingency plans and conditions in the brand alliance contracts to minimise these risks.

> *Risk of data/info sharing to 3rd parties, but strictly protected by contract. Time and money are invested in the development and management of the transactions… The alliance has some risks in terms of long-term dependence and eventual loss of revenue if the alliance would come to an end. As well as partnership actions are taken, exit plans should also be constantly checked.*
>
> (Alpha3 Marketing Manager)

4.3.3.9. Level of Resource Allocation and Influence on Value Outcomes

Among the case studies, Alpha3 (Fuel and Energy) is one of the two brands with Alpha1 (Telecom) which allocates a high level of technological resources to its brand alliances. In addition, Alpha3 contributes a high level of brand alliance experience to the brand alliances, which stems from the many brand alliances they conducted with brands from banking and telecommunications sector. However, the regulations in their sector limited the benefits the brands can provide to their customers, forcing Alpha3 into finding new ways to provide customer benefits. By contributing a high level of technological resources and brand alliance experience to their brand alliances, Alpha3 enables alliance partner brands to find innovative ways in the brand alliances which co-creates customer acquisition and customer satisfaction value outcomes. The resource allocation levels and their influence on value outcomes in Alpha3 case are presented in Table 26.

Table 26 Resource Allocation Levels and Value Outcomes of Alpha3 Brand Alliances

Alpha3		***Direct Value Outcomes***				***Indirect Value Outcomes***			
Allocated Resource Type	**Resource Allocation Level**	*Financial*	*Customer Acquisition*	*Customer Satisfaction*	*Brand Awareness*	*Brand Image*	*Customer Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Marketing Resources	Medium	✓	✓						
Human Resources	Medium			✓					
Financial Resources	Medium		✓						
Technological Resources	High	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
External Resources	Low								
Brand Alliance Experience	High		✓	✓					
Physical Resources	Low								

In addition to the high level of technological resources allocated, medium level allocation of marketing resources and financial resources turned into success in the brand alliances with Delta2 (Telecom), Delta11 (Banking), and Delta90 (Technology). While the partnerships with these brands generated financial value through the acquisition of new customers, the contribution of marketing resources by the partner brands was necessary to achieve these value outcomes. Considering that Alpha3 is a global brand with strong brand equity, Alpha3 looks for partner brands at a similar level of brand equity which can contribute a high level of marketing resources and financial resources into the brand alliances. Although this condition limits the number of brands that Alpha3 can choose as alliance partners, the success of the mentioned partnerships show the importance of a similar level of marketing resource allocation to acquire more customers.

When the cases of Alpha1 and Alpha3 are compared, it can be discussed that Alpha1 does not achieve the customer acquisition value outcome even though Alpha1 allocates more marketing resources than its partner brands in the brand alliances. It can be due to the limited market reach of Alpha1's partner brands which aims to utilise Alpha1's marketing resources to increase brand awareness. However, partner brands of Alpha3 have similar levels of market reach as Alpha3, and the aims of the brand alliances differ from the case of Alpha1. As a result, Alpha3 overcomes the regulations that limit the value outcomes of its brand alliances by choosing partner brands that can co-create innovation and knowledge with Alpha3 to increase customer acquisition.

4.3.4. Alpha4 Case (Sports Retailer) Analysis

Alpha4 is a sports goods retailer brand that has stores in different cities in Turkey. The sports retailer brand Alpha4 started to make brand alliances with other brands from different categories in Turkey in 2018, which is the year the interviews with the marketing specialist of the brand are conducted. The brand chooses partners that complement the products and services they provide to their customers, such as sports & hobby courses, travel & leisure brands, and sports education providers. The brand alliances of Alpha4 are depicted in Figure 21, and the types of brand alliances are listed in Table 27.

Figure 21 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Alpha4

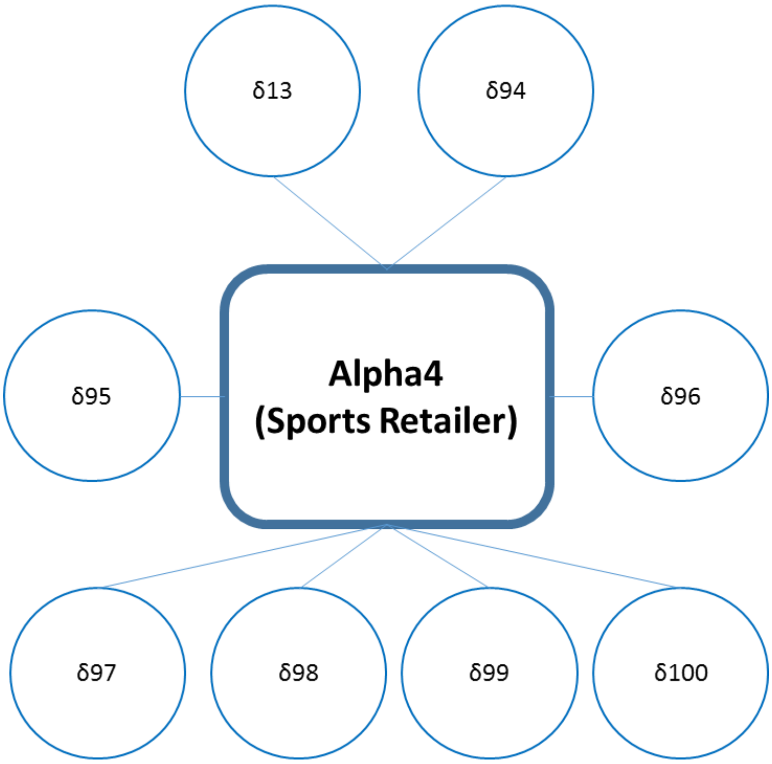


Table 27 Brand Alliance Types of Alpha4 Partnerships

Case Study Brand	**Category**	**Partner Brand**	**Category**	**Brand Alliance Type**
Alpha4	Sports Retailer	Delta13	Sports / Hobby	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta94	Sports / Hobby	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta95	Sports / Hobby	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta96	Travel / Leisure	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta97	Sports / Education	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta98	Sports / Education	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta99	Sports / Education	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta100	Sports / Hobby	Co-Branding (Complementary)

4.3.4.1. Overview of the Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Like Alpha1 and Alpha2, Alpha4 facilitates the brand alliances as part of the customer loyalty program they launched in 2018. The brand alliances include co-branding partnerships with cross-category brands that provide complementary services to Alpha4's products and services. The example mechanism of the Alpha4's customer offers is as follows: (1) the customer of Alpha4 registers as a member of Alpha4 loyalty programme, (2) the customer spends a certain amount of money at a specific product category, (3) the customer becomes eligible for the offer that is provided by the partner brand which has a service related to the product category. Thus, it is critical for Alpha4 to find alliance partners that would provide benefits to the customers that are relevant to the product categories of Alpha4. In return, Alpha4 supports the alliance partners with communication support which enables them to have access to Alpha4's customer database.

4.3.4.2. Resources & Capabilities Used

The resources and capabilities Alpha4 commit to a partnership depend on the benefits the partner brand provides for the customers of Alpha4. Alpha4 contributes to the brand alliance with marketing resources and capabilities such as BTL communication tools, in-store visibility, email marketing, owned media channels of website and social media accounts. The communication that is made to the customer database of Alpha4 is an important marketing capability that is used during the brand alliances.

> *…we will commit to making regular communication about Delta13 to our database. Because here in our database, we have about 1.3 million opt-ins yes customers. So actually, this is a huge number in terms of to exploit from our communication for Delta13. However, from the eyes of them, they should be more flexible in the economic sides. They will give some economic discount to our customers… We use mainly emailing, website, events, and social media. Now we also began to in-store visibility which we place some POP materials.*
>
> (Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

The partner brand not only uses financial resources to compensate for the benefit provided for Alpha4 customers but also uses marketing resources to support the marketing communication of the brand alliance. For the local partnerships that are organised by Alpha4 stores, the store uses financial resources from its dedicated budget for the brand alliances they make. Besides, Alpha4 uses physical resources (e.g. stores and parking lots of stores) to increase the engagement of customers and create awareness about the brand alliances if the partner brand's offer for Alpha4 customers is above a level that is satisfactory for Alpha4 management to commit additional resources. Furthermore, Alpha4 uses its marketing resources and capabilities as a bargaining tool in the brand alliance formation process.

…every Alpha4 store has its autonomy. They are allocating a budget from their store budgets in order to organise those sports events…in every Alpha4 store, we are organising micro-events, but these micro-events are located inside the store…I also offer in-store visibility if I want to raise the value of the offer. Briefly, our owned marketing channels are my most important asset in the negotiation period.

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.3. Aims and Expectations

The most important aim of brand alliances for Alpha4 is an alignment with the brand's promise, which is "make sports accessible for everyone". To reach this aim, they expect the maximum benefit that the partner brand can provide for Alpha4 customers. Moreover, it is critical to find partner brands that help to increase the number of members in the customer database through the re-launch of the loyalty program.

…but for me, the most important part is to get the maximum benefit of sports for our user (it must be a minimum 15% if it is a discount) … Actually, we are doing this partnership to increase our customer database.

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

Through creating extra value for the customers with the help of cross-category brand alliances, Alpha4 aims to increase its market share. Alpha4 expects that the facilitation of sports experience for its customers through cross-category brand alliances will increase the attachment of its customers to the brand to purchase sports-related products. Therefore, increasing customer retention and achieving customer loyalty are the other aims of cross-category brand alliances for Alpha4. Although Alpha4 commits marketing resources and capabilities to the brand alliance to promote the partner brand, the brand states that the interests of Alpha4 are the top priority which is different than the win-win approach of other case study brands.

…we want to create value for our customers which activates them to do more sports, and these results also bring us to more market share… for us, our priority is, our focus is our interests… we thought that if we attach our sports users to sports, they will come to us again and again. I think this is a

sustainable model for us. If, you know, some people are motivated seasonally and just for a short period, and if I capture those customers, and if they begin to do sports and do it regularly, I know that they will come to us and buy more and more.

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.4. Partner Brand Selection Criteria

The "global" brand alliances of Alpha4 means the partnerships that are managed by the headquarters, and they are valid all around the country. The "local" means the brand alliances made by the branch managers and managed at the regional level in the store's area. Alpha4 specifies four different criteria which are accessibility, seasonality, responsiveness, and flexibility for their partner selection process. The brand initiates the partnerships if only the partner brand matches these criteria. For instance, they have not started a major brand alliance with Delta13 because of the brand's reluctance to be flexible even though they have met other criteria. Although it is not explicitly stated, the criteria of Alpha4 for partner brand selection can be summarised as customer reach of the brand (accessibility), customer segment fit (seasonality), and the level of interaction between the alliance partners to improve the success of the alliance (responsiveness and flexibility).

For example, Delta94 is a digital yoga content platform which you can initiate membership from anywhere in Turkey. Thus, ***accessibility*** *is very important in brand selection for global partnerships. Secondly,* ***seasonality*** *affects our partner selection as well. Some sports are commonly top of mind in winter (such as skiing, hiking) and of course, it is important to find a partner that provides a skiing experience just right now! Third, the* ***responsiveness*** *of a partner is important. I should feel comfortable when I mention any issue to them no matter it is negative or positive, and I expect them to understand me immediately and provide me with an exact solution. And last,* ***flexibility*** *also affects my selection. I want my partner to be open-minded about any topic related to our loyalty campaign. For example, I sometimes want to arouse the effect & attention of a partnership; thus, I plan to create one-shot, short-term social media contests while the current campaign is going on. In this sense,*

> *partners' extra offers are expected from my side. Thus the partner should be flexible in the scope of the partnership.*

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

Furthermore, an additional criterion for partner selection is the match of the partner brand with customer preferences. The store managers are independent to choose the partner brands for their region based on the popularity of sports or product categories in their region.

> *...we make them free to make their decisions because they know their customers very well so they should be the authority who will decide on the sports activities because for example in City1, the main sports are very different. In City2, main sports are different from City1, so that is why they also customise their sports organisations according to the most popular, according to their commercial policy, according to their customers' preferences*.

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.5. Value Co-Creation Process

The value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha4 starts with the interaction with the potential partner brands. If the partner brand does not meet the partner selection criteria, Alpha4 contacts other potential brands for the brand alliance. During the interaction with the potential brands, Alpha4 uses its marketing resources and capabilities as a bargaining tool in the interactions to get the highest benefit for its customers from the potential alliance partner brand. The potential brands are chosen amongst the ones that would fit the product categories of Alpha4 such as sports-related hobby courses, outdoor or skiing focused travel companies. Alpha4 aims to co-create an experience with the partner brand to provide its customers with a reason to use its products in real-life conditions with the benefits from the partner brands. Besides, Alpha4 organises cooperated events at its premises with the partner brands to engage its customers who visit the departmental stores. Therefore, the prominent value co-creation roles the partner brands share in the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha4 are co-promoter and experience creator.

*Global partnerships include countrywide partnerships which any Alpha4 users could easily reach and benefits from a sports experience…Experience, of course, the experience is in the centre of this project. Maybe I will provide economic benefit for my customer, but my main motivation is to be with my customer in their sports experience...*We also organize some events in-store or outer store depending on the attendance of our customers…

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.6. Competitive Advantage

Although Alpha4 states that they do not have direct counterpart competitors in their category, other sports clothing brands such as Delta14 and Delta16 has cross-category brand alliances with other brands. Still, the loyalty program approach of Alpha4 is unique amongst its competitors in which Alpha4 brings the cross-category brand alliances to one platform that the customers can access. However, the partner brands have customer communities which Alpha4 aims to build or already formed major partnerships with FMCG brands such as Delta 15 (FMCG) and Delta16 (Sports clothing) partnership. Alpha4 aims to achieve competitive advantage through the cross-category brand alliances by creating a customer experience that would trigger customers to buy again from the brand after they get to benefit from the partner brand offers.

Actually, our competitors are more focusing on building communities. For example, Delta14 has its own applications, and Delta14 has an online community, and they are already organising these events by their power. They are doing it internally, with internal resources. They do not have any alliances as far as I know…For example, Delta16 gave a discount for Delta15 buyers, right? Okay, but I do not remember such cooperation for Delta14. These are not our direct competitors. Currently, we do not have, and I don't know which competitors make brand alliances.

(Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.7. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

Alpha4 tracks the number of redemptions of the cross-category brand alliance campaigns to measure the performance of the brand alliances. The brand also measures the increase in the number of loyalty program members and customer database. As the brand relaunched its loyalty program with new brand alliances, the brand evaluates the relaunch period as a learning phase to get brand alliance experience. Thus, brand alliance experience is one of the outcomes of the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha4. Among the different roles of value co-creation, Alpha4 states that the brand co-creates experience for the customers and makes co-promotion with the partner brand. Therefore, the improved customer experience during the co-promotion of the brand alliance is the most significant value that is co-created for Alpha4.

Furthermore, customer benefit is also co-created thanks to the customised offer that is provided by the partner brands for Alpha4 customers based on their preferences and location. Although the initial brand alliances did not bring the expected outcomes, the partner brands benefit from access to the customer database of Alpha4 thanks to the marketing communications of Alpha4 to its customers to promote the cross-category brand alliances. Furthermore, the partner brands achieve brand awareness with the support of Alpha4's marketing communications.

4.3.4.8. Potential Risks

Despite the risks included in the partner selection process by giving autonomy to the store managers, Alpha4 considers the risk as part of the learning process. The brand alliance experiences the store managers get during the learning process is an additional value outcome of the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances.

> *We give a chance to make mistakes. It is okay; if you make this mistake, it is okay for us. We can handle it, but what you learn from this? Okay we got the feedback, and we monitor the store managers, and they again get their decision on their own. Making a mistake is not a problem in Alpha4 culture.*
>
> (Alpha4 Marketing Specialist)

4.3.4.9. Level of Resource Allocation and Influence on Value Outcomes

Compared to the other cases, Alpha4 is the brand that allocates more physical resources than any other case study brand in the brand alliances. It is related to their managerial decision of delegating partner brand choices to store managers. The level of human resources allocation increases with this decision as well; the store managers utilise the employees of stores during the brand alliance process. When the store managers form a brand alliance with local partner brands in their region, they use the facilities of the stores to co-create value with partner brands. The partnership with local brands from different product categories not only increases the awareness of the brand in the region but also provides an opportunity for potential customers to experience Alpha4's products and services. The allocation levels of resources and their influence on value outcomes in Alpha4 case is presented **in Table 28.**

Table 28 Resource Allocation Levels and Value Outcomes of Alpha4 Brand Alliances

Alpha4		***Direct Value Outcomes***				***Indirect Value Outcomes***			
Allocated Resource Type	**Resource Allocation Level**	*Financial*	*Customer Acquisition*	*Customer Satisfaction*	*Brand Awareness*	*Brand Image*	*Customer Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Marketing Resources	Medium			✓	✓				✓
Human Resources	Medium			✓	✓				
Financial Resources	Low								
Technological Resources	Low								
External Resources	Low								
Brand Alliance Experience	Low								
Physical Resources	Medium			✓	✓				

Alpha4 does not have high levels of marketing or financial resources to allocate to its brand alliances. The brand aims to utilise a medium level of marketing resources and human resources to co-create value in the brand alliances. The main aim of Alpha4's brand alliances is to reflect its brand message, which is "to enable anyone to do sports". Alpha4 is looking for brand partners that would ease access to any type of sports. The availability of alliance partner brands around the Alpha4 stores is more important than the brand equity of the partner brand.

Considering the limited financial resources that Alpha4 allocates to the brand alliances, the strong brand equity and customer communication channels of Alpha4 are the resources Alpha4 uses to convince brands to form a brand alliance with the brand. By providing several opportunities to do sports at partner brand locations at a good price, Alpha4 leverages the resources it contributes to the brand alliances and increases customer satisfaction. In return, the alliance partner brands co-create brand awareness thanks to the utilisation of Alpha4's marketing resources.

An indirect value outcome of Alpha4's brand alliances is knowledge. While the brand allocates a low level of technological resources to its brand alliances, brand alliances with local brands increase the knowledge about the regional customer needs and demands. Alpha4 is a global brand which does not have a long history in Turkey as other case study brands Alpha2 (Automotive) and Alpha3 (Fuel and Energy). The knowledge Alpha4 accumulates during the brand alliances is not only a co-created value outcome but also contributes to a valuable resource which is brand alliance experience. In addition, local knowledge about the customers and regions of the country would not be possible if the brand formed brand alliances with stronger brands for a nationwide collaboration. Therefore, the brand alliances with differing levels of market reach and brand equity contribute to different types of value outcomes in cross-category brand alliances.

4.3.5. Alpha5 Case (Pharmaceutical) Analysis

Alpha5 operates in the pharmaceutical sector, which is an industry that is highly regulated in terms of marketing activities in Turkey (Ekiyor and Tengilimoglu 2014). In the interview with the services manager of the brand, the manager explained how they form the complementary type of brand alliances with partner brands to support the services they provide to their pharmacist customers. Different than the other case studies, the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha5 are aimed for B2B customers. The brand alliances that Alpha5 have are with brands from technology & enterprise, services & car fleet, education, insurance, and finance companies. The brand alliances mentioned in the interview are illustrated in Figure 22. The types of alliances are listed in Table 29.

Figure 22 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Alpha5

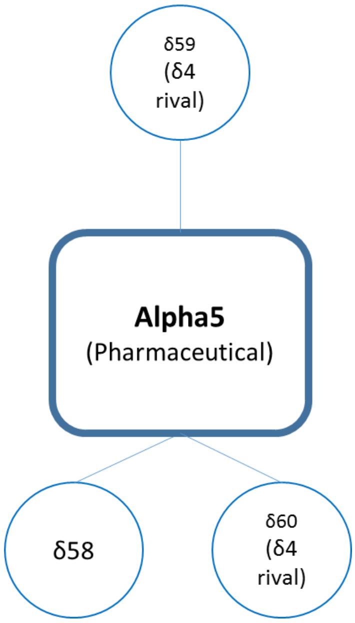


Table 29 Brand Alliance Types of Alpha5 Partnerships

Case Study Brand	Category	Partner Brand	Category	Brand Alliance Type
Alpha5	Pharmaceutical	Delta58	Technology / Enterprise	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta59	Service / Car Fleet	Co-Branding (Complementary)
		Delta60	Service / Car Fleet	Co-Branding (Complementary)

4.3.5.1. Overview of the Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Alpha5 is a pharmaceutical warehouse brand which makes brand alliances with brands from different product categories to complement their services to the pharmacists. Because of the regulations in the pharmaceutical sector, Alpha5 is not allowed to make ATL marketing activities to announce the brand alliances. Different than the previous case studies, the brand alliances of Alpha5 are mostly communicated in a closed communication platform. Thus, there is a significant importance of internal communications within the client network to support the brand alliances. The pharmacists are members of the communication network of Alpha5. When Alpha5 agrees to a new brand alliance, it notifies its members about the details and benefits of the new brand alliance for the members through messages on the communication platform, email, or SMS messages. If the customer wants to get the benefit, they contact Alpha5 or the alliance partner for the service.

4.3.5.2. Resources & Capabilities Used

The resources Alpha5 utilise for the brand alliances can be summarised as financial resources, technology, human resources, and internal marketing resources and capabilities. For the communication of brand alliances to the B2B customers, Alpha5 invested in technological infrastructure to develop a web interface in which the customers have access to the latest information about the products and brand alliances.

Besides, Alpha5 set-up a call centre to support the customers when they need additional information;

> *I have set up a call centre on a small scale, and we have also developed a system at the same time. The person could reach us by mail if they want. Their website had an interface. They had an interface where they can log in by a password that is used by the pharmacists. We could announce everything. We could make a personal announcement.*

(Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

Furthermore, Alpha5 used the brand alliances to replace the usage of internal resources with the services the partner brand provides. For example, the company abolished its own insurance and technology support departments and agreed with the brands in these product categories to compensate for their internal resources. In the insurance example, they have started to use the human resources and technology of the insurance brand as a shared resource during the brand alliance. Although the partnership aimed to provide cost-efficiency, Alpha5 utilised the new brand partnership in the marketing activities to attract potential members.

While not all outsourcing activities are brand alliances, the outsourcing can turn into another example of co-branding type of brand alliance when the main brand uses the logo of the partner brand in their marketing activities to promote the product or service the brands provide together. The product outsourcing type of co-branding examples include the brand alliance between IBM and Intel in which IBM outsources the processor component of the computers from Intel, and IBM promotes Intel brand next to their logo in their marketing activities (Blacket and Boad 1999). In the case of Alpha5, the main brand Alpha5 endorses the partner brand's logo in their marketing activities to benefit from the partner brand's values and positioning (Blacket and Boad 1999).

> *…They have abolished that (technology) company. I went and agreed with Delta58. I have made a brand alliance in a defined contract format with all types of technological support for all pharmacies there, all around Turkey and by a monthly payment taken by the company. The agreement with Delta58 was a very important one for them because we have completely changed what they currently had and used outsource party…within our own structure, we had an insurance company once upon a time. They have abolished it as well. They have said to make it outsource; we have agreed with an insurance company. We had a guy inside the company who was for joint use with them, our guy was calling, but we were making the insurance of the people by using their screens.*
>
> (Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

4.3.5.3. Aims and Expectations

One of the most important aims of cross-category brand alliances for Alpha5 is improving the customer service and customer satisfaction by providing services from top quality brands that satisfy the needs of the customers. In return, the brand expects an increase in the loyalty of its customers. For instance, the brand alliance with Delta58 from technology category enabled the company to replace its internal technology support with a known and expert brand in the technology sector to meet the customer needs about technology. Moreover, Alpha5 aims to increase the customer benefit to its clients with the offers it provides in the cross-category brand alliances. Alpha5 expects a win-win approach from the partner brand during the brand alliance which would create mutual benefit for both partners;

> *Brand alliance process is done because of two reasons. The first one, you make your advertisement and marketing and promote yourself. The second one, to fulfil the need of the company it can be done in the intention of mutual win-win; we will give them a benefit, and they will give us a benefit…The goal is, of course, to make life easier. Because we had one main service, what would the customer want except that? What would you provide them to bond them in terms of loyalty? It also corresponds to what you are doing, what would be the*

benefit? ...You remember, everyone tries to take the best conditions for themselves, the other side… If the other party is selling something to me, let them not to make any profit and let me take the best advantage. At the same time, there is something called win-win. If the alliance is for both side's profit in a win-win manner, it would continue in the long term… Finally, to sum up, of course win-win, both sides win, and both sides need to grow in their respect.

(Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

4.3.5.4. Partner Selection Criteria

Before deciding on the partner brand to replace the existing partner brand or complement the services Alpha5 provides, Alpha5 conducted market research about the potential partner brands. In line with Alpha5's overall strategy to serve its customers around the country where they have members, Alpha5 needed to find brand alliance partners that have the market reach to provide service at the regions Alpha5 operates. Moreover, Alpha5 preferred the partner brand that would provide a comprehensive service to its customers with a professional approach. On the other hand, the interaction between the brands was also significant on the decision as some of the potential partner brands did not respond to the meeting requests on time.

We have done the research; 3-4 companies in Turkey can do this… We wanted to go to a corporate one especially to make a corporate agreement once, we would have a counterpart there, and it would make us always relieved. For example, Delta62 was not interested in us… Delta58 was seriously interested in us. With Delta58, we have from phone support to record the identities at the call centre, the field; they have their own field team. They have such a service in Turkey; they have more than 50% of the POS devices in Turkey.

(Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

While choosing the partner, Delta59 was slow to create the value in the form of a new product that Alpha5 asked for to satisfy the customer needs. Delta60 accepted to create the new product and became the chosen partner of Alpha5 in the car rental service category. They have provided a better customer experience together with the creation of a new solution together and increased customer satisfaction. The solution also helped Delta60 to sell the cars in their stock and decreased their cost of inventories which helped to improve their financial results.

4.3.5.5. Value Co-Creation Process

Like the findings of the Alpha1 and Beta4 brand alliance, the involvement of upper management in the first stages of the brand alliance assists to kick-off the value co-creation process. Although the size of the partnership between Alpha5 and Delta58 is a smaller one than the Alpha1 and Beta4 brand alliance, the meeting between the top managers sped up the formation of the brand alliance.

> *We have done the agreement in almost three months. We made the general managers come together to make the agreement process faster, to make the way quicker mutually.*
>
> (Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

During the partnership between Alpha5 and Delta60 (car rental & fleet services); Delta60 applied the recommendations of Alpha5 to innovate a new financial payment solution for Alpha5 customers which helped to increase the sales of Delta60 services. In addition, the brands acted in cooperation to choose the car models to promote to the customers, which increased the effectiveness of the communications to the customers. Therefore, the brands shared the roles of co-promoter and co-innovator during the value co-creation process.

> *After that, we had found a contact in Delta60, we have given this benefit to the pharmacist after we have started to work with them at that time. That was the most important thing. We could give a car by nine instalments on the credit card. Any usual pharmacy and the pharmacists had high credit card limits, think about it there are no documents needed about your company's financial background. You are already giving it by your credit card, automatically for nine months and a car for a year in 9 instalments. It suited to most of the pharmacists firstly. Automatically we have removed many processes. When there was a special price made, and when they cannot find it on the market; it suited to them as well. Because they (Delta60) had cars in their stock and they needed to finish the stock. We have made three*

segments of cars for the pharmacists. The pharmacists had usually driven top segment cars. We have provided one Jeep, one Mercedes from top segment cars. And one for their head worker, some pharmacists have more than one pharmacy. We have provided lower segment car as a pool car. It was incredibly useful.

(Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

4.3.5.6. Competitive Advantage

The cross-category brand alliances Alpha5 forms with partner brands help Alpha5 to increase the number of offers they have in their membership packages for the clients. Although the pharmacist clients are free to choose rivals of Alpha5, the membership packages increase the attractiveness of signing long-term contracts with Alpha5. Alpha5 aims to choose partner brands which can provide service to its clients in any region Alpha5 has customers so that the clients do not need to choose the competitors of Alpha5. Therefore, the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha5 has a critical role in providing a competitive advantage over the rivals in the market.

It is like that there; we were gifting the service from Delta58, but there were different segments internally in the company as in all corporations. They become our member, pay the subscription fee, they can buy stuff as much as they want. They do not have any commitment. They can buy stuff worth 1 lira in a year or 1 million. Some pharmacists make belonging agreements. That is like that, and there were three levels. I commit to buying that much stuff from you. We were gifting it to them. The service was an automatic gift to the ones who made that belonging agreement.

(Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

4.3.5.7. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

The brand alliance with a big global technology brand Delta58 increased the credibility of the local pharmaceutical brand Alpha5 in the eyes of their existing customers. In return, Delta58 increased its brand awareness in the region and had a chance to provide service in a region where its reach was limited. In addition, the customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of Alpha5 customers increased thanks to the service quality of partner brand Delta58. As a result, the value is co-created for the stakeholders of local pharmaceutical brand Alpha5, global technology brand Delta58 and the end customers of Alpha5. Thanks to the service quality of Delta58, the customer satisfaction and loyalty of Alpha5 customers increased as an outcome of the brand alliance.

> *The pharmacist got happy; their loyalty increased more. This is a fact ultimately, they become happy and their loyalty increases when the person's problems are solved and when you give them something, they didn't ask for by identifying their problem and send them the solution.*
>
> (Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

Another value that is created during Alpha5's brand alliances is increased market reach for Delta60 by access to the improved network in the cities Alpha5 exists. Although Delta60 had limited human resources in the area, they were able to reach new customers and increased their brand awareness in the region thanks to the brand alliance with Alpha5. Furthermore, the financial value is created for Delta60 (car rental & fleet services) thanks to the successful partnership with Alpha5 to promote the services of Delta60 to Alpha5 customers. The co-innovation of new financial service during the brand alliance helped Delta60 to increase the sales of its services to Alpha5 customers. Besides, the special prices provided by Delta60 enabled Alpha5 to increase the benefit Alpha5 offers to its customers.

4.3.5.8. Potential Risks

Alpha5 aims to improve the service it offers to its B2B clients by forming cross-category brand alliances in the areas it needs to support its service. For each area, Alpha5 selects one exclusive partner brands from the brand category to provide the service for its clients. While the exclusivity of the brand in its category has the benefit of increased commitment from the brand, it carries the risk of dependency on one brand's services in the category Alpha5 clients need.

For instance, if the technology services of Delta58 malfunctions, the clients of Alpha5 might have problems that would lead to revenue loss and dissatisfaction. To minimise the risks of dependency on one partner brand, Alpha5 aims to choose the partner brands carefully among the ones which are competent in its category and which have the resources to overcome any issues promptly with their customer services. In addition, service-level-agreements (SLA) are included in the brand alliance contracts to cover the conditions of service failures. The insufficiency of the exclusive partner brand to provide service to the customers of Alpha5 is one of the reasons which lead to the change of car rental/fleet service partner brand from Delta59 to Delta60. That is why competency of the partner brand is another criterion that brands give importance in their selection among potential brands for cross-category brand alliances.

> *With Delta58, we have from phone support to record the identities at the call centre, the field, they have their own field team. They have such a service in Turkey, they have more than 50% of the POS devices in Turkey, and they had a company which provides the service. As they (Delta58) are providing POS infrastructure service from pharmacies to small shops, they are comfortable. We made an agreement with them; we have defined the service criteria. We have defined service standards.*
>
> (Alpha5 Marketing Manager)

4.3.5.9. Level of Resource Allocation and Influence on Value Outcomes

Alpha5 is a great example of how a brand can leverage cross-category brand alliances to co-create different value outcomes with alliance partner brands. While the brand had low brand alliance experience before they formed the brand alliances that are investigated in the case study, they overcame the lack of brand alliance experience by hiring a marketing manager who is experienced in brand alliances. The dependence on the new marketing manager increased the level of human resources allocation in the brand alliances. However, the newly formed brand alliances helped to keep the financial resources allocation level low while utilising the human resources during the brand alliance process. In Table 30, the resource allocation levels and their influence on value outcomes in Alpha5 case are summarised.

Table 30 Resource Allocation Levels and Value Outcomes of Alpha5 Brand Alliances

Alpha5		***Direct Value Outcomes***				***Indirect Value Outcomes***			
Allocated Resource Type	**Resource Allocation Level**	*Financial*	*Customer Acquisition*	*Customer Satisfaction*	*Brand Awareness*	*Brand Image*	*Customer Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Marketing Resources	Medium		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Human Resources	High	✓		✓				✓	
Financial Resources	Low								
Technological Resources	Medium			✓		✓	✓	✓	
External Resources	Low								
Brand Alliance Experience	Low								
Physical Resources	Low								

Being a regional brand, Alpha5 contributed a medium level of marketing resources into its brand alliances. Besides, Alpha5 aimed to benefit from the brand equity of partner brands to increase brand awareness and improve brand image. While the partner brands Alpha5 chose to work with had stronger brand equity, the alliance partner brands utilised the brand alliance with Alpha5 to reach a different customer segment that they were not targeting in their routine marketing activities. It is another example of the significance of aims and expectations in a brand alliance which influence the partner selection criteria and value outcomes.

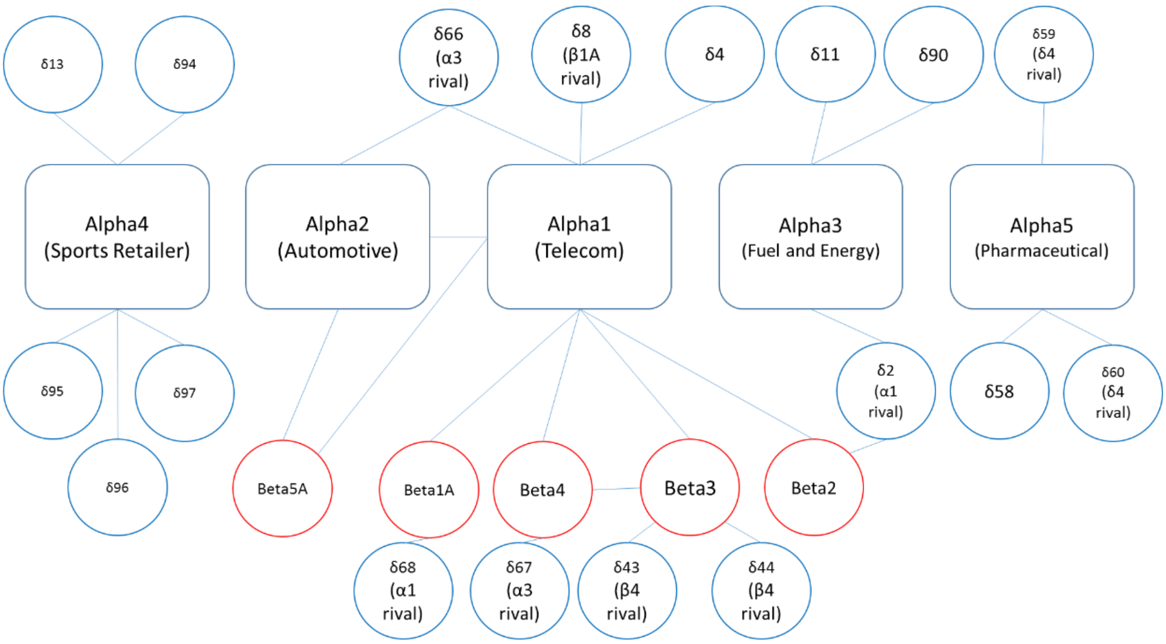
Furthermore, Alpha5 allocated medium level of technological resources to the brand alliances to co-create innovation with alliance partner brands. The alliance partner brands which have expertise in technology helped Alpha5 to improve its brand image. According to Alpha5's marketing manager, the improved service quality thanks to the co-created innovations during the brand alliances increased customer satisfaction. In addition, customers prefer working with Alpha5 in the long term due to the success of its brand alliances which resulted in the value outcome of customer loyalty.

4.3.6. Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Case Study Brands and the Alliance Partner Brands

The analysed brand alliances in the study are illustrated in Figure 23. The brand alliances that are mentioned during the interviews are supported by secondary research and field notes about the case study brands, alliance partner brands and their rivals. The figure depicts the overall relationships between case study brands, alliance partner brands that are interviewed, and the alliance partner brands that are mentioned in the interviews.

The brands that are labelled as Alpha (α) are the case study brands, the brands that are labelled as Beta (β) are the alliance partner brands that are interviewed, and the brands that are labelled as Delta (δ) are the other alliance partner brands that are mentioned in the interviews or identified by secondary research and field notes about the case study brands. The case study brands (Alpha), represented by the interviewees, are illustrated as rounded rectangles. The alliance partner brands, represented by the interviewees (Beta), are shown in red circle shapes. The alliance partner brands that are mentioned by the interviewees (Delta) are illustrated in blue circles. Each blue line represents a brand alliance between the brands.

Figure 23 Cross-Category Brand Alliances of Case Study Brands and Alliance Partner Brands



4.4. Cross-Case Analysis and Emerging Themes

After the case by case analysis of the findings, the emerging themes from each case study are collated to present an overall picture of the findings. This section helps to understand the similarities and differences between case studies in one place. Other real-life examples support the findings of the case studies. In addition, this section gives a clear representation of the findings before the discussion of the findings chapter. The emerging themes of the study are categorised under resources & capabilities, aims and expectations, partner selection criteria, value co-creation process & roles, alliance outcome & types of values co-created, potential risks and level of allocated resources sections.

According to the findings, the cross-category brand alliance type, which all case study brands form is the complementary type of co-branding. The other types are advertising (in three cases) and sponsorship (in Alpha1 case). In all analysed brand alliances of case study brands, marketing resources and capabilities, and human resources are allocated to the brand alliances. The case study brands which have bigger marketing budgets (Alpha1, Alpha2, Alpha3) allocated financial resources to the brand alliances. The case study brands with smaller marketing budgets leveraged physical (Alpha4) and technological (Alpha5) resources to compensate for the lack of financial resources.

The aims and expectations of the brands from the brand alliances can be classified as brand-based (e.g. the brand image), finance-based (e.g. sales increase) and customer-based (e.g. customer satisfaction) aims. The mutual benefit from the alliance and customer loyalty are the common aims and expectations of the analysed brand alliances in the study. Only one case study brand (Alpha3) identified “access to customer database” among the aims, which is an aim that leads to financial aims of market share (Alpha4) and sales increase (Alpha2).

Customer segment fit is an emerging theme among the partner selection criteria of case study and alliance partner brands. Responsiveness and flexibility of the partner brands are other common criteria that are identified in the findings. Co-promoter, experience creator and co-innovator are the common value co-creation roles that the brands have during the value co-creation process in the analysed cross-category brand alliances.

Majority of the co-created value outcomes are in parallel to the aims and expectations. The analysed cases show that the brands co-create brand-based values such as brand awareness, financial-based values such as increased sales, and customer-based values such as customer satisfaction. However, the findings show that the brands co-create innovation as a value outcome of the analysed cross-category brand alliances while it was not among the identified aims and expectations.

There is a variety of risks related to the cross-category brand alliances, which are identified in the analysis. Dependency on one partner during the alliance is a common theme of two case studies (Alpha3 and Alpha5) while other risks are specific to each case. Still, the identified risks have the potential to inform marketing managers to have an improved value co-creation process in their future brand alliances.

When the relationship between the level of resource allocation and value outcomes is analysed, there is a common theme identified about the relationship between the level of technological resources allocation and innovation outcome. Besides, the level of human resources allocation is closely related to customer satisfaction value outcome. The findings show that the value outcomes are achieved through the integration of resources between partner brands, which explains why the case study brands formed the complementary type of brand alliances in common.

4.4.1. Resources and Capabilities

This section summarises the resources and capabilities allocated by the partner brands to the brand alliances that are analysed in the case studies. Table 31 helps to identify the types of the resources & capabilities utilised in the cross-category brand alliances in the partnerships between different brand categories to co-create value.

Table 31 Resources and Capabilities Used by Case Study Brands

Case Study	**Brand Alliance Types**	**Resources & Capabilities Used**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	Marketing resources & capabilities (owned channels, paid channels), Human resources, Financial resources, Technological resources, External resources, Brand alliance experience
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Marketing resources & capabilities (owned channels), Human resources, Financial resources
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Financial resources, Technological resources, Brand alliance experience
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Physical resources
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Technological resources

As listed in Table 31, marketing resources and capabilities is a common resource that brands allocate in the analysed brand alliances. It is not surprising when the common type of the brand alliances is considered; co-branding in which at least two brands pair to cooperate in a marketing context (Dickinson and Heath 2008). Human resources emerge as the other common resource that brands allocate to the brand alliances. While the inclusion of top management is an important part of human resources allocation in the cases of Alpha1 and Alpha5, the human resources consist of marketing department employees (all cases) and sales point employees (Alpha1, Alpha2, Alpha4) in the analysed brand alliances.

Allocation of financial resources (Alpha1, Alpha2, Alpha3), technological resources (Alpha1, Alpha3, Alpha5), and brand alliance experience (Alpha1 and Alpha3) depend on the existing resources of case study brands. For instance, Alpha2 allocates more financial resources to co-create innovation with the alliance partner brands because of the lack of technological resources. Similarly, Alpha5 allocates more human resources to mitigate the limited financial resources.

The utilisation of external resources is specific to the case of Alpha1 in which Alpha1 works with 3rd party companies to manage the high number of brand alliances they have. Physical resources are utilised only in the case of Alpha4 as the brand allocates its department stores to enable events and activities related to the cross-category brand alliances they have.

4.4.2. Aims and Expectations

In this section, the aims and expectations of brand alliance partners are summarised according to the findings of the case studies. In Table 32 below, the findings of the case studies are listed.

Table 32 Aims and Expectations of Case Study Brands

Case Study	**Brand Alliance / Type**	**Aims and Expectations**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	Customer retention, customer experience, customer loyalty, mutual benefit
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Sales increase, Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty, mutual benefit
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Brand image, Cost efficiency, Access to the customer database, Communication synergy
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Customer experience, Market share, Customer retention, Customer loyalty
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Customer service, Customer benefit, Customer satisfaction, Customer experience, customer loyalty, mutual benefit

Mutual benefit stands out as a common aim in the analysed brand alliances. Common customer-based aims and expectations are identified as customer loyalty, customer experience, customer satisfaction and customer retention. Only in the case of Alpha3, any customer-based aim is not identified. However, Alpha3 stated access to customer database in the aims and expectations as a diverging theme from other cases.

Finance-based aims are identified as sales increase (Alpha2), cost efficiency (Alpha3), and market share (Alpha4). Although some of the customer-based aims which are identified in other cases such as customer retention and customer loyalty would lead to financial outcomes, financial aims are not explicitly stated among the aims of brand alliances in Alpha1 and Alpha5 cases.

Brand-based aims and expectations are identified in Alpha2 and Alpha3 cases. While the brand image is mentioned in both cases as one of the aims of the brand alliances, brand awareness is identified only in Alpha2 case. This finding is related to the specific expectation of Alpha2 in the brand alliances they form, Alpha2 aims to increase brand awareness among new customer segments by forming brand alliances with brands from different product categories.

4.4.3. Partner Selection Criteria

The partner selection criteria of the brands to form cross-category brand alliances are listed in Table 33 below. Although there are several different criteria that the brands give importance for their partner brand selection; market reach, brand awareness, and customer segment fit are prominent according to the findings.

Table 33 Partner Selection Criteria of Case Study Brands

Case Study / Partner	**Brand Alliance / Type**	**Partner Selection Criteria**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	Customer segment (base) fit, customer service quality, market reach, brand awareness, exclusivity in the category
Alpha1 (Telecommunications & Beta3 (Tobacco)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Product fit for the customer segment, agility, and flexibility of the partner brand
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Co-Branding (Complementary)	Customer segment fit, Product fit for customer segment
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Co-Branding (Complementary)	Customer segment fit, Brand positioning (fit)
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Market reach, Product & Service fit for the customer segment, Responsiveness, and flexibility of the partner brand
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Market reach, competency, and responsiveness of the partner brand

While different types of fit between brands are identified in the findings among partner brand selection criteria, customer segment fit emerged as a common theme in the cases of Alpha1, Alpha2, and Alpha3. In the cases of Alpha1, Alpha2 and Alpha4, product and service fit for the customer segment are identified as additional items to the customer segment fit.

Responsiveness and flexibility, and market reach of the alliance partner brand are important criteria for Alpha1, Alpha4 and Alpha5 cases. The importance of market reach is emphasised by Alpha4 and Alpha5 managers due to their regional approach to the brand alliances. Both Alpha4 and Alpha5 aims to ensure they can form brand alliances with alliance partner brands that would be accessible for their local customers in the regions they operate in.

4.4.4. Value Co-Creation Process and Roles

The value co-creation roles that the brands share during the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances are summarised in Table 34 below.

Table 34 Value Co-creation Roles of Case Study Brands

Case Study	Brand Alliance Types	Value Co-Creation Roles
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	Co-promoter, Co-innovator, Experience creator
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Co-promoter, co-producer, co-innovator, Experience creator
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Co-promoter, co-innovator, Experience creator, co-tester
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Co-promoter, Experience creator
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Co-promoter, co-innovator, Experience creator

Among the value co-creation roles that are analysed in the study, co-promoter and experience creator roles are common themes in all cases. Co-innovator role emerges in all cases except Alpha4. It can be due to the limited financial resource allocation of Alpha4, which is a constraint on innovation. Distinct role in the case of Alpha2 is co-producer, which is a result of co-innovation the brand realised with the alliance partner brand. Different than other cases, the co-tester role is identified in Alpha3 case. Due to the regulations in Alpha3's product category (fuel and energy), Alpha3 is testing different alternatives with the alliance partner brands in the cross-category brand alliances.

4.4.5. Alliance Outcome & Types of Values Co-Created

The types of the values co-created according to the case study findings are classified in Table 35 below.

Table 35 Types of Values Co-created in the Brand Alliances

Case Study	**Brand Alliance Types**	**Types of Values Co-Created**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	The innovation of Technology, Financial value, Brand Reputation, Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Benefit, Customer Loyalty
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Market Reach, Customer Experience, Innovation
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Customer Experience, Innovation of Technology & Payment Service, Customer Benefit, Increased Sales, Access to the customer database, Know-how, and insights
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Customer Experience, Customer Benefit, Brand Alliance Experience, Access to the customer database, Brand Awareness
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Brand Credibility, Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Market Reach, Increased Sales, Innovation of Financial Service

While most of the value outcomes of the brand alliances are related to the aims and expectations of the brands, innovation stands out as an emerging theme in the findings of the case studies. Different innovation types (e.g. financial service, technology) are identified as a type of value outcome in all cases except Alpha4. The lack of innovation can be expected in Alpha4 case in which the co-innovation role is not identified among alliance partner brands.

Customer-based value outcomes are evident in all cases in different forms. The findings show that co-creating value for customers is a common outcome of the cross-category brand alliances. While most of the customer-based outcomes are the short-term impact of the brand alliances such as customer benefit (Alpha1, Alpha3, Alpha4), the long-term outcome of customer loyalty is identified in Alpha1 and Alpha5 cases.

Access to the customer database, which is one of the aims of Alpha3, is identified as value outcome in Alpha3 and Alpha4 cases. The marketing managers of Alpha3 and Alpha4 emphasised it as an important value outcome considering the new data protection regulations. Different than the other cases, know-how and insights are identified as a unique value outcome in Alpha3 case. It is in line with the co-tester role of the brand, Alpha3 aims to gather know-how and insights from the alliance partner brands to deal with the restricting regulations in its product category.

4.4.6. Potential Risks

The potential risks that are mentioned in the findings of the case studies are listed in Table 36 below. The risks that might cause further problems in the value co-creation process is a theme that emerged in the findings of the case studies.

Table 36 Potential Risks in the VCC Process

Case Study	**Brand Alliance Types**	**Potential Risks**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary, Sponsorship	Information asymmetry during the marketing activities
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Lack of internal communication within the partner brand
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-Branding & Advertising, Complementary	Risk of data sharing with 3rd parties, dependency on one partner during the contract, abrupt end of the alliance
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Partner selection autonomy of store managers
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-Branding (Complementary)	Dependency on one partner brand in its category

The risks identified in the case studies are diverse. Dependency on one alliance partner brand is a commonly identified risk in the cases of Alpha3 and Alpha5. Exclusivity in the product category is one of the partner brand selection criteria of Alpha1. However, Alpha3 and Alpha5 consider working exclusively with one alliance partner brand in a product category as a risk due to dependence on the alliance partner brand. Alpha2 emphasises lack of internal communication as a potential risk which leads to disruption in customer service at sales points. According to Alpha2 marketing manager, the risk can be mitigated by managing the human resources better during the brand alliances.

The potential risk identified in Alpha1 case is information asymmetry between alliance partner brands during the brand alliances. The reason why this risk is more evident in Alpha1 case is the high number of brand alliances Alpha1 has. Due to various brand alliances at one time, Alpha1 struggles to gather all the information about the ongoing brand alliances. To mitigate this risk, Alpha1 utilises external resources such as 3rd party agencies.

4.4.7. Level of Allocated Resources, Risks and Value Outcomes

According to the findings, the brands allocate different levels of resources to the brand alliances depending on the existing resources they have, the resources owned by the alliance partner brand, and aims of the brand alliance. While a low level of resource allocation does not contribute to value outcomes, a high level of resource allocation does not guarantee that the brands would achieve the aims of the brand alliance. However, the findings show the relationship between technological resource allocation and innovation. Besides, the allocation level of human resources is closely related to the value outcome of customer satisfaction. The level of allocated resources, value outcomes, and risks for each case study are summarised in Table 37 below.

Table 37 Summary of Case Study Resources, Risks, and Value Outcomes

	Level of Resources Contributed to the Brand Alliances								***Direct Value Outcomes***				***Indirect Value Outcomes***			
Case Study Brand	***Marketing Resources and Capabilities***	***Human Resources***	***Financial Resources***	***Technological Resources***	***External Resources***	***Brand Alliance Experience***	***Physical Resources***	***Challenges & Risks***	*Financial*	*Acquisition*	*Satisfaction*	*Awareness*	*Image*	*Loyalty*	*Innovation*	*Knowledge*
Alpha1 (Telecom)	**High**	Medium	Medium	**High**	Medium	**High**	Low	Information asymmetry during the marketing activities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alpha2 (Automotive)	**High**	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Lack of internal communication within the partner brand		✓	✓				✓	
Alpha3 (Fuel and Energy)	Medium	Medium	Medium	**High**	Low	**High**	Low	Risk of data sharing with 3rd parties, dependency on one partner during the contract period, the abrupt end of the alliance	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Partner selection autonomy of store managers			✓	✓				✓
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Medium	**High**	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Dependency on one partner brand in its category	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

4.5. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the findings of the case studies are explained by analysing the interviews that are made with the marketing managers of case study brands and their partner brands, the field notes about the brand alliances that are collected during the research, and secondary data about the cross-category brand alliances. The chapter starts with the cases section, which gives detailed information about each case. The chapter continues with the analysis of each case according to the emerging themes during the thematic analysis. Each case study section gives details about the emerging themes with the support of quotations from the interviews, field notes about the relevant brand alliances, and secondary data that support the emerging findings.

After case by case analysis, the differences and similarities between the cases are discussed. Emerging themes are summarised and compared in tables in each related section. The summary of the analysis is presented in Table 38. In the next chapter, the findings of the study are discussed by reviewing them against past studies to investigate the similarities, differences, and emerging topics. In addition, the theoretical framework is revisited, and revised research framework is developed in the final section of the next chapter.

Table 38 Summary Table of Emerging Themes

Case Study	Resources & Capabilities Used	Aims and Expectations	Partner Selection Criteria	Value Co-Creation Roles	Types of Values Co-Created	Potential Risks
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Financial resources, Technological resources, External resources, Brand alliance experience	Customer retention, customer experience, customer loyalty, mutual benefit	Customer segment fit, customer service quality, market reach, brand awareness, exclusivity, Product fit, agility & flexibility of the partner brand	Co-promoter, Co-innovator, Experience creator	Innovation, Financial value, Brand Reputation, Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Benefit, Customer Loyalty	Information asymmetry during the marketing activities
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Financial resources	Brand Image & Awareness, Sales increase, Customer satisfaction & loyalty, mutual benefit	Customer segment fit, Product fit for customer segment	Co-promoter, co-producer, co-innovator, Experience creator	Market Reach, Customer Experience, Innovation	Lack of internal communication within the partner brand
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Financial resources, Technological resources, Brand alliance experience	Brand image, Cost efficiency, Access to the customer database, Communication synergy	Customer segment fit, Brand positioning (fit)	Co-promoter, co-innovator, Experience creator, co-tester	Customer Experience, Innovation, Customer Benefit, Increased Sales, Access to the customer database, Know-how and insights	Risk of data sharing with 3rd parties, dependency on one partner during the contract, abrupt end of the alliance
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Physical resources	Customer experience, Market share, Customer retention, Customer loyalty	Market reach, Product & Service fit, Responsiveness and flexibility of the partner brand	Co-promoter, Experience creator	Customer Experience, Customer Benefit, Brand Alliance Experience, Access to the customer database, Brand Awareness	Partner selection autonomy of store managers
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Marketing resources & capabilities, Human resources, Technological resources	Customer service, Customer benefit, Customer satisfaction, Customer experience, customer loyalty, mutual benefit	Market reach, competency and responsiveness of the partner brand	Co-promoter, co-innovator, Experience creator	Brand Credibility, Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Market Reach, Increased Sales, Innovation	Dependency on one partner brand in its category

5. Chapter 5 Discussion of Findings

5.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the findings of the previous chapter are discussed by exploring the similarities and differences with the past studies. The chapter starts with the section about the resources and capabilities that are used in the brand alliances to co-create value. It continues with the discussion about the partner selection criteria of the brands in the cross-category brand alliances.

As the past studies about brand alliances investigated the consumer perceptions of the brand alliances while exploring the partner brand selection criteria, this study identifies different criteria than the past studies from the business perspective. The value co-creation process is explored by comparing the findings with past studies. The findings of the alliance outcome and types of values co-created are explored together to identify the relation between them in the light of the relevant studies. Potential risks in the value co-creation process which is another emerging topic of the findings is discussed in the following section. The final section of the chapter explains the development of a framework based on the review of findings with the relevant studies.

5.2. Resources and Capabilities

In this section, the findings about the resources and capabilities that are used during the brand alliances are discussed against underpinning theories of the study. Furthermore, the studies about the usage of marketing resources and capabilities in the brand alliances are compared with the findings of the research. The resources that the brands utilise in the cross-category brand alliances are classified and the resource integration to form the brand alliance resource portfolio is illustrated in this section.

The brands are using the cross-category brand alliances as a way of accessing and utilising the partner brand’s resources to co-create value. While both brands aim to achieve competitive advantage by utilising their superior resources, the partner brand’s resources and capabilities are additional tools to reach this aim (Chiambaretto and Wasmer 2018). According to the findings, the resources that the partner brands use to co-create value include marketing resources & capabilities, financial resources, human resources, technological resources, physical resources, knowledge-based resources such as brand alliance competence and experience. Besides, the brands facilitate relation-based resources and external resources to maximise the benefit they get from the brand alliance.

The external resources might be 3rd party companies such as the intermediary agencies, 3rd party suppliers, technology providers, and research companies. External stakeholders are also critical in the partner selection process in some cases by providing insights to the companies, by building up relations between the partner brands or by conducting researches for the companies to help them understand the optimum choice for their alliance partner selection. As the brands utilise the external resources by using their relations with the external stakeholders, the external resources of the brands that are allocated in the brand alliances are categorised under the relation-based resources in this study.

5.2.1. Operand and Operant Resource Classification

The resources that are used during the cross-category brand alliances can be classified as operand and operant resources to match the terminology of S-D logic literature (Vargo and Lusch 2004). The table below summarises the classification of resources in the context of this study. The physical resources of the brands such as the brand stores (or the stadium in Beta4 sports club example, see Section 4.3.1.1), the cars that are used for transportation or promotion activities, the digital screens or printed material to present the advertisements at the points of sales, and the electronic devices that support the payment or campaign process are the operand resources that the brands utilise in the cross-category brand alliances. Despite being operand resources, the brand’s physical resources are utilised for marketing services during the cross-category brand alliances. Also, the financial resources of the brands are included in the operant resources categorisation as they are tradeable and not firm-specific (Williams and Aitken 2011).

Table 39 The Classification of Resources that are Utilised for Value Co-Creation

Operand Resources	**Operant Resources**
• Physical resources (stores, marketing materials, IT devices) • Financial resources	• Marketing resources • Human resources • Technological resources • Knowledge-based resources • Relation-based resources

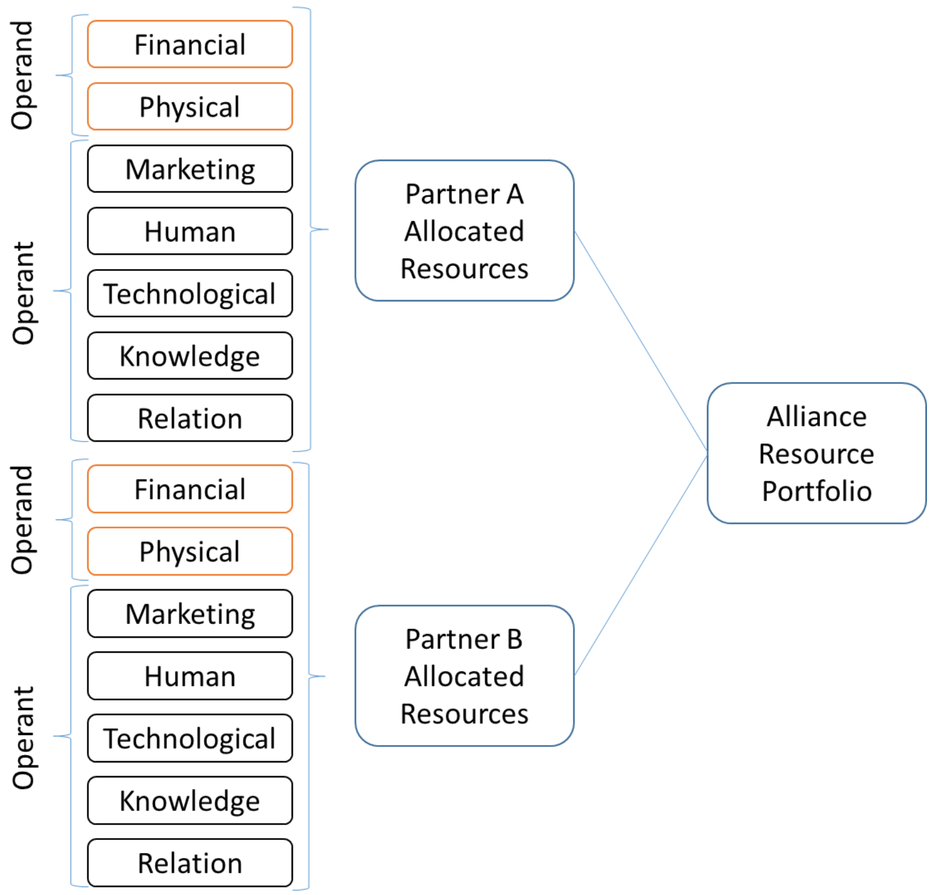
As summarised in Table 39, the operant resources of the brands that are utilised during the cross-category brand alliances are the marketing resources and capabilities, human resources, technological resources, internal company resources, knowledge-based resources, and relation-based resources. Marketing resources and capabilities that are contributed to the brand alliances consist of the brand-related resources such as brand equity, brand attributes; any marketing channels the brand uses for marketing communication activities, the managerial capabilities to organise the brand alliance process.

Although Hooley et al. (2005) include all tangible and intangible resources related to marketing activities in the marketing resources, other marketing-related resources are discussed separately in this study to stay in line with operand and operant resource categorisation of S-D logic. The resource types that are utilised by the partner brands during the cross-category brand alliances are illustrated in Figure 24 below. The resource allocation of the brands is not static but dynamic, and the level of resource allocation changes during the value co-creation process depending on the conditions of the brand alliance.

5.2.2. Resource Allocation of Partner Brands

Resource allocation can be reconfigured during the brand alliance by analysing the emerging needs (Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018). Still, the contractual agreements between the partner brands set the level of resource allocation for some type of resources such as the agreed marketing communication activities or the financial resource allocation for the services of the partner brand. Besides, the interaction between the partners and the customers influence the resource allocation during the value co-creation process, which is discussed in the value co-creation process section of the chapter (Section 4.4.4). In Figure 24 below, operand resources of a brand are shown in orange outlined boxes and operant resources are shown in black outlined boxes. Partner brands allocate different levels of their resources (illustrated as "Partner Allocated Resources" box) to the brand alliance. The pool of allocated resources to a brand alliance form the box illustrated as "Alliance Resource Portfolio" in the figure.

Figure 24 The Resource Allocation of Partner Brands for Alliance Resource Portfolio



In some cases, the brands are not able to control the contribution level of some operant resources in terms of marketing such as brand equity, brand awareness, or brand credibility. Partner brands get the benefit of these marketing resources of each other when they are conducting shared marketing activities during the brand alliance. However, the brand that has more control on the alliance process can decide the level of resource contribution in terms of marketing communication activities as in the case of Alpha1 from telecommunications category or Alpha4 from sports retailer category. In those examples, the main brand uses their marketing resources and capabilities as a strength in the deal process to achieve the contribution of more resources such as financial resources in terms of customer benefit from the partner brand. For the brands which do not have strong marketing resources and capabilities, the most attractive characteristic of the potential partner brand is the power of marketing resources and capabilities.

The power of the marketing resources and capabilities is stemmed from the potential partner brand's brand equity, brand awareness, the size of the customer database, and the financial resources that support the marketing budget for marketing communication activities. The strength of the marketing resources is also crucial for the role distribution in the brand alliance. The brand that has more marketing resources and capabilities claim the role of the leading brand in the brand alliance. The leading brand uses the strength of the marketing resources as bargaining power in the dealing process with the potential alliance partner as in the example of Alpha1 from telecommunications category (Section 4.3.1) and Alpha4 from sports retailer category (Section 4.3.5) which have strong resources to support marketing communication activities. Even though the marketing resources and capabilities of the brands are not fully committed to the brand alliance, the strength of the resources gives the brands the power to manage the value co-creation process during the brand alliance.

5.2.3. Human Resources

The human resources of the brands include the marketing managers who are managing the brand alliances and related marketing activities, top management (heads of department, chief marketing officers, CEOs, and the owners of the companies), the employees who work at the point of sales, at customer service channels, and at marketing related promotional activities. The human resources are critical to apply the resource creation in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances because of their knowledge, experience, and capabilities to facilitate the operand resources of the brands (Gummesson and Mele 2010). Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018, p.3) claim that "coherent resource management" of the companies is crucial in the value creation process. It is evident in the value co-creation process in the brand alliances as marketing managers have a critical role in deciding which resources are contributed to the brand alliance.

While the marketing managers are responsible for forming the brand alliances and managing the marketing activities related to the brand alliance, the findings show enabling the information flow about the details of brand alliances through the internal communication channels is also critical in the value co-creation process. When the human resources that work at the sales points or customer service channels are not informed properly about the brand alliance details, the risk of customer complaints and negative information spill-over (Votolato and Unnava 2006) increase. These risks are discussed in the potential risks section of the chapter (Section 5.6).

Furthermore, the findings show that the inclusion of top management in the brand alliance formation speeds up the value co-creation process, which is discussed with examples in the value co-creation process section (Section 5.4). In the partnerships such as Alpha1 sponsorship agreement with Beta4 in which many financial resources are committed to the brand alliance, several departments of the brands other than the marketing department are included in the value co-creation process.

5.2.4. Alliance Competence and Brand Alliance Experience

Alliance competence and brand alliance experience are important knowledge-based resources that brands utilise in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. Lambe et al. (2002) stated that the alliance competence, which is the ability of the brand to deploy its resources in the brand alliance, has a positive impact on the resource-based alliance outcome. Moreover, Cao and Yan (2017) claimed that the brand alliance experience is closely related to the financial outcome of the brand alliance.

The findings show that the brands with more alliance competence and brand alliance experience are preferred over other potential brands that have less brand alliance experience. Brand alliance experience is not only related to the number of brand alliances a brand makes in a year, but also about the tenure of the brand alliances of the brand. While the brand alliances are managed by the managers of the brands who can have different roles in the company later, the brand alliance experience is accumulated in the internal company resources through the data collected about the brand alliances which turns into alliance competence of the brand in the long term.

The brand alliance experience is utilised in the value co-creation process to improve the interaction between the brands and solve the occurring problems thanks to the similar experiences in the past. Although the brands of the case studies pointed the importance of brand alliance experience and competence in the choice of partner brands and the improved process of value co-creation, the influence on the brand alliance outcome is not explicitly discussed. Therefore, the impact of alliance competence and brand alliance experience on the alliance outcome is an indirect one according to the findings contrary to the findings of Lambe et al. (2002) and Cao and Yan (2017). The divergence of the findings from those studies might be because of the quantitative approach of the articles which looks at the causality of the events rather than the implicit meanings.

5.2.4.1. Contribution of Learning to Alliance Competence

Learning is another outcome of the brand alliances, and brands develop organisational capabilities by forming alliances (Gulati 1999). Learnings of past brand alliances lead to innovations like development of new digital platforms to manage the brand alliances better and more efficiently such as the mobile applications and website platforms developed by Alpha1 (Telecommunications), Alpha2 (Automotive), Alpha3 (Fuel). Moreover, learning from past brand alliances contributes to alliance experience and competence by engaging in and improving a similar set of activities (Gulati 1999). Although brand alliances are not a new form of business strategy, they have the potential of adapting to new conditions in the changing business environment. Dynamic capability view suggests that companies with strong capabilities have strong learning capacities (Lee and Falahat 2019). The integration of unique resources and capabilities in a brand alliance provides a learning environment for partner brands.

In a brand alliance, the brands utilise their learning capabilities to support the innovation process (Lee and Falahat 2019) and adapt to the new conditions in the market to gain competitive advantage. An example of such innovation as an outcome of the brand alliance is the mobile phone-based platform of Beta3 tobacco company. Because of the regulations and restrictions in its product category, Beta3 has limited marketing opportunities to access its customer base. However, Alpha1 (Telecommunications), which is a brand with strong learning capacity due to alliance competence, proposes a partnership to Beta3, which would make it possible to reach their customers. The mobile app platform that is developed to enable the marketing activities in the brand alliance turns into a great success for both partner brands. While Alpha1 increases their sales by providing a service to Beta3 customers on the platform, Beta3 improves customer satisfaction thanks to the innovation in the brand alliance.

5.2.5. Technological Resources

The technological resources of the brands contributed to the brand alliances have a critical role in the co-creation of value by the partner brands. While the technological resources remind the physical resources such as computers; the technological resources in the context of the case studies of this research are the technologies the brands develop and deploy for the marketing activities such as CRM software, e-mail marketing, and mobile marketing technologies. Therefore, the technological resources in this study's context are classified as operant resources that brands utilise to create value during the cross-category brand alliances.

Although technology-enabled VCC process is complex (Breidbach and Maglio 2016), technological resources are an important part of the resource exchange and integration process between the alliance partner brands. According to the findings, the allocation of technological resources to the brand alliance contributes to the value outcome of innovation (Srivastava and Gnyawali 2011). In addition to the role of technological resources to connect the brands with the customers through social media channels in the value co-creation process (Agrawal and Rahman 2015), technological resources provide the brands with the means to improve the efficiency of value co-creation process during the brand alliances.

The technological resources not only help to identify the customer segments to target for the promotion of brand alliances by advanced CRM software but also enable smart marketing tools such as automated e-mail marketing and mobile applications for the communication and redemption of the campaigns during the brand alliances. Furthermore, the technological resources help the brands to innovate new ways to improve the customer service and experience in a collaborative way which leads to better customer satisfaction with the added value to the products and services.

The example of Alpha1 from telecommunications category contributing its smart location-based marketing technology to the alliance with a brand from food & bakery category in exchange of discounts for the customers of Alpha1 presents the value co-creation thanks to the exchange of resources by creating a win-win situation for both brands. While the brands have specialised resources in their brand categories, making a brand alliance with a brand from a different brand category creates the opportunity to have access to partner brand's specialised operant resources. Thanks to the expertise of the partner brand, the brand has the chance to use the partner brand's operant resources such as technology knowledge to innovate new services. While one brand contributes to the brand alliance with the knowledge in technology, the other brand uses its knowledge to communicate effectively to its customer database as in the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha3 from fuel & energy category and Delta11 from banking category.

Moreover, the findings from case studies show that technological resources are enablers of cross-category brand alliances. For instance, Alpha1 from telecommunications category uses a mobile application that hosts the cross-category brand alliances to promote them to the customers. Similarly, Alpha2 from automotive category developed a digital platform that presents the cross-category brand alliances at one place to reach small and mid-sized company owners who purchased Alpha2 cars. Furthermore, Alpha3 from fuel & energy category uses the mobile platform of the partner brand Delta90 technology category to communicate with the customers and to provide the improved customer experience. Therefore, the use of technological resources not only enables the exchange process between partner brands but also contributes to the efficiency of the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances.

The launch, management, and communication of brand alliances became easier thanks to the development of new technologies such as mobile applications. The customers of Alpha1, Alpha3, Beta4 can download each brand's mobile application to see the brand alliances at one place. In addition, brands can send marketing communication messages immediately to targeted customer segments in terms of their location, age, or past purchase behaviour. The management of the brand alliance process is more efficient as well through the usage of CRM and content management systems. The development in digital technologies increased the importance of technological resources in the brand alliances. Furthermore, it turned into an important partner selection criterion as well when brands look for partners that have more technological resources and capabilities to manage the brand alliance process.

Alpha1 moved one step further in the formation of brand alliances and created a platform for small businesses to test and roll-out their own brand alliance campaigns on the brand alliance mobile application platform. The small businesses that want to cooperate with Alpha1 submit their campaign on the moderation system of the platform. After the validation, the brand alliance is launched on the platform. While the platform helped to create hundreds of brand alliances easily, it brings the risk of spill-over impact on the brand equity of Alpha1 if the customers do not get the expected service from the small businesses in the brand alliances formed on the platform. Besides, other larger brands might ask for similar easy access to form brand alliances with Alpha1 in the future without contributing the level of resources that they committed in the past brand alliances.

Cutting edge CRM systems of brands such as Alpha1, Alpha3 provide the advantage of testing the possible direct value outcomes of the brand alliances by analysing the past brand alliances conducted. The test scenarios to check which customer segment would bring more value outcomes at the end of the brand alliance help the brands to decide on the partner brand that would fit the target customer segment. It is another reason why alliance experience is a critical resource and capability that brands utilise in the value co-creation process in the brand alliances.

5.2.6. Relation-based Resources

According to the findings, relation-based resources are utilised during the brand alliances for the management of relations not only with the partner brands and customers but also with external stakeholders such as 3rd party suppliers, marketing agencies, and research companies. In the S-D logic, network interaction is at the focus of the value co-creation during the resource integration process between the stakeholders (Gummesson and Mele 2010). Relational resources of the companies are facilitated by the internal capabilities to get the benefit of the partner's resources for innovation and added value (Srivastava and Gnyawali 2011). While the relational resources are not totally owned or controlled by the brand (Srivastava et al. 2001), they are vital for the interaction with other companies and with the customers. Srivastava et al. (2001) label relation-based resources as relational assets which consist of the relationships with the customers, channels, strategic partners, outsourcing companies, and networks.

In the brand alliance context, relation-based resources include the relationships with the potential brand alliance partners and the alliance partner brand's stakeholders. The brands in the case studies contact with other companies to initiate the interaction with the other brands, to conduct market research by reaching the target customers for customer need analysis, to develop necessary technologies for the marketing communications, and to produce marketing materials. The relation-based resources are specific to the brands because of past relations with the stakeholders. While some brands need to utilise more relation-based resources in the brand alliances because of the number of brand alliances they have such as Alpha1 (telecommunications), some brands choose to utilise internal resources to build the relations with other stakeholders for cost efficiency such as the relationship management operations of Alpha5 (pharmaceutical). Therefore, the internal capabilities of the brand are crucial to facilitate the relation-based resources as proposed by Srivastava and Gnyawali (2011).

In line with the resource-based view (Das and Teng 2000) and resource-advantage theory (Hunt and Morgan 1996), the resource portfolio of partner brands in the brand alliance plays an important role in achieving competitive advantage over the rivals by co-creating unique products or services. However, the findings show that the competitors start to imitate the same actions of other brands in the product category and soon after, forming brand alliances turn into a necessity to survive in the competition as in the case of Alpha1 from telecommunications category. Still, forming long-term brand alliances with the partner brands that give the first-mover advantage in the brand category creates a basis of competitive advantage thanks to the specialised resources of the partner brand such as the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 and Beta5A (services & concierge category).

5.2.7. Type of the Cross-category Brand Alliance

The type of cross-category brand alliance is another factor that determines the resources that are committed to the brand alliance. For instance, the brand that sponsors another brand from different product category contributes a significant amount of financial resources to the brand alliance. However, the commitment of financial resources does not stop the usage of other resources and capabilities during the brand alliance. In addition, the sponsor brand attempt to use the resources and capabilities of the partner brand to the limit because of the level of financial resources devoted to the partnership. On the other hand, the brands tend to commit fewer resources to the brand alliance if the tenure of the brand alliance is short such as 1-month partnerships. As the brands aim to have access to each other’s markets and resources during the brand alliance (Beverland 2018), the tenure of the brand influences the level of access to partner brand's customers and resources. Therefore, the brands tend to minimise the risk by allocating a lower level of resources to the brand alliance when it is a short-term partnership.

The resource allocation in the brand alliances is an important decision made by the marketing managers of the brands to maximize the level of resource utilisation in the value co-creation process. The level of resource utilisation is measured with the opportunity cost of the resource by considering the opportunity if the resource was used for other purposes of the brand internally or externally (Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018). Applying this logic to the brand alliance context, the opportunity cost of the resources contributed to the cross-category brand alliance can be measured by comparing the outcomes of the brand alliance and values co-created with different partner brands. While this study focuses on the dyadic relations between the partner brands during the cross-category brand alliances, it should be noted that the case study brands form several brand alliances with brands from different product categories simultaneously.

Simultaneous brand alliances add more complexity to the decisions about resource allocation between the partner brands. While having many brand alliances at the same time creates the opportunity of enhanced services for the customers and decreasing costs by economies of scale, the marginal benefit of any additional brand alliance would diminish because of the limited internal resources. On the other hand, there is a trade-off between utilising the resources internally to create value and contributing them to a brand alliance externally with the expectation of leveraging the resources through access to partner brand's unique resources.

Moreover, preliminary research about the potential partners by using external resources such as research companies would help to reduce the risk of poor resource allocation decisions. Therefore, partner brand selection is also crucial in the resource allocation decisions in the cross-category brand alliances. The findings of the partner selection criteria of the brands for the cross-category brand alliances and the opportunity cost model for partner selection are discussed in the next section.

5.3. Partner Selection Criteria

According to the findings of the study, the brands look for different criteria in the potential brands before forming the brand alliance. The partner selection criteria that are found during the data analysis can be classified under two headings which are the fit of different attributes with the partner brand and the expected attributes of the partner brand. The attributes are classified and summarised in Table 40 below. The brands aim to form cross-category brand alliances when there is a fit between the customer segments of the brands, when there is a product & service fit with the partner brand, and when the brand values of the brands fit each other. Furthermore, the brands tend to choose partner brands which have a good market reach, brand awareness, and satisfactory customer service quality.

Contrary to past studies, the findings indicate that customer segment fit is more critical for the brands when they are choosing the cross-category brand alliance partner. An additional dimension of fit that is critical in the partner brand selection is resource complementarity (Soda and Furlotti 2017). While the brands aim to utilise the unique resources of the partner brand, they try to find the partners that would complement their resources to enhance their service offerings to the customers. Furthermore, the brands expect the partner brand to have the characteristics of agility, flexibility, competency, and responsiveness during the brand alliance.

Another criterion the brands ask from the partner brand to form a brand alliance is the exclusivity of the partnership in the brand category. The knowledge-based resources, which are alliance competence and brand alliance experience, are also critical for the partner brand selection in the cross-category brand alliances. However, the importance of different partner selection criteria depends on the type of the brand alliance, the level of resource allocation, and the tenure of the brand alliance.

Table 40 Partner Selection Criteria of Case Study Brands

The Fit of Attributes with the Partner Brand	Expected Attributes of Partner Brand
• Customer segment fit • Product & service fit • The fit of brand values • Resource complementarity	• Brand awareness • Brand image • Market reach • Customer service quality • Exclusivity in the category • Agility, flexibility, competency, and responsiveness • Brand alliance experience

Li et al. (2013) claim that the main motive of alliances is sharing the resources, costs, and risks with the partner brands. Besides, adaptation to environmental changes with the support of the partner brand is another important motive to form alliances in the international context (Li et al. 2013). It is evident in the first cross-category brand alliances of Alpha1 from telecommunications category when the brand first entered the Turkish market. To adapt to the new market conditions, Alpha1 followed the example of top brand Delta2 in its category and made brand alliances with the rival brands of Delta2's partner brands. The brand alliances with the cross-category brands allowed Alpha1 to share the costs and risks of marketing activities in a new market.

After improving the brand alliance experience in the market, Alpha1 started to share more resources with partner brands such as technological and financial, which gave a competitive advantage to Alpha1 over the rivals in its category. Therefore, market knowledge of the partner brand is one of the important criteria of partner selection for the brands which needs to adapt to new market conditions. It is also in line with the findings of the importance of knowledge-based resources such as alliance competence and alliance experience in the value co-creation process, as mentioned in the resources and capabilities section (Section 5.2).

5.3.1. Customer Segment Fit

The findings show that the customer segment fit between the partner brand's target customers is considered more important for the partner brand selection than the other criteria such as brand fit, product fit, or country of origin. The brands aim to find a partner that can help them increase their reach to get more customers who would be potential buyers for their products. While the previous articles emphasised the dimensions like brand fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Van der Lans, Van den Bergh and Dieleman 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017), country of origin fit (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009; Lee et al. 2018), product category fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Lanseng and Olsen 2010; Norman 2016) as the important criteria for partner brand selection for the success and evaluation of the brand alliance; the findings show that brands give customer segment fit more importance in the partner brand selection process.

Customer segment fit is an additional dimension that should be considered in the future brand alliance research that studies the fit between partner brands. Although Prince and Davies (2002) give the example of brands that have complementary products and services as evidence of marketing to related customer segments in the brand alliances, the brands from different categories which do not complement each other's services also look for customer segment fit in their choice of partner brands.

The findings about the customer segment fit as a factor that influences the success of cross-category brand alliances can be explained through the potential to reach similar customers that would be interested in the products or services of the partner brands. As an example, the telecommunications brand Alpha1 (see Section 4.3.1) markets its services in an approach that segments customers according to their monthly spending. Besides, their market research before the internal customer segmentation provides insights about the needs and demands of their different customer segments.

When Alpha1 marketing managers look for a brand partner for their high-value customer segment which generates the most monthly revenue, they aim to find a partner that their customers would need and demand (see Section 4.3.1.4). If Alpha1 works with a partner brand that their customer segment would not like to consume, they would miss the opportunity to increase customer satisfaction for that customer segment. Therefore, they choose to work with rent-a-car company Delta4 which provides services to similar customers to Alpha1's high-value customer segment. The partnership also provides an opportunity to Delta4 to reach a customer database that they would not be able to communicate with without the brand alliance with Alpha1.

Customer segment fit between the partner brands also creates up-selling and cross-selling opportunities during and after the cross-category brand alliances. As the brands in the partnership are from different product categories, they are not competing to sell similar products or services in the market. Conversely, they choose partner brands that their customers would need as a complementary product or service as aforementioned.

The cross-category brand alliances in the case studies usually invite the customers to purchase a product or service with a special price at the partner brand's point of sales. When the customer is purchasing the product or service from the partner brand, the partner brand can offer the customer more expensive version of the product (i.e. up-selling) or additional products and services (cross-selling). While there are studies that investigate cross-selling (Li et al. 2005, Kamakura 2008) and upselling (Johnson and Friend 2015) opportunities among the brand's own products, the findings show that cross-category brand alliances provide such opportunities for partner brands.

The opportunities for up-selling and cross-selling increase when there is a better customer segment fit between the partner brands. Furthermore, even if the customers do not purchase additional products or services during the brand alliance, the customer data remains in the partner brand's database if the customers give consent. The partner brands can continue to offer new cross-selling offers to their acquired customers through the brand alliance. The number of newly acquired customers would depend on the success of the cross-category brand alliance, which benefits from better customer segment fit.

Although the marketing managers stated customer segment fit as one of the important factors in partner selection, there are examples in which the partner brand is from a different customer segment. In the case of Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical, Section 4.3.5), Alpha5 forms a brand alliance with Delta58 (Technology) brand, which is mainly aiming for bigger enterprise companies as its main customer segment. However, the main customer segment of Alpha5 is small and mid-size companies. By forming this alliance, Alpha5 endorses the value of its brand thanks to the brand reputation of Delta58. In return, Delta58 reaches a customer segment that the brand is not targeting by its routine marketing activities. Blackett and Boad (1999) note that the value creation potential of this type of partnerships is small due to the shorter duration of such alliances. However, Alpha5 marketing manager states that the brand alliance with Delta58 is one of the most successful partnerships they have formed thanks to improved customer satisfaction for Alpha5 customers and increased brand awareness and market reach for Delta58.

5.3.2. Resource Complementarity

Despite not being explicitly stated by the marketing managers of case study brands, resource complementarity (Lin et al. 2009; Chen et al. 2017; Soda and Furlotti 2017) is another important dimension in the partner selection criteria for cross-category brand alliances. The complementing resources of the partner brands are the essence of the value creation to achieve competitive advantage in the brand alliances (Soda and Furlotti 2017). As mentioned in the resources and capabilities section (Section 5.2), resource allocation decision is critical for the value co-creation process. The resource complementarity is not only important for the complementary product & service type of brand alliances but also for the other types such as sponsorship. The resource complementarity between the partner brands is mostly in terms of services that are not provided by the brand by its internal resources.

The case of Alpha1 from telecommunications category (Section 4.3.1) shows that the brand attempts to enhance its core service which is providing communications for its customers by the services of partner brands to satisfy other lifestyle needs of its customers such as entertainment, food, and travel. Therefore, Alpha1 complements its resources with the partner brand resources to improve the service it provides to its customers. On the other hand, there is an exchange of resources between the brands during the value co-creation process. In return, Alpha1 helps to complement the partner brand’s resources that need to be supported, such as marketing resources and capabilities, knowledge-based resources, and technological resources.

Taking other cases into consideration, the examples of resource complementarity between the partner brands can be multiplied. For instance, Alpha3 (Section 4.3.3) uses the technological resources of partner brands Delta11 from banking category and Delta92 from technology category to complement its services with new technological payment solutions to improve the customer experience. In return, the brands have the opportunity to have access to the marketing resources and capabilities of Alpha3, which complements their own marketing resources. As a result, integrating resource complementarity criterion with the opportunity cost approach (Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018) of resource allocation would help marketing managers to reach better partner selection decisions.

5.3.2.1. The Balance of Resources and Brand Equity

The size of the brands in terms of brand equity is not always equal in the brand alliances. A global brand such as Alpha2 (Automotive, Section 4.3.2) can form a brand alliance with a local restaurant brand if the brand alliance would provide benefits for their customers. However, this causes an unbalanced allocation of resources, especially in terms of marketing resources and capabilities. The asymmetry between the brand equity of partner brands has the potential to transfer consumer attraction from the brand which has higher brand equity to the brand that has lower brand equity (Kalafatis et al. 2012).

While the brand with higher brand equity invests its well-known brand in the alliance, the smaller brand benefits from the alliance without investing a similar size of marketing resources. It increases the risk of negative spill-over effect (Baumgarth 2004; Votolato and Unnava 2006; Schumann et al. 2014) for the larger brand when the service or the product of the smaller brand is not satisfactory for the larger brand's customers. The negative spill-over effect risk, in this case, is more about the negative experiences during the brand alliance (Votolato and Unnava 2006; Schumann et al. 2014) rather than the brand equity or familiarity mismatch between the partner brands (Baumgarth 2004). Further risks about the partner brand selection are discussed in the "Potential Risks" section (Section 5.6).

Kalafatis et al. (2012) claim the smaller brand in an asymmetric brand alliance benefits more from the alliance in terms of marketing resources, and the bigger brand gets more benefit in terms of knowledge-based (e.g. technical capabilities or operational processes) resources. This claim is supported by the marketing managers of Beta1 (Entertainment) and Beta2 (E-commerce) when they discuss their brand alliances with Alpha1 (Telecommunications, Section 4.3.1). Being the smaller brands in the alliance, both Beta1 and Beta2 aim to benefit from the marketing resources of Alpha1. Although the partnership with Beta1 or Beta2 does not improve brand awareness of Alpha1, these partnerships help Alpha1 access customer data that they would not be able to capture because of new data protection rules (Kurt 2018). Therefore, the brand with higher brand equity is ready to commit its bigger marketing resources into partnerships with brands with smaller brand equity to capture functional benefits (Kalafatis et al. 2012) from the cross-category brand alliance.

5.3.3. Other Criteria

While the brands in the case studies pointed out that the country-of-origin is not critical in the choice of partner brand, the brand nationality is an impactful attribute on the brand alliance perceptions of the customers (Ahn et al. 2009). The less importance of country-of-origin in the partner selection might be because of the long history of the case study brands Alpha2 from automotive category (Section 4.3.2) and Alpha3 from fuel & energy category (Section 4.3.3) in the country of research, Turkey. Despite this, Alpha1 from telecommunications category (Section 4.3.1) used cross-category brand alliances to adapt to new market conditions. The brand gave more importance to the potential partner brand’s market reach in the country than the brand’s country-of-origin. Similarly, Alpha4 (Section 4.3.4) from sports retailer category aimed to find partner brands around its points of sales to reach its customers.

On the other hand; brand nationality is an embedded attribute in the brand equity and linked to other brand attributes such as brand reputation, authenticity, and brand image (Simonin and Ruth 1998) which are among the criteria the brands look for in the partner brand selection. The findings diverge from the past studies because of the B2C approach of the past studies which explored the customer perceptions rather than the underlying reasons of partner selection criteria. Besides, the country-of-origin criterion might be more important in the international cross-category brand alliances, which were not explored in this study. Although country-of-origin is not one of the critical criteria for partner selection according to the findings of the study, the marketing managers should be aware of the impact of brand nationality on the customer perceptions of the brand alliance. Still, the customer perceptions are beyond the scope of this research and can be investigated in a future study from a B2C perspective.

The findings indicate that the number of brand alliances the brands conduct in a year, the projected resource allocation for the brand alliance, the strategic importance of the brand alliance for the brand’s services, and the expected outcomes of the brand alliance influence the partner selection process. In the case of Alpha1 from telecommunications category (Section 4.3.1), the brand is part of more than 300 cross-category brand alliances in a year. For most of these brand alliances, the brand uses a systematic approach to choose the brands by using a brand index with predefined partner selection criteria.

The partner selection criteria include the brand attributes such as brand image, brand awareness, and other resource-related criteria such as market share, brand alliance experience of the partner brand. Apart from the brand image (Riley et al. 2015), the partner selection criteria of Alpha1 are more measurable than the partner selection criteria defined by the past studies such as the brand personality dimensions (Van der Lans et al. 2014) or brand concept consistency (Lanseng and Olsen 2012).

Although past studies proposed the importance of brand fit and brand familiarity (Van der Lans et al. 2014, Norman 2017) on brand alliance outcome, the case of Alpha1 (Section 4.3.1) which has many cross-category brand alliances with several brands from different categories show these concepts are more critical in the major brand alliances. For instance; both Alpha1 and Beta4 from sports category spent more time on the partner selection process by analysing the criteria they have set such as the fit of brand values, the fit of customer segments for the sponsorship type of cross-category brand alliance which includes a long-term agreement with a huge amount of financial resources allocated.

5.3.4. Brand Alliance Portfolio Analysis

Portfolio analysis is a conceptual framework to assist resource allocation between different strategic business units of an organisation to achieve overall objectives (Udo-Imeh et al. 2012). Traditional portfolio analysis models are Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix, General Electric / McKinsey matrix, Shell directional policy matrix, Arthur D. Little strategic condition matrix, and Abell & Hammond investment opportunity matrix (Udo-Imeh et al. 2012). Applying portfolio analysis logic (Udo-Imeh et al. 2012) to the brand alliance context, the brands can decide on (1) which brand alliance should receive more resource allocation, (2) which future partner brand would contribute more to overall goals and strengthen the brand's competitive position in the market, (3) which brand alliance should continue or should be ceased.

Although BCG matrix is developed to analyse product performance of a company in the market (Coate 1983), the brands which have more than one alliance at a time such as the case study brands can approach their brand alliances with a similar terminology to define the “Cash cow” and “Star” brand alliances that generate more value for the company. After the analysis of value outcomes, they can identify the “Question mark” and “Dog” brand alliances that need more resource contribution than the values they create. Portfolio analysis of past brand alliances would help companies to make better strategic decisions about the future brand partnerships they will form.

5.3.5. Partner Selection Model

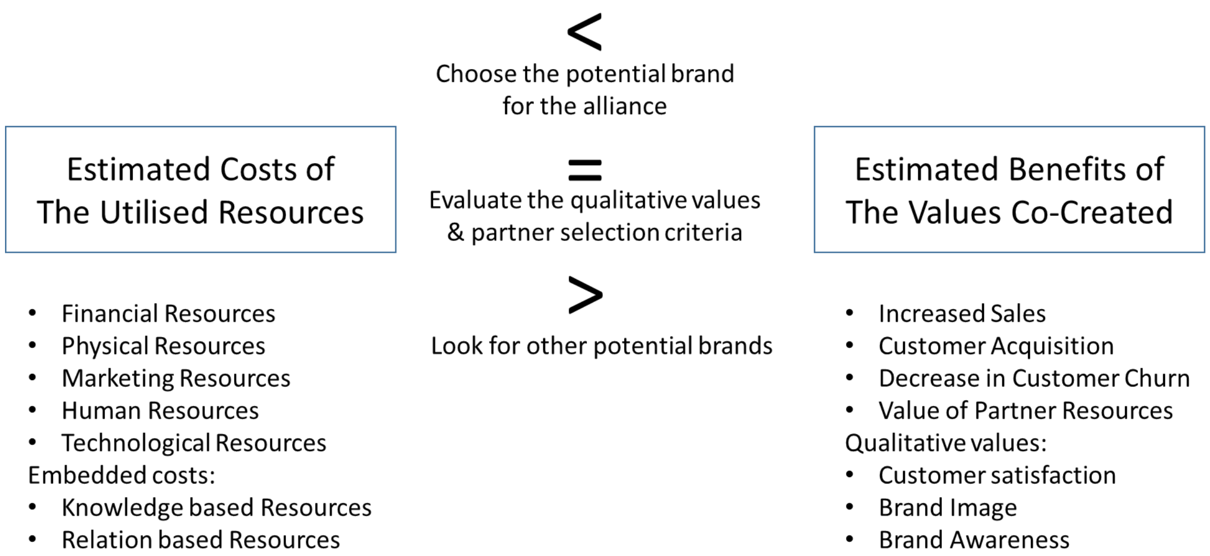
Integrating the opportunity cost methodology of Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018) with the resource allocation, partner selection criteria and brand alliance aims that are identified in the findings of the case studies, the following partner selection model is developed. The findings show that the brands decide on the potential brands' list for cross-category brand alliances after analysing the needs of the customers, the lack of resources that are necessary to satisfy those needs, and the expected outcome of the brand alliance. Besides, they develop their own partner selection criteria with the indispensable attributes of the partner brand (i.e. market reach, brand awareness, etc.) for their specific needs.

Although Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018) propose to utilise the excess resource capacity in the alliances, the brands allocate existing resources to the brand alliance even if they are not an excessive amount. To calculate the opportunity cost of the resources, the brands can list the resources they plan to allocate to the planned brand alliance by estimating the projected duration of the brand alliance. The opportunity cost of human resources can be calculated by the daily cost of the employees that are involved in the brand alliance. The costs of the technological and physical resources can be calculated by the potential rental costs of these resources. The value of the marketing resources and capabilities can be calculated by the production costs of the marketing material and advertisement costs of the marketing communications. The cost of financial resources should be added to the sum of other costs.

Even though the knowledge-based and relation-based resources do not have a quantifiable value, their costs can be accepted as embedded in the value of other resources. The costs included in the brand alliance resource allocation consists of fixed and variable costs. While some resources are allocated once at the beginning of the brand alliance (such as the inclusion of top management), some resources are continuously used during the brand alliance. That is why the brands tend to choose long-term brand alliances rather than short-term ones not to allocate the same resources every time before starting a brand alliance.

The expected benefits of the brand alliance can be calculated by adding up the projected sales increase, the value of new members for the brand, the value of the reduction in the customer churn, and the potential value of the resources allocated by the partner brand. The qualitative outcomes of the brand alliance such as improvement in the brand image, increase in the brand awareness and customer satisfaction can be used to make the final decision about the partner selection and the level of resource utilisation. The partner selection model that is based on the resource allocation and values co-created after the cross-category brand alliance is presented in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25 Partner Selection Opportunity Cost Model



(Adapted from Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018)

As suggested by Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018) in their framework, the brands can reconfigure the resource allocation after the initial opportunity cost calculation and change the decisions about the levels of resource utilisation in the brand alliance. For instance, the brand can allocate less marketing resources to the brand alliance by decreasing the amount of marketing communication activities to level the costs with the expected benefits. This type of bargaining is evident in the findings when the brands agree on the conditions of resource allocation between each other by comparing the marketing resources allocated and the potential financial resources used by the partner brand.

Although the model is a quantitative approach for the partner selection, the brands might still choose another brand as the alliance partner because of the other criteria such as past relations between the brands, the resource complementarity between the brands, the customer segment fit, the exclusivity of the brand with another rival brand, or any brand attribute issues such as brand image-related problems. Therefore, the model is guidance for calculating the opportunity cost of choosing one potential brand over another before making the final decision to form a cross-category brand alliance with the potential brands.

After choosing the potential brands for the projected cross-category brand alliances, the brands start to interact with the potential alliance partners to start the value co-creation process. The findings of the value co-creation process in the case studies are discussed in the next section of the study.

5.4. Value Co-Creation Process

In this section, the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances is discussed by exploring the findings considering past studies. It is critical to understand the factors that affect the dynamics of the value co-creation process not only for the theoretical implications about marketing but also practical implications about the cross-category brand alliances (Gummesson and Mele 2010). The findings show that there is an emphasis by the brands on synergy and win-win approach for the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances.

The findings validate that the interaction between the partner brands is a crucial factor in the value co-creation process as proposed by Gummesson and Mele (2010) in their VCC framework for marketing. Besides, the inclusion of customers in the value co-creation process by continuously evaluating their feedback and complaints to improve the process is critical for the brands to co-create value in the cross-category brand alliances. Therefore, there is a triadic interaction during the value co-creation process that goes beyond the relations between the partner brands. Similarly, the outcome of the cross-category brand alliance leads to values co-created for the partner brands and the customers, which will be discussed in detail in the proceeding section.

According to the findings, the interaction between the partner brands is pivotal in the value co-creation process. In their study that integrates S-D logic, relationship marketing, and many-to-many network approach; Gummesson and Mele (2010) stated that the interaction between the actors enables the transfer of knowledge, resource integration and organisational learning which leads to value co-creation in the networks. Although the framework of the authors is based on the network environment, the propositions of their study are supported by the findings of this study in the brand alliance context.

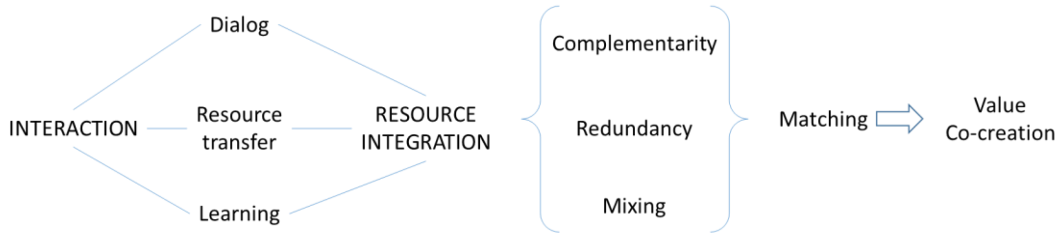
While the communication is between the firm and customer or the firm and the supplier in the relationship marketing logic (Gummesson and Mele 2010), the actors are replaced with brands in the context of brand alliances. Instead of business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) communication, brand-to-brand communication takes place in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. The brands have different roles in the cross-category brand alliances such as co-marketing partners, co-production partners, and co-innovation partners (Agrawal and Rahman 2015) in addition to the traditional supplier-buyer relation that is discussed in the B2B value co-creation literature (Grönroos and Helle 2010; Gummesson and Mele 2010).

The value co-creation process in the brand alliances starts with the first interaction between the potential brand alliance partners. The brands analyse the needs and wants of their customers and identify the missing parts in their service offerings that need to be fulfilled by a partner brand. As identified in the partner selection criteria section (Section 5.3), the brands define the needs of each customer segments separately to find the right partner brand that fits each customer segment's needs. After the analysis, they determine the potential brands for specific needs. The findings present that the first interaction is initiated with an email, a phone call, or through a third party which manages the brand alliance processes for the brand.

5.4.1. Value Co-Creation Process Framework

For the brands that have a brand alliance for the first time, face-to-face meetings are organised to agree on the details. As aforementioned, inclusion of human resources and top management when necessary happen at this stage. Gummesson and Mele (2010) propose two vital phases of the value co-creation process as the interaction between the actors and resource integration between the actors. After the initial interaction between the brands, the brands analyse the expectations, resources, and capabilities of each other. The resource integration starts only after the brands agree on the conditions of which resources will be allocated to the brand alliance. Different than the model of Gummesson and Mele (2010, p.190) in Figure 26, some types of resources are exchanged in the process rather than integrated.

Figure 26 Value Co-Creation Process Framework

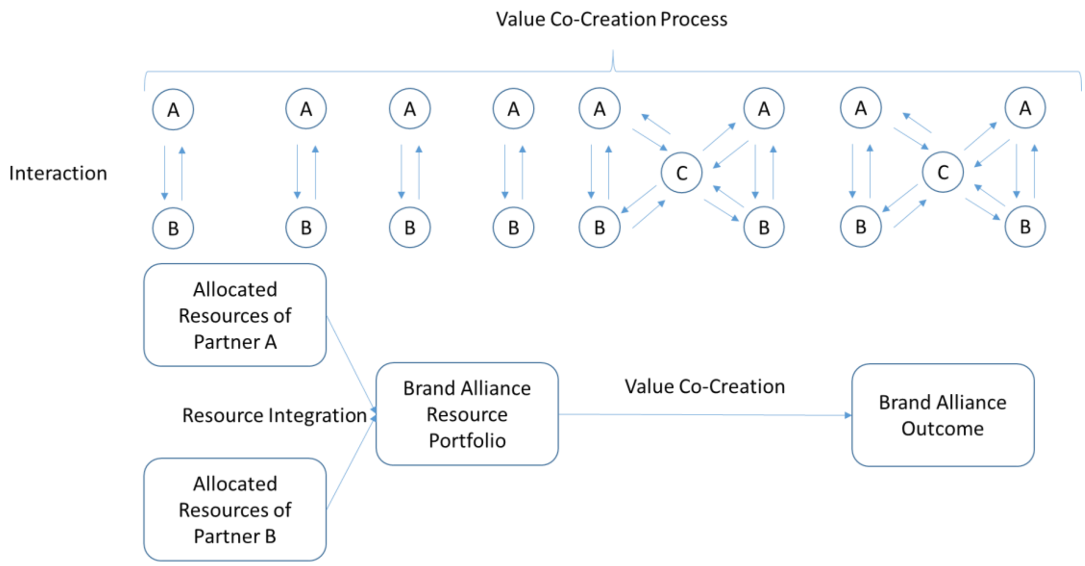


(Gummesson and Mele 2010, p.190)

Contrary to the many-to-many network setting of Gummesson and Mele (2010) framework, the dialogue and resource exchange continue during the value co-creation process in the dyadic interaction context of the brand alliances. In addition, learning is an outcome of the value co-creation process which the brands utilise a knowledge-based resource in their future brand alliances. As suggested in the framework; resource complementarity, which is a significant partner selection criterion has a critical role in the efficiency and effectiveness of the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances. The redundancy and mixing forms of resource integration occur while brands match their resources and processes during the brand alliance activities.

After the resource integration phase, the brand alliance resource portfolio is formed for the cross-category brand alliance. The interaction between the brand alliance partners continues in each phase of the value co-creation process. When the cross-category brand alliance is promoted to the customers, the interaction between the customers and the brands is initiated. The example partners are labelled as A and B, the customers are labelled as C, and arrows show the interaction between the actors in the framework below. The feedback from the customers assists the brand to solve any issue during the brand alliance. Even though the brand alliance finishes after the values are co-created as the outcome of the brand alliance, the interaction between the parties continues in means of customer service, reporting, and feedback. The alliance outcome and values co-created are discussed in the proceeding section of the chapter. The value co-creation process framework in the cross-category brand alliance context is illustrated in Figure 27 below.

Figure 27 Value Co-Creation Process in the Cross-Category Brand Alliances



As in the case of Beta3 from tobacco category, the brands that are bounded by the regulations for their marketing activities utilise the brand alliances to find a workaround solution about the regulations. While Beta3 is not allowed to make any type of marketing activities or advertisement in Turkey because of the regulations against tobacco advertisement; they innovated a B2B marketing platform to reach their clients in the sales network and provided brand alliance campaigns to their customers on the closed community platform. This workaround solution helped them to build emotional bonds with their customers and resulted in long-term loyalty to the brand. However, they have abandoned the platform since they could not get a significant impact on the sales results.

Although creating the emotional bond was one of the initial aims of the brand alliance platform, the aim of increased sales came out as a more important aim than the others and had the decisive impact on the platform's feature. It is in line with the transaction cost theories of the firm, which claims the main goal of any company is generating income and profits (Williamson 1975; Doz and Shuen 1987).

Another example of using cross-category brand alliances to overcome a regulation barrier is the shared customer database usage and CRM activities during the cross-category brand alliances. The issues related to customer privacy and protection of customer data are getting attention in the marketing literature (Green 2012; Morey et al. 2015; Martin et al. 2017; Martin and Murphy 2017; Palmatier and Martin 2019). While Green (2012) claims that customer data has a universal value, Morey et al. (2015) suggest that customer data is turning into a source of competitive advantage. In addition, Morey et al. (2015) point the need for transparency and trust to gain customers' confidence about how the data is protected while the digital technologies are exponentially using vast amounts of customer data for marketing purposes.

Furthermore, Martin et al. (2017) validated the risks of data misuse and the importance of data protection transparency on firm performance by investigating the cases of data breaches and data vulnerability. On the other hand, the protection of customer data during the brand alliances is not investigated thoroughly after the implementation of new data protection regulations.

Like the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that protect the private data of customers in European Union countries, personal data is protected by law and regulations in Turkey (Kurt 2018). Due to the regulations, the brands are not allowed to share any personal data with other parties. Besides, they cannot buy or sell customer data to make any type of marketing communications. According to the regulations, only the customers who give consent can be contacted through marketing communication channels. As the ways to communicate with the customers are limited after the regulations, the brands try to reach new customer segments through marketing partnerships with other brands.

The brands in the case studies explicitly stated the aim of accessing the partner brand's customer database with the expectation of the partner brand's marketing communication to its target customers through CRM tools. While the brand cannot have the control or ownership of the partner brand's customer database, the marketing communication through the brand alliance leads to efficient reach to a targeted customer segment who are interested in the brand's products or services. Also, the use of technological resources by partner brands such as Alpha1 (telecommunications) provides flexibility and effectiveness in the process of marketing communications. Therefore, access to the partner brand's customer database is an indirect value outcome of the value co-creation process, which can be classified among the knowledge-based values. Still, the brands should be aware of the limitations in the regulations, which can cause the loss of the benefits because of the severe punishments when there is data misuse.

5.4.2. Value Co-Creation Roles

Although Agrawal and Rahman (2015) developed a value co-creation process framework to depict the value co-creation between the customers and firms, the value co-creation roles they assigned to the customers are existent in the value co-creation process between the brands during the cross-category brand alliances. In the findings of the case studies, the brands stated they share the roles of co-promoter, co-distributor, co-producer, co-innovator, co-designer, and experience creator with the partner brands which are the roles identified by Agrawal and Rahman (2015) for the customer in the value co-creation process. In addition to the roles stated by the brands, the roles of co-evaluator, co-ideator, co-evaluator, and co-tester are also identified in the findings.

The marketing focus of the cross-category brand alliances means almost all brands in the case studies defined themselves as co-promoter in the value co-creation process. As the cross-category brand alliances serve a way to improve the customer experience to enhance customer satisfaction, the brands share the role of experience creator to co-create value in the brand alliances. The new technologies and marketing methods are developed during the brand alliances, which make the partner brands co-innovators in the value co-creation process.

When there is a supplier-buyer relation in the brand alliance, the brands take the role of co-distributor as in the cross-category brand alliances of Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical, see Section 4.3.5), Beta2 (E-commerce, see Section 4.3.1), and Beta3 (Tobacco, see Section 4.3.1). While Alpha5 and Beta2 assist their brand partners for the distribution of the products and services, Beta3 utilises the partner brands as places to promote and distribute its products because of the marketing restrictions in its product category. As mentioned by Alpha1's partner brand Beta5 (see Section 4.3.1), the brands share the role of co-designer when they are designing the project or marketing campaign together at the initial phases of the brand alliance.

Even though not all the roles were explicitly mentioned in the interviews, the findings support the existence of the value co-creation roles of Agrawal and Rahman (2015) except co-customer role in the value co-creation process of cross-category brand alliances. Therefore, the findings illustrate that the alliance partner brands share similar value co-creation roles as in the relationship between customer and firm in the value co-creation process as summarised in Table 41.

Table 41 The Value Co-Creation Roles of Cross-Category Brand Alliance Partners

The Brand & Partnership	**Value Co-Creation Roles**
Alpha1 (Telecommunications)	Co-promoter, Co-innovator
Alpha1 (Telecommunications) & Beta1 (Entertainment)	Co-promoter, Experience Creator
Alpha1 (Telecommunications) & Beta2 (E-Commerce)	Co-promoter
Alpha1 (Telecommunications) & Beta4 (Sports)	Co-promoter, Experience Creator, Co-innovator
Alpha1 (Telecommunications) & Beta5 (Service)	Co-designer
Alpha2 (Automotive)	Co-promoter, Co-producer, Experience creator
Alpha3 (Fuel & Energy)	Co-promoter, Co-innovator
Alpha4 (Sports Retailer)	Co-promoter, Experience creator
Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical)	Co-distributor, Experience Creator
Beta2 (E-Commerce) & Delta17 (Food)	Co-distributor
Beta3 (Tobacco)	Co-promoter, Co-distributor, Experience creator

5.4.3. Value Co-Creation Process Pillars

The value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances is also justified by applying findings of the study to the value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015). In their conceptual framework, the authors identified five pillars of value co-creation, which are interlinked to facilitate each other in the value co-creation process. The authors categorised 27 elements of the value co-creation process into five pillars by analysing the articles about value co-creation. According to the findings of case studies, the five pillars of the value co-creation which are process environment, resources, co-production, perceived benefits, and management structure are existent in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. Among the 27 elements identified by Bharti et al. (2015) for value co-creation process, the correspondent elements are summarised in Table 42 below.

Table 42 Value Co-Creation Process Pillars of Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Value Co-Creation Process Pillars	**Cross-Category Brand Alliance Correspondence**
Process Environment	• Interaction at every stage of the process • Information sharing to decide on resource allocation • Exchange of resources
Resources	• Integration of resources • The utilisation of marketing, human, financial, technological, knowledge, and relation-based resources
Co-Production	• Win-win approach and synergy • Involvement & participation of the customer in value co-creation • Partnership in marketing activities
Perceived Benefits	• Direct & Indirect value outcomes • Shared knowledge for problem-solving • Learning from customer feedback • Brand Alliance experience
Management Structure	• Partner brand’s agility & flexibility • Top management’s inclusion • Match of corporate & brand values

(Adapted from Bharti et al. 2015)

For the process environment, the interaction element is existent at every stage of the brand alliance, as mentioned in the value co-creation process framework. The partner brands share information from the start of the alliance, and they continue to share the information even after the brand alliance in the form of reporting and feedback. In addition to the knowledge exchange, other types of resources are exchanged during the brand alliance to co-create value.

Furthermore, the resources of partner brands are integrated and utilised to form the brand alliance resource portfolio, which initiated the value co-creation process. At this stage, the marketing resources and capabilities, human resources, financial resources, technological resources, knowledge, and relation-based resources of the partner brands are allocated to the brand alliance resource portfolio. Thanks to the synergy and win-win approach of the partner brands, the shared marketing activities are performed in the value co-creation process. Moreover, the customers are involved in the value co-creation process by their participation with feedback to the customer service and points of sales of partner brands.

As mentioned before, the partner brands have different expectations from the brand alliance, and the outcomes of the value co-creation process are perceived differently by each beneficiary. Direct and indirect value outcomes that are identified in the proceeding section are co-created for the partner brands and customers in the cross-category brand alliances. As Bharti et al. (2015) stated; the value co-creation process is not possible without the inclusion of the fifth pillar, which is the management structure. The involvement of top management in the brand alliance formation is influential on the overall value co-creation process.

Furthermore, the agility and flexibility, and the match of corporate values are among the partner selection criteria of the brands in the cross-category brand alliance findings. Therefore, the five pillars of the value co-creation process are valid in the cross-category brand alliance context with most of the elements which are identified by Bharti et al. (2015). However, Bharti et al. (2015) did not consider the risks that could have an impact on the pillars of value co-creation process which are discussed in the potential risks section of the study (Section 5.6). The elements of the five pillars of value co-creation process (Bharti et al. 2015) that are identified in the findings of case studies are listed in Table 43 below.

Table 43 The Elements of Five-Pillars of VCC Process in the Case Studies

Pillars	Elements	Alpha1	Alpha2	Alpha3	Alpha4	Alpha5
Management Structure	Organisational agility				✓	✓
	Leadership	✓				✓
	Corporate values	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Top management approach	✓				✓
Perceived Benefits	Problem-solving	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Expected benefits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Value	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Customer learning	✓				✓
	Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Co-production	Mutuality	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Partnership and Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Customer involvement	✓				✓
	Customer participation	✓				✓
Resources	Trust	✓	✓			✓
	Customer communities	✓				✓
	Network	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Technology	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Capability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Relationship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Process Environment	Customer role clarity					✓
	Prototyping	✓	✓			✓
	Encounter					
	Communication and dialogue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Information sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Exchange	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Relational norm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The case of sports retailer brand Alpha4 provides another example for the aim of increased sales through cross-category brand alliances. While Alpha4 brand aims to have an impact on the lifestyle choices of their customers by providing them customer benefits related to sports from partner brands, they reveal that the expectation would be the increased sports-related product sales in Alpha5 stores. As mentioned in the resources and capabilities section (Section 5.2), technological resources and relation-based resources are critical for the efficiency and effectiveness of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances.

By utilising technological resources in the cross-category brand alliances, brands co-innovate new marketing channels such as mobile applications and websites (e.g. Alpha1, Alpha2, and Alpha3 cases), communication tools (e.g. location-based communication services by Alpha1), and payment systems (e.g. the partnership of Alpha3 with brands from banking category). The relation-based assets enable the utilisation of external resources that include 3rd party suppliers, marketing agencies, technology providers, and research companies.

Even if the brands come together to create value for the firms, the values co-created are beneficiary for the end customers through innovation, efficiency and improved customer experience. The co-creation of value for the customer is a by-product of the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances. Furthermore, the customers are also part of the value co-creation process as proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) in their landmark article about S-D logic.

The role of the customer in VCC process of a cross-category brand alliance is in line with the assumption of Vargo and Lusch (2004); the brands in the alliance utilise the customers as operant resources by keeping the interaction with the customers for feedback and improvement of the service (See Figure 28 about an example from Alpha1-Beta5A alliance). These findings about the role of the customer in VCC process of cross-category brand alliances validate the 6th and 8th foundational premises of Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 10-11); “The customer is always a coproducer” (foundational premise 6), “A Service-centered view is customer-oriented and relational” (foundational premise 8).

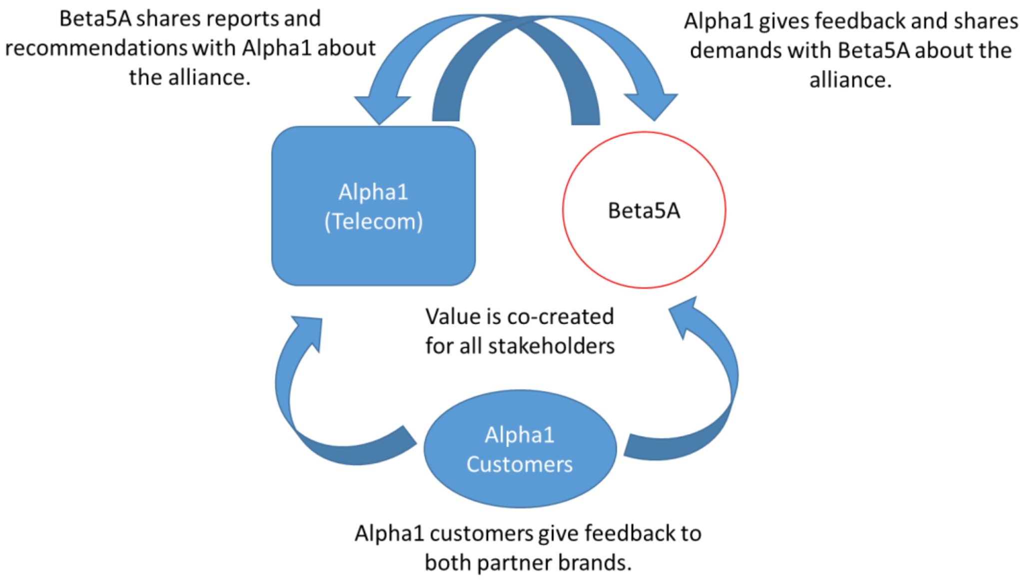
Although the relationships between the brands are in B2B context during the brand alliance, the findings show that the alliance partners use the feedback from the customers to improve the process of the brand alliance. For example, Alpha1 from telecommunications category dynamically uses customer complaints that are reported through its marketing channels such as social media and customer service to inform the partner brands about the potential problems. The brands in the alliance utilise their resources to correct the problem in the brand alliance and therefore improve the service the customer receives. As a result, the customer plays an active role in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances in addition to co-creation role of the partner brands.

The findings are consistent with the assumptions of Agrawal and Rahman (2015) about the inclusion of customers in the value co-creation process to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process. The findings show involvement of the partner brand in the value co-creation process improves the efficiency and effectiveness with a further step thanks to the resource contribution of the partner brand to solve the problems that occur during the brand alliance.

While the exchange and interaction occur only between the customer and the brand in the value co-creation process model of Agrawal and Rahman (2015), the findings of this study present an understanding for the importance of the exchange of resources and the interaction between the partner brands in the value co-creation process. Besides, Agrawal and Rahman suggest customer insight and feedback as an outcome of the value co-creation process. However, the customer insight and customer feedback are used as facilitators during the brand alliance by the partner brands to co-create value thanks to the advanced and dynamic feedback collection mechanisms and the interaction between the partner brands.

The importance of interaction between the brands and the customers is illustrated by the following example (see Figure 28). In some cases, the partner brands have a buyer-seller relation as in the cross-category brand alliance between Alpha1 from telecommunications category and Beta5A from services & concierge category. Although Alpha1 uses financial resources to pay for the services of Beta5A that are used by Alpha1 customers, the brands communicate regularly to improve the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliance. While Alpha1 is a customer of Beta5A in a B2B context, both partners provide service to Alpha1 customers during the brand alliance. The service is enhanced by the interaction between the brands, and the feedback supported by the customers to both brands. The outcome of the brand alliance is co-created value for all stakeholders, despite the types of values are various for each stakeholder.

Figure 28 The Value Co-Creation Process Example between Alpha1 & Beta5A



5.5. Alliance Outcome and Types of Values Co-Created

In this section, the findings of how brands evaluate the alliance outcome are explored with the types of values co-created as an outcome of the cross-category brand alliances. The types of values are categorised in terms of the values created for the firms and customers by discussing past studies about the value types. The triadic outcome of the brand alliances, which comprises values for both partner brands in the alliance and the customers of the brands are explained and illustrated. In addition, the value outcomes of the brand alliances are categorised into direct value outcomes and indirect value outcomes following the classification developed by Chowdhury et al. (2016).

5.5.1. Value Outcomes Classification

According to the findings, the direct value outcomes of the cross-category brand alliances are the changes in the revenue, the number of customers, customer satisfaction, and brand awareness which brands regularly measure by the metrics they have developed. The indirect value outcomes of the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances are the changes in the brand image, brand reputation, customer loyalty, innovations (technological, marketing-related, etc.), and knowledge related outcomes such as learning and experience.

The types of value outcomes are summarised in Table 44 below. The findings show that the values co-created during the cross-category brand alliances are different for each brand and cannot be shared evenly. Furthermore, there are risks of negative outcomes in some types of values such as brand image even though brand alliances might result in the co-creation of other types of values.

Table 44 Direct & Indirect Value Outcomes of Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Direct Value Outcomes	Indirect Value Outcomes
• Financial (sales, profit) • Customer Acquisition • Customer Satisfaction • Brand Awareness	• Brand Image & Reputation • Customer Loyalty • Innovation • Knowledge (Learning, experience, customer data)

According to the findings, the outcome of the cross-category brand alliances is evaluated by diverse methods. The brands compare the outcome with the criteria they set for the brand alliances in their marketing strategy to evaluate the performance of the brand alliance. As the findings show that there are values co-created both for the brands and the customers during the cross-category brand alliances, the types of values co-created can be classified under two categories of "values co-created for the brands" and "values co-created for the customers".

Although there are values co-created by the brands for the customers, these values also serve for the aims and objectives of the brands to form the brand alliances in the first place. According to the findings, the brands come together to improve the service they provide to the customers. The brands enhance the value of their product or service by providing extra customer benefits from the partner brands. Access to new customers thanks to the shared marketing activities with the partner brand create brand awareness for both brands in the alliance.

The new technologies that are co-created during the cross-category brand alliances assist the brands in improving customer service and experience. By taking the experience creator role, the partner brands co-create experience for their customers. As a result, they expect an increase in customer satisfaction with improved customer service, extra customer benefits, and better customer experience. The brands assume that the increased customer satisfaction will lead to more sales and profits, decrease in the customer churn, and thus increase in the customer loyalty, and a better brand image in the minds of the customers.

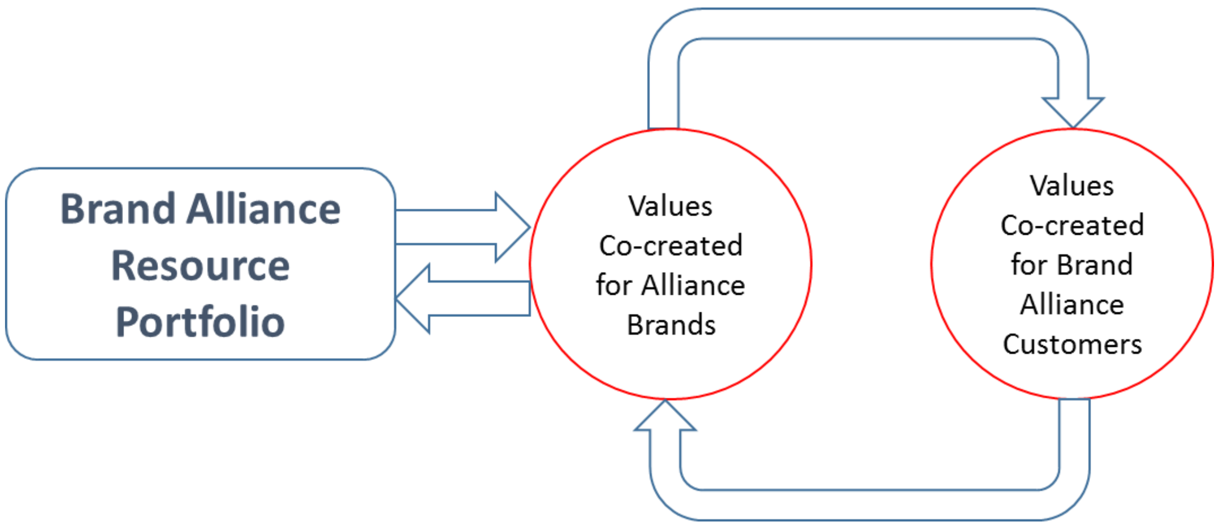
5.5.2. Types of Values Co-Created

The knowledge accumulated during the brand alliance helps the brands to improve their products or services thanks to the learnings from the partner brand and the customer feedback. The increased brand alliance experience enables better partner selection for the future brand alliances. The values co-created as an outcome of the brand alliance is feeding back the resources of the brands. Even if the brand alliance does not continue, the values co-created turn into operant resources for the brands. The types of values co-created for brands and the customers are listed in Table 45. The relation between the values is illustrated in Figure 29 below. Multiple types of value co-created during the brand alliances are discussed in the following subsections.

Table 45 Values Co-Created for the Brands and Customers during Cross-Category Brand Alliances

Values Co-Created for the Alliance Brands	**Values Co-Created for the Customers of the Alliance Brands**
• Technology & Innovation • Brand Image • Brand Awareness • Customer Acquisition • Customer Loyalty • Sales & Profit • Knowledge (Learning, Brand Alliance Experience, Customer data, etc.)	Customer Satisfaction derived from: • Customer Benefit • Customer Experience • Customer Service

Figure 29 The Relationship between Brand Alliance Resource Portfolio and Co-Created Values



Multiple Types of Value Co-Created

As proposed by Ekman et al. (2016), the findings confirm that there are multiple types of value (Table 45) that are created during the value co-creation process and the type of the value is uniquely perceived and determined by the beneficiary. However, the type of value co-created in the brand alliance corresponds to the partner brand’s value when the aims of the brand alliance are set before the alliance by a contract or agreement.

The pre-agreed type of value that is co-created is mostly the financial value type rather than the social, experience or brand types of value that are discussed by previous studies (Sanders and Simons 2009; Ekman et al. 2016; Chowdhury et al. 2016). On the other hand, the financial outcome for each partner brand might be different even though the type of the value matches each other. The financial gain of one partner brand might be substantially bigger than the other brand because of the power imbalances in the brand alliance (Chowdury et al. 2016).

The findings illustrate that the values co-created during the cross-category brand alliances differ for each partner brand even if they have shared goals at the initial stage as assumed in the conceptual framework of the study. In their framework for mutual value creation, Grönroos and Helle (2010) claimed the incremental value that is created during the business relationships could be shared between the business partners. However, the values co-created in the brand alliance context are not always beneficial for both partner brands.

In addition, the dynamics of the value co-creation process makes it difficult to create mutual values for the alliance partners. For instance, in the partnership between Alpha1 (telecommunications, Section 4.3.1) and Alpha2 (automotive, Section 4.3.2), the brands utilise different types of resources in the brand alliance with different expectations from the alliance. While some of the aims are shared, such as brand awareness, and brand image through co-promotion; the aims of increased revenue, customer benefit, or customer acquisition diverge.

The dynamics of the value co-creation process lead to the exchange of outcomes (Figure 29). On one side, Alpha1 provides increased customer benefit and customer satisfaction thanks to the utilised financial resources of Alpha2 to provide a discount for Alpha1 customers. On the other side, Alpha2 increases its sales with new customers through the marketing resources utilised by Alpha1. Therefore, the direct value outcomes of the cross-category brand alliance are different than each other and cannot be shared between the partners. Still, there is a win-win outcome of the brand alliance thanks to the integration of resources that complements each other as assumed by Gummesson and Mele (2010).

Technolology & Innovation

As mentioned in the cases of Alpha1 (Section 4.3.1.7), Alpha2 (Section 4.3.2.5), Alpha3 (Section 4.3.3.5), and Alpha5 (Section 4.3.5.7) the brands use cross-category brand alliances to create value in the type of innovation (Table 45). The brands in the alliance take the role of co-innovators and allocate resources to co-create innovation (**Error! Reference source not found.** 41). The innovations they create together can be grouped as new marketing campaigns, new products, and new technologies.

While the companies come together for a marketing communication campaign, the values they co-create can result in the development of new products or technologies to facilitate that brand alliance. In some cases, the innovation can be used in future brand alliances as well, such as the mobile app and website platforms of Alpha1, Alpha2, and Alpha3.

Customer Experience

The findings of the case studies provided examples in which the value that brands create together in a cross-category alliance is in the form of customer experiences (Table 45). The brands from different product categories form a brand alliance to build a shared experience for the customers by allocating their specialised knowledge and resources in their categories. Experience creation is one of the roles suggested by Agrawal and Rahman (2015) in the value co-creation process.

Agrawal and Rahman (2015) suggest that enhancing customer experience assists the brands in achieving the aims of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer retention, and therefore profitability. The brands from different categories such as the case study brands Alpha2 (Section 4.3.2) from the automotive category, Alpha4 (Section 4.3.4) from sports retailer category, and Alpha5 (Section 4.3.5) from pharmaceutical category; and the partner brands Beta1 from entertainment category, Beta3 from tobacco category, and Beta4 from sports category stated the co-creation of experience with the partner brand as an important outcome of the cross-category brand alliance. The co-production of a customised product, the co-promotion of an event, the co-innovation of technologies with the partner brands lead to co-creation of enhanced experiences for the customers of brands during the cross-category brand alliances.

Sales and Profit

For the brand alliances that are sales-oriented, the outcome of the brand alliance can be measured by the changes in the sales. However, if only one side is sales focused on the brand alliance, the brand alliance outcome is evaluated differently by the partner brands. In the case of Alpha1 (telecommunications, Section 4.3.1) & Alpha2 (automotive, Section 4.3.2) brand alliance, while Alpha2 measures the success of the brand alliance by the financial outcome, Alpha1 evaluates the outcome in terms of customer benefit and customer satisfaction co-created during the brand alliance.

The financial outcome of the VCC process is classified as monetary value by Sanders and Simons (2009), and direct value outcome by Chowdury et al. (2016) in the past studies. Following these classifications, the values Alpha1 co-creates which are customer satisfaction and customer benefit can be categorised as use/experience value according to Sanders and Simons (2009) classification and indirect value outcome according to Chowdury et al. (2016) classification.

Customer Acquisition

The findings show that customer acquisition is another measurable outcome of the cross-category brand alliances (Table 45). The customer acquisition outcome is closely related to the financial outcome of the brand alliance as the new customers lead to an increase in the revenue. The brands can compare the number of their new customers during the brand alliance with the other periods to identify the impact of the brand alliance on customer acquisition.

The aim of the brands to reach new customers through the brand alliances with the brands from other categories are realised when they acquire new customers at the end of the brand alliance period. The case study brands Alpha2 (Section 4.3.2) from automotive category and Alpha3 (Section 4.3.3) from fuel & energy category explicitly state the new customer acquisition as one of the aims of forming brand alliances and among the criteria of the brand alliance performance. The customer acquisition outcome of the cross-category brand alliance can be classified as monetary value (Sanders and Simons 2009) and a direct value outcome (Chowdury et al. 2016).

Emotional Bond with Customers

The findings from the Alpha1 (telecommunications) & Beta3 (tobacco) cross-category brand alliance (Section 4.3.1.1) indicate that forming cross-category brand alliances is a way to build an emotional bond with the customers. Although many studies investigated the perceptions of the customers about brand alliances (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017), the emotional associations with the brand alliance are scarcely studied. One of the studies that explored the functional and emotional associations of the brands and their impact on the brand alliance outcome is conducted by Koschmann and Bowman (2018). However, the authors investigated the perception of the association between the brands at the functional and emotional level, and the impact of customer perception on the marketplace performance. The emotional association with the brands as an outcome of the brand alliance is not identified in the study.

The findings of the Alpha1 & Beta3 partnership shows that despite the regulations that limit the marketing activities of Beta3, the cross-category brand alliances that Beta3 formed with telecommunications brand Alpha1, food brand Delta37, and sports clubs enabled the brand to build an emotional bond with the B2B customers. Although the impact of the brand alliance as a customer benefit and improved customer experience is impulsive and short term focused, the emotional bond with the customers provides a long-term influence on the customers which leads to customer loyalty.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Parallel to the articles by Moore and Sekhon (2005) and Schumann et al. (2014), customer loyalty is one of the significant aims of the brands when they form a cross-category brand alliance (Section 4.3.5.3). The brands aim to achieve customer loyalty as a co-created value by providing customer benefits together with the partner brand and by increasing customer satisfaction with the service they provide collaboratively. Vargo and Lusch (2004) state that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty can only be achieved by incorporating the customers in the value co-creation process.

Compared to the other types of value goals, customer loyalty is a long-term goal for the brands that can be achieved if the customer prefers the same brand consistently for a long period (Cossio-Silva et al. 2016).

It should be noted that as the brand alliance between the partner brands is for a defined period for the marketing purposes, the customer might stay loyal to one of the partner brands but not the other. As a result, the customer loyalty goal might not be achieved as a shared value of the cross-category brand alliance. Customer loyalty as an outcome of cross-category brand alliance can be achieved in the long term by the contribution of partner brands to the improvement of brand alliance performance.

The customer feedback is critical to improving the service quality during the brand alliance and contributes to the success of the brand alliance. Thus, the value in the brand alliance is not only created by the partner brands but also with the contribution of customers by their feedback during the brand alliance. The brands should closely track the newly acquired customers after the campaign to understand the impact of the brand alliance on customer loyalty in the long term.

5.6. Potential Risks

Although not identified significantly in all cases of the study, the potential risks associated with the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances are among the emerging themes of the findings (Section 4.4.6). One of the risks that emerged in the analysis of cross-category brand alliances is the spill-over effect (Baumgarth 2004; Votalato and Unnava 2006) of the negative customer experience. Despite the expected positive impacts of brand alliance on the customer experience for both partner brands' customers, there are some cases which can spread the negative experience of one partner brand to the other.

Furthermore, when the marketing communications about the brand alliance are not conducted properly, the customers start to give negative feedback about the brands in the alliance. The marketing communications during the brand alliance include the promotion of the brand alliance on different marketing channels, and the internal communications to inform the employees at the points of sales, and customer service centres. There is also a risk of extra resource usage by one partner brand because of the lack of interaction between the partner brands during the brand alliance. This risk is closely related to the power relations between the partner brands when one brand takes the role of the main brand because of its abundant marketing resources or the financial resources it uses for the alliance.

In addition, the risk of ending the cross-category brand alliance increases when one brand does not apply the agreed marketing communications activities during the brand alliance. At the same time, the other brand contributes the resources on their side as agreed at the beginning of the brand alliance. The case of breaking the conditions of brand alliance agreement not only leads to a shorter brand alliance term than expected but also triggers the partner brand to choose competitor brands as their partners for their future brand alliances.

Another potential risk of the cross-category brand alliance is about the choice of partner brand selection. While the brands aim to utilise the unique resources of the partner brand to improve their service offering, being close to one partner brand might alienate the brand's existing customers who consume the products or services of the partner brand's rival. Furthermore, the loyal customers of the rival brand of the partner brand might choose the main brand's rival after the launch of cross-category brand alliance.

For instance, the sponsorship partnership of Alpha1 (Section 4.3.1) from telecommunications category with Beta4 from sports category carries the risk of losing the loyal supporters of the rival sports clubs who are the existing customers of Alpha1. According to the findings, there are two possible methods the brands use to reduce this risk. The first one is making brand alliances with several brands from the same brand category. For instance, Beta3 from tobacco category, which is one of the partner brands of Alpha1, makes marketing activities with several hotels, restaurants, and sports clubs to increase the diversity of the offers they provide to their B2B customers. However, this method is not applicable when the partner brand asks for exclusivity in its brand category to make the cross-category brand alliance.

The findings show that most of the brands ask for exclusivity in their brand category as a condition to form the cross-category brand alliance. In the example of Alpha1 & Beta4 partnership, both brands guarantee the exclusivity of each other in the brand category. The exclusivity provides protection of unique access to the partner brand's resources and thus enabling competitive advantage during the cross-category brand alliance.

However, there is a risk of dependency on one partner brand for the provision of services as in the example of the case study brand Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical, Section 4.3.5) when there is an exclusivity for the partner brand in its category. When there is a problem with the service of the partner brand, the main brand might experience dissatisfaction of its customers because of the partner brand’s service quality. To minimise the risks of dependency, the brand should add legal conditions about the service levels of the partner brands when the partner brand provides a critical service for the main brand’s customers.

The other option to reduce the risk is making short-term brand alliances with several brands from the same brand category at different periods while protecting the exclusivity of the brand in its category during the brand alliance. Although this is a method used by Alpha1 for some brand categories that are related to basic needs of the customers such as food, clothing; the potential disadvantage of this method is sacrificing the possible returns of long-term brand alliances such as improved relations with the partner brand and better level of resource utilisation.

Other case study brand Alpha5 from pharmaceutical category selects its partner brands to make brand alliances at least for three years to build the trust between the partners at the start of the brand alliance. One of the most stated aims of the brands in the case studies is building long-term partnerships with the potential partner brands to allow enough time for the value co-creation process. Therefore, the marketing managers should carefully analyse the trade-off between exclusivity, tenure of the alliance, and customer churn while choosing the potential brand alliance partners.

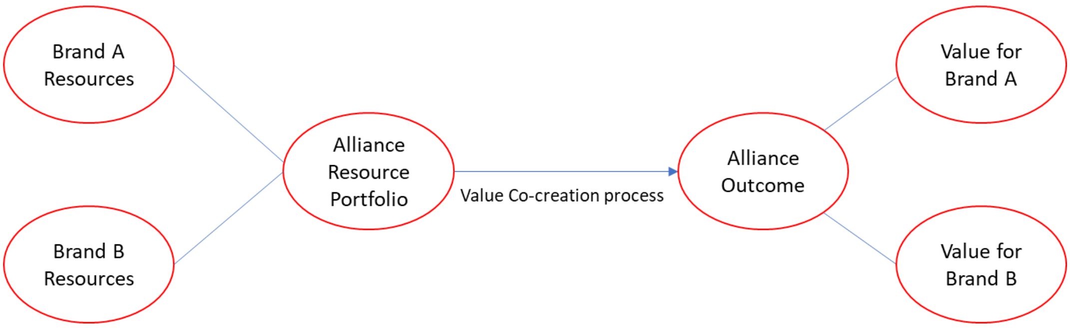
The partner brand’s hidden agenda during the cross-category brand alliance might cause problems for the other brand because of the regulations in the market. The partner brands are not aware of all the regulations in each other’s brand category as in the examples of fuel & energy brand Alpha3 (Section 4.3.3) or tobacco brand Beta3. On the other hand, some brands are very sensitive about the regulations in their category which slows down the value co-creation process as in the case of Alpha1 (telecommunications) which asks for extra resource usage about the protection of customer data.

In addition, the tenure of the brand alliance might not allow enough time to have access to all the information about the partner brand. Information asymmetry between the partner brands might cause regulation related problems in the cross-category brand alliance. To minimise this risk, the brands should consult their legal departments before finalising the agreements with the potential alliance partners. Furthermore, the trust and transparency between the brands would help to prevent the risk of hidden agendas during the cross-category brand alliances.

5.7. Development of VCC Process Framework in the Cross-Category Alliances

In this section, the theoretical framework that is presented in the literature review chapter (Figure 30) is revisited and revised according to the findings of the study. The developed framework aims to map the relationship between the resources used in the brand alliances and the types of values co-created in the cross-category brand alliances as questioned by the research objectives of the study. In the final research framework, the frameworks developed in the sections of discussion of findings chapter is integrated. The allocation of resources and capabilities to form the brand alliance resource portfolio, value co-creation process framework and the relation between the resources and the alliance outcome are depicted in the final framework. The theoretical framework that is developed in the literature review chapter is reminded in the figure below.

Figure 30 Theoretical Framework in the Literature Review Chapter



The theoretical framework developed after the literature review was based on the brand equity model of Aaker (1991) and market-based resources model of Srivastava et al. (2001). However, both models were developed for one company context to illustrate how companies create value and achieve competitive advantage. The models are revised to adapt to the brand-alliance context to illustrate the relation between the alliance resource portfolio (Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018) and alliance outcomes during the value co-creation process.

5.7.1. Value Co-Creation Process Framework

The framework is an integration of the frameworks developed by Gummesson and Mele (2010), and Grönross and Hele (2010), Agrawal and Rahman (2015), Bharti et al. (2015) for value co-creation process and roles. While the management structure pillar is embedded in the human resources of operant resources, the framework illustrates all five pillars of the value co-creation process that are identified by Bharti et al. (2015). However, the value co-creation frameworks developed before did not involve the resource-based view and resource advantage theories.

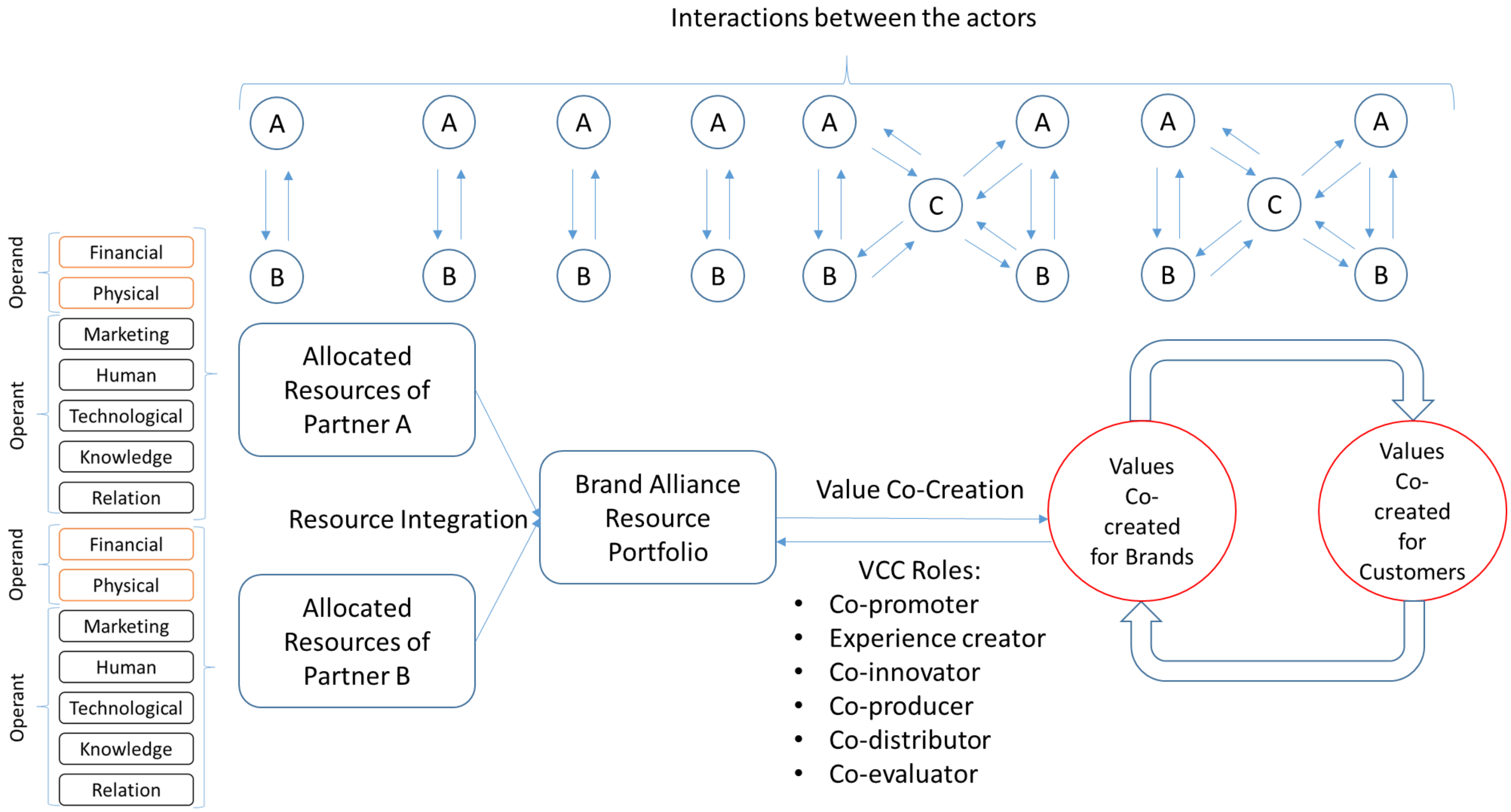
While the past authors developed value co-creation process frameworks in the firm-customer context, the findings of this study justified the value co-creation process between partner brands in the cross-category brand alliances by discussing three different value co-creation process frameworks of Gummesson and Mele (2010), and Grönross and Hele (2010), Bharti et al. (2015). Furthermore, the value co-creation roles (Agrawal and Rahman 2015) in the firm-customer context is adapted to the brand alliance context.

Besides, the previous VCC frameworks involved the interaction between the firm and the customer but not the triadic interaction between the brands and the customer that takes place in the brand alliance context. Similarly, the relationship between the values co-created for brands and the values co-created for customers are not identified in the previous VCC frameworks. Moreover, the two-way relationship between the alliance outcome and brand resources is depicted in the framework. The brand alliance outcome is explained as the value outcomes for the brands and the customers in the framework. Although the existence of different types of value outcomes for the partner brands are validated in the findings as assumed in the conceptual framework, it is not illustrated in the final framework. The final value co-creation process framework in the cross-category brand alliances is presented in Figure 31 below.

In the figure, label A and B represent the partner brands that form the cross-category brand alliance. In the upper part of the figure, the circles labelled with A and B represent the alliance partner brands, and the circle labelled with C represents the customers of alliance partner brands. The arrows between the circles show the way of interaction between the actors A, B, and C. On the left-hand side part of the figure, operand (orange rectangle boxes) and operant resources (black rectangle boxes) of the alliance partner brands that are allocated to the cross-category brand alliance are listed.

The allocated resources of each alliance partner brand are illustrated in a rectangle box and labelled as “Allocated Resources of Partner A” and “Allocated Resources of Partner B”. The integrated resource pool of alliance partner brands is illustrated in the box labelled with “Brand Alliance Resource Portfolio”. VCC process is shown with the arrows next to “Brand Alliance Resource Portfolio” box. The VCC roles are listed under these arrows. The arrows show the two-way flow between the co-created values and brand alliance resource portfolio. The red circles on the right side of the figure illustrate the values co-created by the alliance partner brands. The thicker arrows between the values co-created for alliance partner brands and values co-created for customers illustrate the relationship between these different types of co-created values which feed each other.

Figure 31 Value Co-Creation Process Framework in the Cross-Category Brand Alliances



The upper part of the value co-creation process framework illustrates the interaction between the cross-category brand alliance actors during the value co-creation process. As stated in the past studies (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Grönroos and Helle 2010; Gummesson and Mele 2010), the interaction between the actors has a vital role in the value co-creation process. This part of the model coincides with the process environment pillar of Bharti et al. (2015) VCC framework (Section 5.7.4). While relation-based resources (Section 5.2.6) have an important role in improving the VCC process through better communication between alliance partner brands, the interaction with the customers of the alliance partner brands (Section 5.4.1) enables them to overcome issues during the brand alliance that would cause negative customer experience without customer feedback.

In the cross-category brand alliances, the interaction between the brands starts when one of them contacts the other potential partner to form a brand alliance. The potential partner brand might be a partner that the brand had alliance before or a new one that is contacted for the first time. The medium of the first contact depends on the past relations between the brands. Although the partner selection opportunity cost model that is developed in Section 5.7.2 is not included in the VCC process framework (Figure 31), the brands go through an alliance partner selection process to identify the potential brands that would be suitable with the aims and expectations of a new brand alliance. The partner selection process is discussed in the next section.

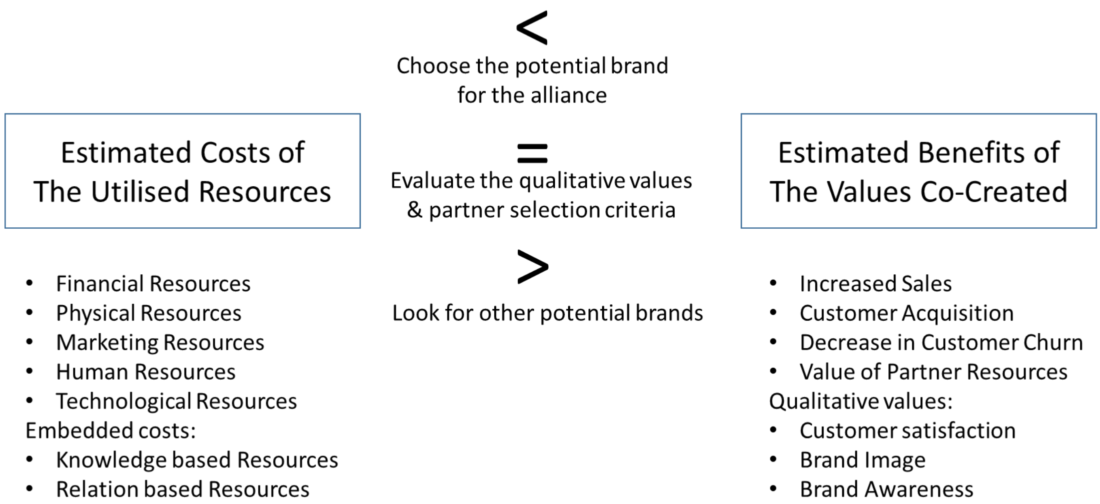
5.7.2. Partner Selection Opportunity Cost Model

According to the findings, the partner selection criteria (Section 4.3.5.4) include the customer segment fit, product & service fit, the fit of brand values, and resource complementarity between the brands. Besides, the brands expect the alliance partner would have brand awareness, brand image, market reach, and customer service quality attributes to be a suitable partner for the cross-category brand alliance. The partner selection opportunity cost model (Figure 32) that is inspired by Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018) is presenting a framework to guide the marketing managers in their decision about the levels of resource utilisation and partner selection.

In Figure 32, estimated costs of the resources that would be utilised in a potential cross-category brand alliance are listed on the left side of the figure. The estimated benefits of the values co-created in a potential cross-category brand alliance are listed on the right side of the figure. Both costs and values should be quantified and summed up to calculate the total estimated cost and benefit of a potential brand alliance. Suppose the estimated total cost of the potential brand alliance is bigger than the total estimated benefit. In that case, the brand should look for another potential brand to form a cross-category brand alliance. If the total estimated benefit is higher than the total estimated cost, the brand can choose the potential brand as the partner brand for the cross-category brand alliance. If the total estimated cost equals the total estimated benefit, then the brand can evaluate other qualitative values about the potential partner brand such as customer segment fit, the fit of brand values which among the partner selection criteria of this study’s findings (Section 4.3.5.4).

By weighing the balance of estimated costs of the utilised resources and estimated benefits of the values co-created, the brands can decide not only about the partner brand but also about the feasibility of forming a brand alliance. In some cases, the brands allocate resources before the first interaction to get more information about the potential alliance partners before making the final decision about the partner brand.

Figure 32 Partner Selection Opportunity Cost Model



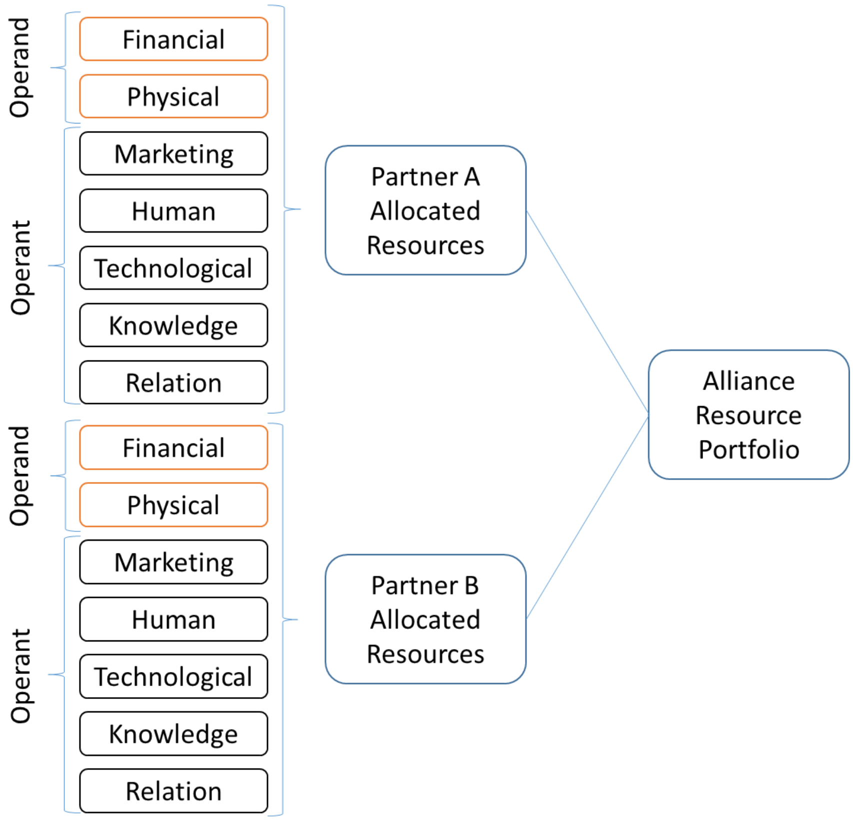
(Adapted from Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018)

5.7.3. Details of Value Co-Creation Process Framework

Allocated Resources

The left part of the value co-creation process framework (Figure 33) depicts the types of resources that are allocated by the partner brands to the brand alliances, which is one of the aims of the study. The resources are categorised as operand and operant (Vargo and Lusch 2004) according to the analysis of findings. This part of the framework matches the resources pillar of Bharti et al. (2015) VCC framework.

Figure 33 The Resource Allocation of Partner Brands for Alliance Resource Portfolio



Besides, the human resources of operant resources consist of the management structure pillar. The operand resources that the brands allocate to the cross-category brand alliances are financial and physical resources. Furthermore, the brands allocate operant resources of marketing, human, technological, knowledge-based, and relation-based resources to the cross-category brand alliances. The level of each resource allocation depends on the type of the brand alliance, the number of brand alliances the brand has at that period, the tenure of the brand alliance, and the past alliances with the partner brand. The continued interaction between the partner brands enables the resource configuration (Chiambaretto and Wassmer 2018) if there is excess or underutilisation of any type of resources.

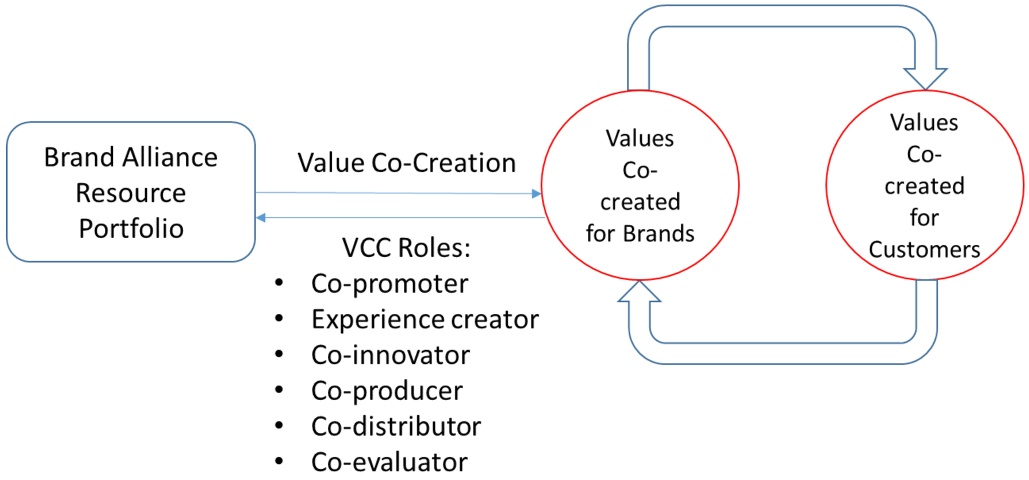
Depending on the type of the brand alliance and the conditions of the alliance, the brands might allocate different types of resources to the alliance. For instance, while one brand might commit financial resources to the alliance, the other brand might only allocate its marketing resources and capabilities. Resource integration, which is the second vital phase of value co-creation process (Gummesson and Mele 2010), starts after the brands decide on the conditions of the cross-category brand alliance and initial levels of resource allocation. Resource integration is a dynamic process during the cross-category brand alliance, thanks to the continuous interaction between the partner brands.

Furthermore, the resource configuration takes place after the involvement of customers in the value co-creation process when the cross-category brand alliance is launched after the initial resource integration. The feedback from the customers to both brands influence the levels of resource utilisation in the value co-creation process. While the value co-creation process framework is inspired by the frameworks of Gummesson and Mele (2010), and Grönroos and Hele (2010), it is a developed version with the involvement of RBV and R-A theories which illustrates the types of resources allocated to the cross-category brand alliances.

Brand Alliance Resource Portfolio, VCC Roles, and Co-Created Values

The right part of the value co-creation process framework (Figure 34) illustrates the relationship between the brand alliance resource portfolio, brand alliance outcome and values co-created. In addition, the value co-creation roles of the partner brands are listed on the framework. During the value co-creation process, the brands share value co-creation roles which are identified as co-promoter, co-innovator, experience creator, co-producer, co-distributor, and co-evaluator in the findings of the case studies.

Figure 34 The Relationship between Brand Alliance Resource Portfolio and Co-Created Values



Although the roles are classified by Agrawal and Rahman (2015) for the value co-creation process between the firms and the customers, the findings validated that the roles are taken by the partner brands in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. This phase of the framework is defined as co-production pillar in the value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015). It should be noted that the customers are also involved in the value co-creation process after the brand alliance is launched by their interaction with each brand through the customer service channels and points of sales.

As this study is investigating the value co-creation process between the partner brands, the value co-creation roles of the customers in the brand alliance context is not identified in the framework. The findings show that the level of the contribution of the resources depends on the cross-category brand alliance type, the tenure of the brand alliance, the level of financial resources invested, and the power relations between the partner brands. The efficiency of the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliance is influenced by knowledge-based resources such as alliance competence and experience, technological resources such as smart marketing tools, and relation-based resources. In addition, customer segment fit between the partner brands is an important criterion that moderates the effectiveness of the value co-creation process and thus alliance outcome.

The alliance outcome is the final phase of the framework, which matches with the perceived benefits pillar of the VCC framework of Bharti et al. (2015). At this phase, the direct and indirect value outcomes of the brand alliance are evaluated differently by each brand. It is consistent with the value definition of Vargo and Lusch (2004) in which the value is defined as the perceived benefit by each beneficiary. As presented in the examples of the case studies, the increased revenue of one partner means increased customer benefit for the other in the cross-category brand alliances.

The value is co-created by the partner brands because of resource integration, configuration, and exchange during the value co-creation process. The different value outcomes for each partner brand can be explained by the value definition of Ford and Mouzas (2013, p.12), who define the value as "the perceived worth in exchange of sacrifices made". However, there are shared brand alliance goals and value outcomes, such as improved brand image and brand alliance experience. As explained in the alliance outcome section of the chapter, there are values co-created for brands and customers in the value co-creation process of cross-category brand alliances.

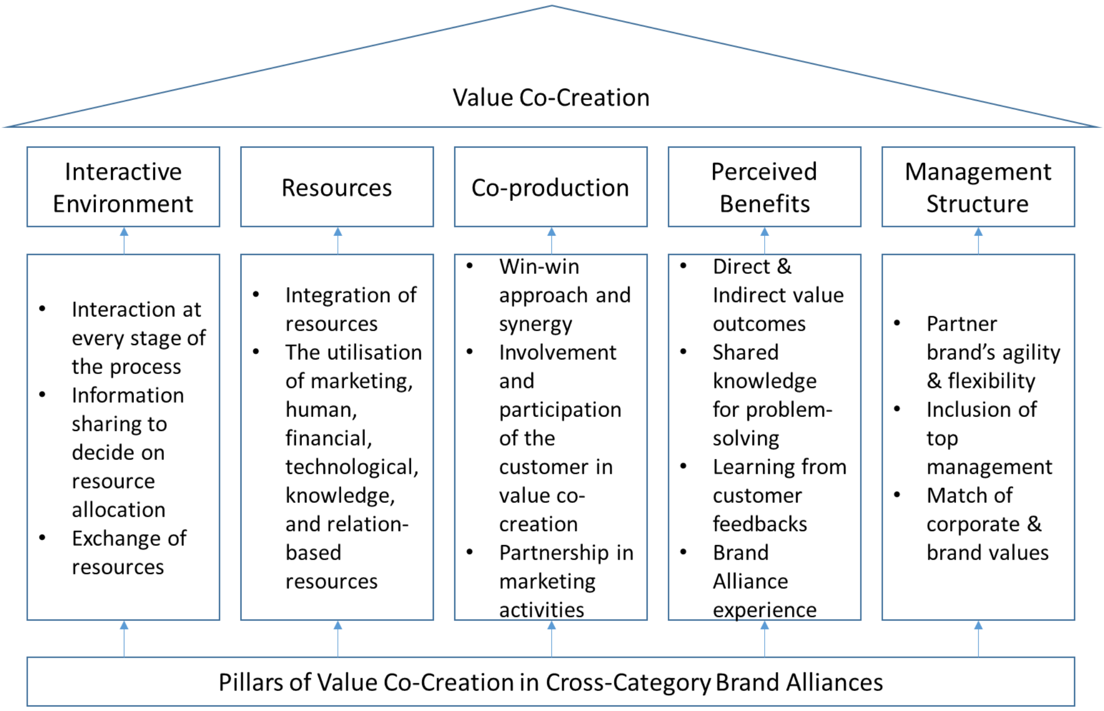
Furthermore, there is a dynamic relationship between the values co-created for brands and customers, which feedback the value co-creation process and the brand alliance resource portfolio. Thanks to the interaction between the partner brands and the customers during the value co-creation process, the brands innovate new technologies for marketing to communicate efficiently with customers, and new ways to improve customer experience. The enhanced service offering of the partner brands and the innovations co-created during the brand alliance enable the brands to improve customer experience and increase customer benefit. In return, the brands gain new customers, increase sales & profit, and improve customer loyalty as a long-term value outcome.

In addition, they gather knowledge-based resources such as brand alliance experience and customer data for their future brand alliances. Therefore, the values co-created for brands during the brand alliances provide a basis for the values co-created for customers. Similarly, values co-created for customers lead to the creation of values for the brands. It should be noted that the interaction between all parties continues during the final stage. Moreover, the triadic interaction continues even after the brand alliance to evaluate the results of the brand alliance, prepare reports, receive feedback from the customers, and discuss future opportunities. When there is a financial commitment in the brand alliance, the exchange of financial resources takes place at the final stage after reporting the results of the brand alliance.

5.7.4. Five Pillars of Value Co-Creation Process

As aforementioned, the findings of the study validated the existence of five pillars of value co-creation process framework of Bharti et al. (2015) in the cross-category brand alliance context. The five pillars of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances are illustrated in Figure 35 below. In the original framework of Bharti et al. (2015), the authors analysed past studies about the value co-creation process. They identified 27 elements of value co-creation in the firm-customer context.

Figure 35 Five Pillars of Value Co-Creation Process in Cross-Category Brand Alliances



(Adapted from Bharti et al. 2015, p.584)

However, the framework was not applied to the B2B value co-creation context. After discussing the findings of the case studies, the elements of the five pillars framework are matched to the brand alliance context to identify the elements of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances. Even though not all elements are identified in the brand alliance context, more than 20 elements are matched with the original elements which supported the existence of common elements in the value co-creation process as summarised in the above framework.

For instance, the interactive environment pillar consists of the elements of interaction, relational forms, exchange, information sharing, communication and dialogue, encounter prototyping, and customer role clarity elements in the original framework (Bharti et al. 2015). As discussed in the value co-creation process section (Section 5.4), there is an interaction between the parties at every stage of the value co-creation process in the brand alliances which follows a structured relationship between the partner brands through their human resources.

In addition, knowledge resources are exchanged and shared through face-to-face communication, email, or phone calls. The interactive environment pillar of the framework matches with the interaction map of the value co-creation process framework of the study. The resources pillar of the original framework comprises relationship, capabilities, technology, network, customer communities, and trust elements (Bharti et al. 2015). The findings of the study identified the resources that the brands contribute to the alliance resource portfolio to co-create value during the cross-category brand alliances. The alliance resource portfolio consists of operand resources which are physical resources and financial resources; and operant resources which are marketing resources and capabilities, human resources, technological resources, knowledge-based resources, and relation-based resources.

As discussed in the previous sections, the relation with the partners, customers, and other network actors are critical in the value co-creation process, which matches the elements of the resources pillar. Although the element of customer communities is not identified in the findings, the interaction of brands with the customers take place in the forums and social media communities of the brands. Besides, trust between the parties has an important role in the allocation and utilisation of resources during the cross-category brand alliance. The correspondents of the other elements of the pillars of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliance context are listed in the value co-creation process section (Section 5.4). As a result, the existence of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances from a B2B perspective is supported by the five-pillar value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015).

5.8. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed under separate sections of emerging themes. In the resources and capabilities section, the operand, and operant resources that the brands utilise in the cross-category brand alliances to co-create value are classified, and the formation of brand alliance resource portfolio is illustrated. In the partner selection criteria section, the aims and expectations of the brands to form cross-category brand alliances are explored to identify the important criteria for partner selection. Partner selection opportunity cost model is developed to assist marketing managers in their choice between the potential brands.

In the following section, a framework for value co-creation process in the brand alliance context is developed to illustrate the significance of the interaction between the brands and customers in the value co-creation process as identified in the findings of the study and past studies. Besides, the value co-creation roles of the alliance partners are identified in this section. Five pillars of the value co-creation process (Bharti et al. 2015) are explained according to the findings of cross-category brand alliance case studies. The direct and indirect value outcomes of the cross-category brand alliances are categorised in terms of the values co-created for the brands and the customers in the proceeding section.

The relation between the brand alliance resource portfolio, alliance outcomes and the values co-created are illustrated. In the potential risks section, the identified risks that might mitigate the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances are explored. The final section of the chapter explains the development of the research framework after revising the theoretical framework and integrating the frameworks that are developed in each section of the chapter. The existence of value co-creation process in the brand alliance context is supported by discussing the value co-creation process frameworks of Gummesson and Mele (2010), and Grönross and Hele (2010), five-pillar value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015), and value co-creation roles of Agrawal and Rahman (2015). In the next chapter, the implications of the findings, the contribution of the study, and the limitations of the research are discussed in separate sections.

6. Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the implications of the findings that are discussed in the previous chapter are presented. The chapter starts with the section which summarises the findings of the study, outlined against research objectives listed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3). It continues with the section that explores the implications of the findings. In the following sections, the contribution of the study to theory and practice are explained. In the last section of the chapter, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are discussed.

6.2. Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study can be summarised as (1) the categorisation of resources and capabilities that are utilised in the brand alliances into operand and operant resources in line with the S-D logic and RBV theories, (2) the identification of partner selection criteria of partner brands in the cross-category brand alliances and the development of partner selection opportunity cost model, (3) mapping the components of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliance context, (4) the identification and classification of values co-created as the outcome of the cross-category brand alliances in terms of direct and indirect value outcomes for the brands and the customers, and (5) determining the potential risks that might influence the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances. The findings contributed to the development of value co-creation process framework in the cross-category brand alliances, which is presented in Section 5.7 of the previous chapter. The implications of the findings are discussed in Section 3.3. The objectives of the study (Section 1.3) are achieved, as explained in the sections below.

<u>First Objective of the Study</u>

The first objective of identifying how and which types of values are co-created by partner brands in the cross-category brand alliance ecosystem is achieved by classifying the values co-created into direct and indirect value outcomes (Table 44 in section 5.5.1), and analysing the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances (Figure 31). The values co-created by the alliance partner brands are categorised into values co-created for brands and values co-created for the customers (Table 45 in section 5.5.2). The values co-created for alliance partner brands are identified as brand image and awareness, customer acquisition and loyalty, sales and profit, technology, innovation, and knowledge. The values co-created for alliance partner brand customers are customer benefit, customer experience and customer service. The research question about the potential risks in the VCC process is answered by identifying the risks in the analysed brand alliances (Section 6.3.5).

Second Objective of the Study

As identified in the value co-creation process (Section 5.4), the customers are involved in the value co-creation, which turns the process during the cross-category brand alliance into a triadic one. Besides, the values co-created provide benefit to the partner brands and the customers as the outcome of the brand alliance. Moreover, there is a virtuous cycle between the values co-created for the brands and the customers which feed each other (Figure 29).

The second objective, which is mapping the resources and capabilities of the partner brands that are utilised to co-create value during the cross-category brand alliances, is attained by categorising the resources into operant and operand resources in line with the S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004). The alliance partner brands are allocations operand resources of financial and physical resources to cross-category brand alliances to co-create value. The operant resources that alliance partner brands allocate to the brand alliances are marketing, human, technological, knowledge-based, and relation-based resources.

The research question that explores how the resources and capabilities are connected to the brand alliance outcomes and co-created value is answered by analysing the relation between the level of allocated resources and value outcomes (Section 4.4.7). According to the analysis, the high level of technological resources allocation contributes to the value outcome of innovation. Besides, there is a relation between the level of human resources allocation and the value outcome of customer satisfaction. While a low level of resource allocation does not contribute to value outcomes, a high level of resource allocation does not guarantee to achieve expected value outcomes.

Third Objective of the Study

Operand resources are divided further into financial and physical subcategories, whereas the operant resources are classified under the subcategories of marketing, human, technological, knowledge-based, and relation-based resources. The factors that influence the allocation of resources and the level of utilisation of resources are identified by exploring the opportunity cost model of Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018).

The third objective of the study which is designing a framework to illustrate the relationship between the utilised resources and the value outcomes is realised by proposing a value co-creation process framework for the cross-category brand alliances (Figure 31). The framework shows the interaction between the brands and customers are as critical as the interaction between alliance partner brands during the VCC process. Besides, the values co-created for customers generate a virtuous cycle which contributes to the values co-created for brands and to the resources the alliance partner brands have. The details about the framework are discussed in the next section.

6.2.1. The Value Co-Creation Process Framework in Cross-Category Brand Alliances

The research framework of the study is based on the brand equity model of Aaker (1991), market-based resources model of Srivastava et al. (2001), and value co-creation process frameworks of Gummesson and Mele (2010), Grönroos and Hele (2010), and Bharti et al. (2015). Developed VCC process framework (**Error! Reference source not found.**1) shows the complex nature of cross-category brand alliances. It demonstrates the main factors of brand equity, market-based resources and VCC process frameworks should be taken into consideration to map out the VCC process in cross-category brand alliances. In the framework, the interaction between the parties is mapped at each stage of the value co-creation process. The resource categories of the brand resources and the allocation of resources to the brand alliance resource portfolio are illustrated. The value co-creation roles of the partner brands that are identified in the findings (Agrawal and Rahman 2015) are listed in the framework. The two-way relationship between the resource portfolio and values co-created are depicted.

In addition, the reciprocal relation of the values co-created for the partner brands and values co-created for the customers are shown in the final phase of the research framework. The value co-creation process framework of the study is novel in terms of integrating value co-creation process frameworks of past studies (Gummesson and Mele 2010; Grönroos and Hele 2010; Bharti et al. 2015) from an RBV perspective in a cross-category brand alliance context. While past studies focused on the relationship between the firms and customers in the value co-creation process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Ballantyne et al. 2011; Grönroos 2011; Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016), the validation of value co-creation process between the brands in the brand alliance context is illustrated in the research framework (Figure 31) by discussing and integrating the frameworks of past studies.

6.3. Implications of Findings; Consistencies and Deviations from Past Studies

In this study, the competitive advantage quest of the companies is investigated by analysing the brand alliances they form to co-create value with other brands. The theories of the resource-based view, resource-advantage, and S-D logic are explored to identify the underlying reasons of companies to form brand alliances according to past studies. Moreover, the resources and capabilities that are committed to the brand alliances are identified to analyse their role in the value co-creation process.

The findings of the study showed that the cross-category brand alliance is a strategic tool that the brands use to co-create value for their business and customers. While the previous studies about value co-creation identified customers at the core of value co-creation (Agrawal and Rahman 2015), this study presented the significance of partner brands in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. The findings clearly indicate that the values co-created for the brands diverge from each other despite being in the same cross-category brand alliance and having shared goals.

The findings of the study indicated that the customers are not only an indispensable part of the value co-creation process in the dyadic brand alliance context but also contribute to the values co-created for the brands as the outcome of the brand alliances. Thus, the findings of the study showed that the companies should consider the involvement of the customers at all stages of the brand alliance and evaluate the outcomes of the brand alliances in terms of the values created for the customers rather than the perceptions of the customers about the brand alliances as in the past studies (Smarandescu et al. 2013; Riley et al. 2015; Yan and Cao 2017).

6.3.1. Value Co-Creation Roles

In this study, the value co-creation roles of the brand alliance partners are identified by using the value co-creation process framework of Agrawal and Rahman (2015) for the firm-customer relationship type of value co-creation. All the value co-creation roles except the co-consumer role are identified in the findings of the study. Therefore, the similarity between the firm-customer value co-creation roles with the brand-to-brand context in the cross-category brand alliances is validated with the findings. Mainly, the partner brands share the roles of co-promoter, co-innovator, and experience creator in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances.

Although these roles are identified by Agrawal and Rahman (2015) for the value co-creation process between the firms and customers, the findings indicated that the partner brands share these roles to co-create value in the cross-category brand alliances. The case study findings show that the role of the partner brands in the value co-creation process is not limited to the supplier and buyer roles as discussed in previous B2B value co-creation studies such as Grönroos and Helle (2010) and Gummesson and Mele (2010).

As the cross-category brand alliances are mainly based on the marketing partnerships (Smarandescu et al. 2013), the main role the partner brands share to co-create value is co-promoter. Experience creation is another important value co-creation role the brands undertake in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. Enhanced customer experience is a vital step to achieve the aims of customer satisfaction, customer retention, and customer loyalty (Agrawal and Rahman 2015). The partner brands utilise their resources in the brand alliance to co-create better experience for their customers which in return lead to increased revenue and profitability.

Even though the content of the co-creation roles is different, they are interrelated in the value co-creation process. For instance, co-innovation of new technologies during the brand alliance enables the co-creation of a better experience for the customers. Similarly, co-production of new products or services provide better customer service, which contributes to increased sales. Therefore, the partner brands share different value co-creation roles simultaneously to create value in the cross-category brand alliances.

6.3.2. Value Co-Creation Process

Moreover, the value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015) is applied to the cross-category brand alliance context to illustrate the existence of five pillars of value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances. The findings showed that the five pillars of value co-creation, which are the interactive environment, resources, co-production, perceived benefits, and management structure exist in the value co-creation process between the cross-category brand alliance partners. While Bharti et al. (2015) identified 27 elements of value co-creation process in literature for the value co-creation process between firms and customers, the findings validated the existence of most of the elements in the brand alliance context. Thus, value co-creation process from a B2B perspective is explained by applying a B2C framework to the findings of cross-category brand alliance case studies.

Another important finding of the study is related to the human resources contribution to the value co-creation process. The involvement of top management of the brands at the brand alliance formation stage not only speeds up the start of the brand alliance but also facilitates the value co-creation process at the later stages of the cross-category brand alliances. This finding is the validation of another pillar in the value co-creation framework of Bharti et al. (2015): Top management approach is one of the four elements Bharti et al. (2015) identified, which facilitates the value co-creation process for higher quality value outcomes.

Besides, the operant resource of brand alliance experience is embedded within the human resources because of the knowledge and experience of the marketing managers who are organising and managing the cross-category brand alliances. This finding is in line with the findings of Lambe et al. (2007) and Cao and Yan (2017) studies in which the authors claimed alliance competence and experience have a positive influence on the alliance outcome. Moreover, case study findings show that the brands with more brand alliance experience are preferred over other brands with less brand alliance experience. However, the impact of brand alliance competence and experience on the alliance outcome is indirect rather than the direct impact identified by Lambe et al. (2007) and Cao and Yan (2017).

Furthermore, the human resources that work at the sales points, customer services, and after-sales channels contribute to the value co-creation process by communicating with the customers and enabling the interaction between the brands and customers. In terms of the value co-creation process pillars of Bharti et al. (2015), human resources have a significant role in the management structure, process environment, and co-production pillars of the cross-category brand alliance value co-creation process. Also, case study findings show that human resources contribute to the relation-based resources to manage the relationships with customers and external stakeholders which is consistent with the study findings of Srivastava and Gnyawali (2011).

As proposed by the past studies about the value co-creation process (Gummesson and Mele 2010; Grönroos and Hele 2010), the interaction between the brand alliance partners is vital in the value co-creation process. The findings show that it is not only the interaction between the managers of partner brands but also the internal communications within the brands have an impact on the value co-creation process. Furthermore, the interaction with the customers is critical to involve the customers in the value co-creation process after the brand alliance starts. The continuous interaction between the partner brands and the involvement of the customer in the interaction during the brand alliance which contributes to the value co-creation are illustrated in the research framework of the study.

The case study findings about the different value outcomes are in line with the study of Ekman et al. (2016) in which the authors suggest that multiple value types are created during VCC process. Besides, the differing value outcomes of the same brand alliance for the partner brands validate the premise of Vargo and Lusch (2008, p.8) about the subjectivity of value: "the value is determined by the beneficiary of service".

6.3.3. Resource Allocation

Resource allocation in the brand alliances is a critical decision made by the marketing managers, which has an impact on the level of resource utilisation in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances. The trade-off between internal usage of the resources and external utilisation in the brand alliances can be measured by calculating the opportunity cost of the resources as recommended by Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018). The risk of wrong resource allocation decisions can be reduced by applying systematic partner selection criteria and using external resources to conduct research about the potential partner brands.

The findings of the study showed that the contribution of technological resources to value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances is manifold. While this type of resources is the medium of exchange and basis of resource integration, technological resources also enable the efficiency of cross-category brand alliances through digital platforms, smart marketing communication and CRM tools. The utilisation of the partner brand's customer data through marketing communications is an indirect value outcome of the value co-creation process of cross-category brand alliances. Still, the brands should be aware of the regulations about data privacy and data protection in the markets they operate to minimise the risks of data misuse.

The utilisation of technological resources in the brand alliances to create value is consistent with the study findings of Srivastava and Gnyawali (2011) in which the authors claim breakthrough innovation is generated through a diverse portfolio of technological resources in an alliance. Although innovation is not the only value outcome of the cross-category brand alliances in the case study findings, it is generated when one of the partner brands allocate a higher level of technological resources to the brand alliances such as in the case of Alpha1 (Telecom), Alpha3 (Fuel and Energy), and Alpha5 (Pharmaceutical).

6.3.4. Partner Brand Selection

The partner selection opportunity cost model that is developed in the discussion of the findings section (Section 5.7.2) can be used by marketing managers in their partner brand selection decision for the brand alliances. Still, the model is guidance for evaluating the quantifiable values of the brand alliance. The final decision about the partner brand selection depends on the specific partner selection criteria of the brands. The findings present that, the partner selection criteria of the brands depend on the type of the cross-category brand alliance, the level of resource allocation, and tenure of the brand alliance. According to the findings, partner selection criteria are categorised into “the fit between attributes of the brands” and “the expected attributes of the partner brand”. Among the fit attributes, customer segment fit has more priority for the brands in their partner brand selection. In addition to the attributes such as brand awareness and brand image, the brands look for the market reach of the partner brand in the expectation of reaching the customers in the target regions of the brand.

Different than the past studies which listed product category fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Lanseng and Olsen 2012; Norman 2016), brand image fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Riley et al. 2015; Gross and Wiedmann 2015), brand quality difference (Yan and Cao 2017), country-of-origin fit (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2018), strategic fit (Bierly III and Gallagher 2007), and brand fit (Simonin and Ruth 1998; Van der Lans et al. 2014; Decker and Baade 2016; Norman 2017) as the most important partner brand selection criteria, customer segment fit stands out as a more critical partner brand selection criterion in the case study findings. This finding is due to the focus of the study on the insights of marketing managers of partner brands who emphasised the influence of the match between partner brand’s customer needs and demands on the success of the cross-category brand alliances.

While the brand fit and brand familiarity influence the partner brand selection and alliance outcomes as proposed by past studies of Van der Lans et al. (2014) and Norman (2017), the influence of these dimensions varies according to the size of the brand alliance. Major brands (in terms of brand equity) such as Alpha1 and Alpha2 consider brand fit and brand familiarity criterion more carefully in their brand alliances with partner brands with a similar level of brand equity. This finding is an additional contribution to the brand alliance studies that investigate fit between the brands.

As the brands in a cross-category brand alliance are from different product categories, partner brands aim to find brands that have products or services that would complement theirs which would improve the customer experience and thus customer satisfaction. Another partner brand selection criterion that is identified in the case study findings is resource complementarity between the partner brands which enhance the partner brands' service offerings. This finding is in line with past studies of Lin et al. (2009), Soda and Furlotti (2017), and Chen et al. (2017). In parallel to the case study findings, Soda and Furlotti (2017) proposed that complementary resources and capabilities lead to superior value creation in interfirm collaborations. Future research can investigate these criteria (customer segment fit, resource complementarity) of partner brand selection to understand their influence on the tangible and intangible outcomes of the brand alliances.

6.3.5. Potential Risks

Despite the aims and expectations of achieving competitive advantage by forming cross-category brand alliances, there are potential risks that the brands should be aware of during the value co-creation process. The risks that might occur during the value co-creation process and the ways to minimise the risks are identified in the study. The risk of the spillover effect of the negative customer experience to the partner brand is identified in the findings as identified in past studies (Baumgarth 2004; Votalato and Unnava 2006).

While Baumgarth (2004) identified factors such as product fit, brand fit, and brand familiarity, which influences the level of spill-over, these factors are not evident in the case study findings. This finding is due to the differences in the data sample, Baumgarth (2004) focused on consumer evaluations of the brand alliances rather than the insights from brand managers. The case study findings are more in line with the study of Votolato and Unnava (2006) in which the authors claim negative spill-over occurs due to incompetence or immorality of the partner brand. Although the cases of immorality are not identified in the findings, the incompetence of the partner brand's human resources in terms of alliance management and customer service causes negative spillover of information and attitude to the other brand in the alliance according to the marketing managers interviewed.

However, the importance of interaction between the partner brands and internal communications during the brand alliance is determined as a way the brands use to decrease the spillover risk in the value co-creation process. The risks of an abrupt end of the brand alliance, dependency on the partner brand in terms of exclusivity' and the issues about regulations are identified as risks being prevented by contractual conditions. Thus, the significance of legal departments as a resource to be utilised in the value co-creation process is identified.

6.4. Contribution of the Study

6.4.1. Contribution to Theory

Firstly, the study contributed to the S-D logic literature by analysing the value co-creation process in the brand alliance context from a B2B perspective. Although there were studies that explored the B2B relations between suppliers and companies in the value co-creation process (Kohtamäki and Rajala 2016; Möller and Halinen 2018, Waseem et al. 2018; Chang et al. 2018), the studies that investigated the value co-creation process in brand alliances are limited. Thus, the study is novel in terms of approaching the brand alliance context from S-D logic point of view.

While the study used RBV theory as the underpinning theory to explain the reasons of brands for utilising partner brand's resources to achieve the competitive advantage (Das and Teng 2000), the findings showed that the values co-created during the brand alliances not only enable the access to partner brand's resources but also help to leverage the brand's existing resources. Therefore, the integration of value co-creation with RBV theory in the analysis of brand alliances contributed to the theories of the firm by identifying the ways of achieving competitive advantage in the brand alliance context.

The study contributed to the brand alliance literature by analysing cross-category brand alliances from S-D perspective. While the past studies about the brand alliances investigated the outcome of the alliances in terms of customer perceptions (Rao et al. 1999; Bluemelhuber et al. 2007; Ahn et al. 2009; Lafferty 2009; Smarandescu et al.

2013; Decker and Baade 2016; Koschmann and Bowman 2018) and firm performance (Lunnan and Haugland 2008; Cristoffersen et al. 2014; Cao and Yan 2017), the value outcomes of cross-category the brand alliances are identified and categorised in this study.

By integrating S-D logic with RBV theory, the resource portfolio of the brands is analysed through operant and operand classification of resources. Value outcomes are not restricted to tangible outcomes or financial terms as in the previous brand alliance studies thanks to the application of the value-in-use approach in S-D logic. Moreover, the "brand resource portfolio" term is introduced to define the unique pool of resources that are allocated by partner brands in a cross-category brand alliance as a contribution to RBV literature. Another contribution to brand alliance literature is the exploration of resource allocation levels by partner brands from an RBV perspective. Besides, the influence of resource allocation levels on value outcomes is investigated by integrating S-D terminology with RBV theory in the brand alliance context.

Moreover, different types of cross-category brand alliances are identified in the literature review section, and the classification is applied in the findings section of the study. Furthermore, this research contributed to the studies about brand alliances that are mostly conducted in developed country settings (Cao and Sorescu 2013; Bouncken and Fredrich 2015; Chaimbaretto et al. 2016); Yan and Cao 2017) with findings from an emerging country context. In addition, the choice of case studies from five different industries is a significant contribution to the brand alliance literature in which the inclusion of more than two industries is scarce.

This study contributed to theory by analysing and classifying the different types of values that are co-created during the brand alliances. Contrary to the quantitative studies about the brand alliance outcome (Cao and Yan 2017; Koschmann and Bowman 2018) in which the financial results are compared, the qualitative analysis in this study assisted in identifying the different types of values that are co-created as an outcome of brand alliances.

Although the perceptions of the customers are not investigated, the values co-created by partner brands for the customers as an outcome of the cross-category brand alliances are identified. The classification of cross-category brand alliances is another contribution to the brand alliance literature, which is a scarcely researched topic (Smarandescu et al. 2013). The categories of cross-category brand alliances are determined by exploring past studies about brand alliances. The classification is applied to the case studies of the research.

Another contribution of the study is the integration of different value co-creation process frameworks of B2C perspective to the brand alliance context. The value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances is validated by applying the value co-creation process frameworks of Gummesson and Mele (2010), Grönroos and Hele (2010), and Bharti et al. (2015). Five pillars of the value co-creation process that is developed by Bharti et al. (2015) for the value co-creation between firms and customers are acknowledged in the brand alliance context in this study by identifying the elements of the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances.

Besides, the value co-creation roles of brand alliance partners in the value co-creation process are identified in the study by validating the similarity of roles with the firm-customer value co-creation context (Agrawal and Rahman 2015). On the other hand, the involvement of the customers both in the interaction and value co-creation process with the partner brands verified the foundational premise of Vargo and Lusch (2004) which claims that the customer is always part of the value co-creation in the S-D logic.

6.4.2. Contribution to Practice

The study contributes to practice by identifying the resources that are critical on the value co-creation process, the partner selection criteria in the cross-category brand alliances, and the importance of interaction between the partner brands for the success of value co-creation process. Furthermore, the potential risks in the value co-creation process that the brands should be aware of are described, which will assist the marketing managers in taking the proactive measures to decrease the impact of the potential risks. Taking the high failure rate of brand alliances into consideration (Farrely et al. 2005), identifying potential risks before the formation of brand alliances is critical for the managers of the brands.

Marketing managers should be aware of the fact that cross-category brand alliances need a significant level of human resources commitment to achieving direct value outcomes such as financial value customer satisfaction. The contribution of human resources to the brand alliance is from different levels of a company:

- At the top management level, top managers contribution eases the process of brand alliance formation. When the top managers act as facilitators at the brand alliance formation stage, the possibly high financial resource allocation level decreases, and it contributes to increased financial value at the end of the brand alliance.
- At the marketing department level, the know-how and experience of the employees act as operant resources to utilise other resources of the company in the value co-creation process.
- At the sales point level, the service to the end consumers plays a critical role to achieve the aim of providing a better customer experience by integrating the services of partner brands. The quality of customer service provision at the sales point contributes to the co-created value of customer satisfaction for partner brands.

Therefore, marketing managers should involve and organise different levels of human resources in the company before and during the brand alliances for a better value co-creation process. The information and details of a brand alliance should be communicated correctly by using the internal communications channels to increase the awareness about the partner brand, and the scope of the cross-category brand alliance.

Considering the influence of different levels of resource allocation on value outcomes, managers should carefully decide on which resources to be contributed to the brand alliances. The resource allocation decisions and the aims of the partner brands about the brand alliance should be analysed before the launch of the brand alliance to improve the value co-creation process. As an example, if one of the partner brands aim to achieve innovation as one of the value outcomes of the brand alliance, a higher level of technological resource allocation from at least one of the partner brands should be agreed at the formation stage of the brand alliance. Identification of aims and levels of resource allocation at the early stages of value co-creation process will help the managers to achieve the value outcomes they expect from the brand alliances.

While the findings highlight various types of resources that are critical on the value co-creation process, the significance of marketing resources and capabilities is an important insight for the marketing managers both for partner selection and resource allocation decisions. The findings suggest that brands with strong marketing resources and capabilities have the ability to manage the value co-creation process without contributing financial resources to the brand alliance. On the other hand, the marketing managers of the brands with smaller marketing budgets can use the brand alliances as a way to leverage their marketing resources and capabilities.

Another critical insight into the findings for the managers is the support of a partner brand to solve the problems that the brand would not be able to overcome with its own resources. The marketing managers can look for potential brands from different categories when there is an issue that cannot be solved with internal resources. Even though the brand alliance is based on marketing terms, the expertise of the partner brand might help to co-create other values during the brand alliance for the brand to solve its existing problems.

The findings show the importance of interaction between the partner brands during the brand alliance to co-create value. The marketing managers should keep the interaction close with the partner brand from the beginning of the brand alliance until the end of the agreed brand alliance period to improve the value co-creation process. The close interaction between the partner brand managers will not only assist the aim of synergy which is a critical factor for the brand alliance outcome but also decrease the risk of miscommunication of brand alliance details which might lead to negative customer experience.

The partner selection criteria that are identified in this study will help the marketing managers of the brands in their choice of potential brands in their future cross-category brand alliances. Besides, the suggestion about the opportunity cost measurement for the resource allocation is helpful to calculate the expected level of resource utilisation in the brand alliances. The partner selection framework based on the opportunity cost calculation is a useful tool for the marketing managers before making the final decision between the potential alliance partner brands.

The findings show that the involvement of customers in the value co-creation process has the potential to improve the value outcomes of cross-category brand alliances. Marketing managers should look for ways to increase the interaction with the customers at different stages of the brand alliance to receive feedback about the brand alliance. The information flow between partner brands about customer feedback should be flawless as well to decrease the risk of negative spill-over if a customer receives a bad service from one of the partner brands. The ways of interaction can be improved by allocating more technological resources and providing channels to the customers to submit their feedback via websites, mobile apps, or social media channels.

Although accessing the customer database of the partner brand through the cross-category brand alliance is a valuable outcome for the brands, the marketing managers should be aware of the regulations about the data protection to minimize the risks about data misuse.

6.5. Limitations and Further Research

Despite the contributions of this study to literature and practice by addressing the value co-creation process in the cross-category brand alliances, it has certain limitations which should be considered for future research.

This study investigated the cross-category brand alliances, where two brands come together for marketing partnership purposes. However, there are other types of cross-category brand alliances in which more than two brands are present. Moreover, not all types of cross-category brand alliances, such as cause-related brand alliances, are analysed in the study. In addition, the cross-category brand alliances that are production-oriented can be studied to understand the value co-creation process in a goods-dominant alliance. Future studies can study other types of cross-category brand alliances that are not analysed in this research to compare the findings in different contexts. Furthermore, the value co-creation process framework can be applied to other types of brand alliances to check its applicability and generalisability.

Although the participants of the interviews were chosen to reflect their expertise and experience in their product category, one individual's views might not represent all the perspectives of the brand's actions and views for the brand alliance process. In future research, more participants can be interviewed to increase the validity of the findings. Also, the final value co-creation process framework can be used as a basis of a questionnaire, and the number of participants can be increased by quantitative research to test the model.

In the study, the professionals in the marketing department of the brands are chosen as the interview participants. The findings show that the brand alliance outcomes are related to not only marketing departments but also other departments such as finance and sales. Further studies can include professionals from the sales and finance departments in the data sample to gather insights about their involvement in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances and the influence of brand alliance outcomes on these departments

While the role of the researcher as an insider provides additional insights about the case studies (Section 3.3.1), the insider role of the researcher is another limitation of the study. Future research about the VCC process in the cross-category brand alliances can be conducted by outsiders to compare the findings of this study with the findings from the outsider's perspective. On the other hand, other insiders can research with the insider perspective, so further in-depth investigations can take place to enrich detailed knowledge on resources integration and VCC processes in the cross-category brand alliances.

This research is conducted in one emerging country setting with brands from different product categories. The economic conditions and regulations of different countries might influence the value co-creation process and thus, the types of values that are co-created in the cross-category brand alliances. The same product categories and global brands can be investigated in other country settings, such as a developed country where hosts the global companies that are used in this research. This type of research would provide a cross-cultural perspective to the research and examine the cross-validity and generalizability of the findings by multi-country research. Although the country-of-origin of brands was not a significant criterion for partner selection of the brands according to the findings of this study, the cross-category brand alliances across borders can be investigated to explore the country-of-origin impact on the value co-creation process.

While the findings showed that the partner brands in the alliance co-create value both for the firms and the customers, the end consumers are not included in the data collection and analysis of the research. Furthermore, the value co-creation roles of the customers in the brand alliance context is not identified even though the value co-creation roles of the brands are defined. The implications of the study about the values co-created for the customers, and the roles of the customers in the value co-creation process during the cross-category brand alliances can be explored in the future studies by including end consumers of the partner brands of the cross-category brand alliances in the analysis.

In this study, the significance of resource allocation decision on value co-creation process is identified, and the opportunity cost calculation of Chiambaretto and Wassmer (2018) is suggested as a method to determine the brand alliance partner and level of resource allocation to the brand alliance. However, the method is not applied to the examples in the case studies. In future studies, the opportunity cost calculation can be used as a method to test the choice between different partner brands, and the impact on the brand alliance outcome.

Moreover, in this study, the values that are co-created for the brands are identified. However, the values co-created are not measured with quantifiable methods. While some values co-created in the brand alliance are not quantifiable such as new technologies; the quantifiable values such as financial value, customer loyalty, brand equity can be investigated in the future quantitative studies to analyse the impact level of resource contribution on the brand alliance outcomes and values co-created.

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Appendix 1: Chapter 1 Tables and Figures

Table 46 Global Top 10 Brands in BrandZ List

BrandZ Ranking	Brand	Category	Country
1	Google	Technology & Media	USA
2	Apple	Technology & Electronics	USA
3	Amazon	Technology & E-Commerce	USA
4	Microsoft	Technology	USA
5	Tencent	Technology & Investment	China
6	Facebook	Technology & Media	USA
7	Visa	Finance	USA
8	McDonald's	Fast-Food	USA
9	Alibaba Group	Technology & E-Commerce	China
10	AT&T	Technology & Telecommunications	USA

(Adapted from WPP 2018)

Table 47 Types of Brand Categorisation

Brand Categorisation	Related Articles
Functional / Expressive	Lanseng and Olsen (2012)
Symbolic	Ahn and Sung (2012)
Hedonic / Utilitarian	Riley, Charlton and Wason (2015)
Product Category	Smarandescu et al. (2013)

Table 48 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Types and Related Studies

Cross-Category Brand Alliance Type	**Example**
Co-Branding	Dr.Pepper and Bonne Bell, Alexander Wang and H&M, Nike and Apple for Nike+ (Bernazzani 2018); Amazon and Visa (Hammett 2018); McDonald's and Monopoly (Verheul 2017); Lego and Shell (Kosin 2017).
Sponsorship	Coca Cola, McDonald's, Visa and the Olympics (Biscaia and Rocha 2018). Chevrolet and Manchester United, Emirates Airlines and AC Milan (Unlucan 2015) Roger Federer and Nike (Payne 2018)
Cause-Brand Alliance	Target and Unicef (Bernazzani 2018); Adidas and Parley (Hammett 2018).
Complementary Products	Casper and West Elm, Nike and Apple for Nike+ (Bernazzani 2018); Leica and Huawei (The New Nation 2018); Amazon and Visa (Hammett 2018); Spotify and Vodafone (Ingham 2013; Ingham 2015); Spotify and Uber (Taylor 2015).

Figure 36 Co-Branding Brand Alliance Example

(Bernazzani 2018)

Figure 37 Cross-Category Brand Alliance between McDonald's and Monopoly

(Carter 2016)

Figure 38 Target and Unicef Brand Alliance

(Bernazzani 2018)

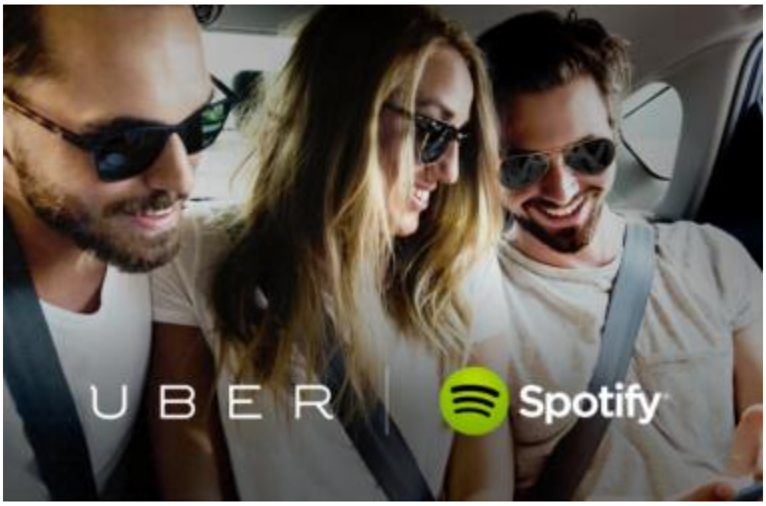
Figure 39 Nike & Apple Brand Alliance

(Bernazzani 2018)

Figure 40 Amazon and Visa Brand Alliance

(Loudenback 2017)

Figure 41 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Example between Uber and Spotify

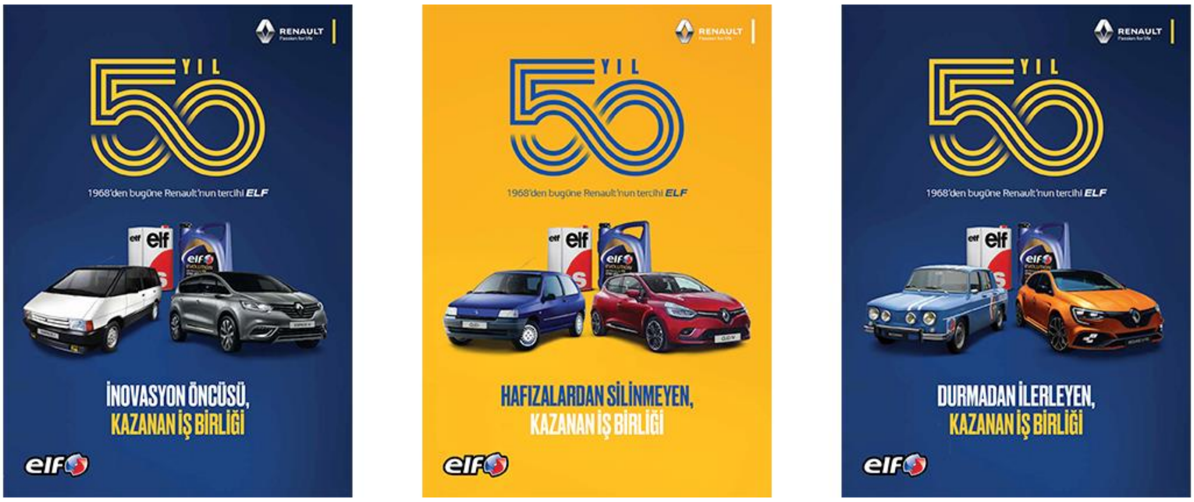


(Taylor 2015)

Figure 42 Example of Failed Cross-Category Brand Alliance

(Matthew 2010)

Figure 43 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Example between Automotive and Fuel Brands



(Total 2018)

Figure 44 Co-Branding Brand Alliance Example from Turkey

(Garanti Bonus 2019)

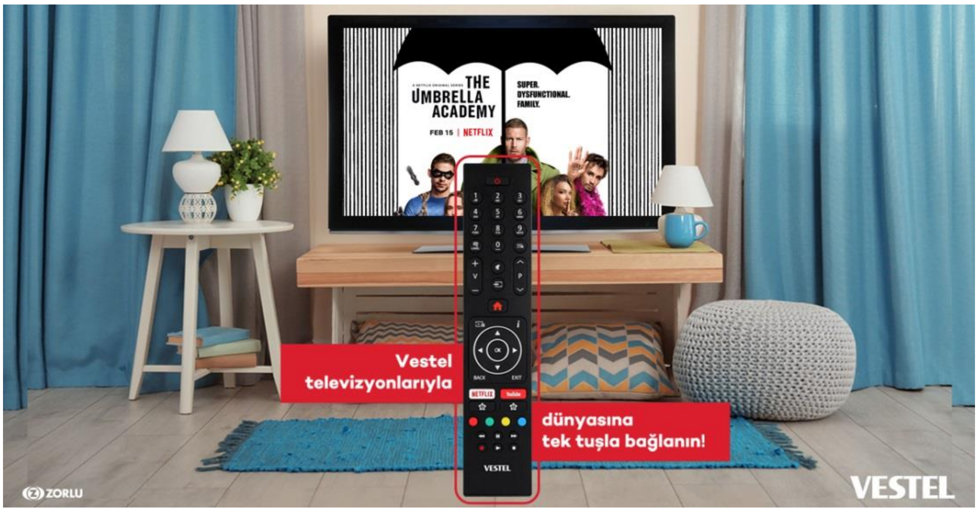
Figure 45 Sponsorship Example from Turkey

(Milliyet 2016)

Figure 46 Cause-related Brand Alliance Example

(Retail Turkiye 2018)

Figure 47 Complementary Products Brand Alliance Example from Turkey



(Vestel 2019)

Table 49 Cross-Category Brand Alliance Examples from Turkey

Year	**Brand (Category)**	**Partner brand (Category)**	**Brand Alliance Type**
2003	Turkcell (Telecom.)	BP (Fuel)	Co-Branding (Sales Promotion)
2010	Turkcell (Telecom.)	McDonald's (Fast-food)	Co-Branding (Sales Promotion)
2010	Arcelik (Technology)	Finish (FMCG)	Co-Branding, Complementary Products
2000-2023	Turkish Airlines (Travel)	Garanti (Banking)	Co-Branding (Credit Card)
2009-2019	Türk Telekom (Telecom.)	Galatasaray (Sports)	Sponsorship (Stadium name & football shirt)
2010-2017	Banat (FMCG)	TEGV (Charity – Education)	Cause-related
2010-2018	Maylo (FMCG)	TEGV (Charity – Education), Migros (Retail)	Cause-related
2011-2012	Burger King (Fast Food)	Monopoly (Entertainment)	Co-Branding
2016	Fenerbahce (Sports Club)	Hello Kitty (Clothing)	Sponsorship & Co-branding
2016-2017	Dalin (FMCG)	ACEV (Charity – Education)	Cause-related
2017-2019	Cinemaximum (Entertainment)	Opet (Fuel & Energy), Migros (Retail), Burger King (Fast-food)	Co-Branding (Sales Promotion)
2016-2019	QNB Finansbank (Banking)	Trabzonspor (Sports)	Sponsorship
2016-2019	Vestel (Technology)	Netflix (Entertainment)	Co-Branding, Complementary Products
2015-2019	Turkish Airlines	Galatasaray (Sports), Basaksehir (Sports)	Sponsorship
2018	Avis (Rent-a-car)	Fenerbahce (Sports)	Sponsorship
2019	Garanti Bonus (Credit Card)	Shell (Fuel), ETS Tur (Travel), Cilek Mobilya (Home Furniture)	Co-Branding (Sales Promotion)
2019-2020	Doga Sigorta (Insurance)	Galatasaray (Sports)	Sponsorship

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Part 1 (Theme: The Brand)

- Can you give some information about yourself?
- What is the mission, vision, and philosophy of your company?
- Can you explain your company's size and sector?
- What is your current business strategy and activities?
- Please provide some information about your marketing activities – what are your objectives and strategies?

Part 2 (Theme: The Cross-Category Brand Alliance Strategy)

- Do you make brand alliances with other brands?
- What type of brand alliances do you have? (Within your sector or with other sector brands?)
- How do you form a brand alliance with other brands?
- How often do you make brand alliances?
- How long your alliances last?
- Why do you need to make an alliance? (Haksever et al. 2004)
- How do you choose your partner brand?
- Do your competitors also make brand alliances?

Part 3 (Theme: Nature of the relationship)

- For how long do you know the partner?
- How was the firm introduced to the partner?
- What do you know about the partner, its needs, resources, strategies, and business context?
- How did you develop all that you know about the partner? Through interaction?
- Did you invest to develop this knowledge about your partner?
- What are the assets used in the relationship?
- How do you interact with your partner? (face-to-face, through other firms etc.)

(Marcos-Cuevas et al. 2016)

- Do you perceive the common interest for the long term?
- How important is to satisfy the needs of the partner?
- Who controls the relationship in the alliance?
- Who has more power in the alliance?
- What is the extent of engagement with the partner?
- What is the level of participation from both partners?
- Are there any other actors in the alliance other than brand partners?
- How do you coordinate your activities during the alliance?

Part 4 (Theme: Value Co-Creation Type)

- What are your activities with the partner in terms of marketing, branding during the alliance?
- What are your expectations about these marketing activities?
- What are the benefits and impacts of an alliance in your marketing & branding strategy?

Part 5 (Theme: Value Co-Creation)

- What are you willing to pay/give in an alliance? (Porter 1985)
- What are the transactions and exchange between two partners? (Zeithaml 1988, Vargo et al. 2008)
- What are the benefits expected and achieved? (Zeithaml 1988)
- What are the sacrifices made during those transactions? (Zeithaml 1988)
- How do you know that you gained a benefit from the alliance? What are your criteria? (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008, 2016)
- What is the contribution of each partner to the alliance outcome? How do you evaluate your contribution? (Dixon 1990, Vargo et al. 2008)
- How do you evaluate the experience during the interaction with the partner? Can you mention any examples? What would they suggest making the alliance better in order to have better benefit? Is the interaction planned?) (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016)
- What your value proposition for the alliance? How or to what extent your

partner intervenes in alliance value proposition? Which actors participate during the interaction? (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016)

- How is value proposition achieved? Which actors intervene? (Kohtamaki and Rajala 2016)
- Which type of value is used in the alliance? What value do you co-create with the partner?
- How can we define your value co-creation type?
    - 1.co-producer
    - 2.co-distributor
    - 3.co-promoter
    - 4.co-manufacturer
    - 5.co-consumer
    - 6.experience creator
    - 7.co-innovator
    - 8.co-ideator
    - 9.co-evaluator
    - 10.co-designer
    - 11.co-tester
- Would you like to add any other type of co-creation relation among your alliances?

Part 6 (Theme: VCC Process)

- How is the value co-created during the alliance?
- Which processes (human, technology, and procedures) are used in the alliance?
- Which roles does your company play in the alliance?
- Which resources do you put in the alliance?
- Which capabilities do you utilize during the alliance?

Part 7 (Theme: Value Co-Creation Outcomes)

- Do you learn specific skills, ways during an alliance?
- What do you learn from your partners?
- Did you learn things that developed your skills, the way you do things, the

way you operate your activities?

- Are they useful for your later relations and operations? (in the network, against competitors, with suppliers, partners)

Appendix 3: List of Delta Brands & Companies

Table 50 List of Delta Brands

Other Brands	Category
Delta1	Technology - Mobile
Delta2	Telecommunications
Delta3	FMCG - Drink
Delta4	Travel - Rent-a-car
Delta5	FMCG - Food
Delta6	Retail - Supermarket
Delta7	Entertainment - TV
Delta8	Entertainment - Family
Delta9	FMCG - Drink
Delta10	3rd party - Agency
Delta11	Banking
Delta12	3rd party - Agency
Delta13	Sports
Delta14	Sports - Retail
Delta15	FMCG - Food
Delta16	Sports - Retail
Delta17	FMCG - Food
Delta18	Retail - Luxury
Delta19	Automotive
Delta20	Tobacco
Delta21	Automotive
Delta22	Tobacco
Delta23	FMCG - Food
Delta24	Tobacco
Delta25	Tobacco
Delta26	Tobacco
Delta27	Tobacco
Delta28	Tobacco
Delta29	3rd party - Agency
Delta30	FMCG - Food
Delta31	FMCG - Food
Delta32	FMCG - Food
Delta33	FMCG - Food
Delta34	FMCG - Drink
Delta35	FMCG - Food
Delta36	FMCG - Food
Delta37	FMCG - Food
Delta38	Entertainment
Delta39	Tobacco

Delta40	Alcohol
Delta41	Alcohol
Delta42	Alcohol
Delta43	Sports
Delta44	Sports
Delta45	Entertainment
Delta46	Technology - Household
Delta47	Industrial Products
Delta48	3rd party - Agency
Delta49	Technology - Payment
Delta50	Entertainment - Music
Delta51	Entertainment - Music
Delta52	Entertainment
Delta53	Technology
Delta54	3rd party - Agency
Delta55	Technology
Delta56	Pharmaceutical
Delta57	Pharmaceutical
Delta58	Technology - Corporate
Delta59	Service - Car Fleet
Delta60	Service - Car Fleet
Delta61	Service - Concierge
Delta62	Technology - Corporate
Delta63	FMCG - Food
Delta64	Service - Car Fleet
Delta65	Service - Car Fleet
Delta66	Fuel and Gas
Delta67	Fuel and Gas
Delta68	Telecommunications
Delta69	Banking
Delta70	Entertainment - Radio
Delta71	Umbrella Company
Delta72	3rd party - Agency
Delta73	Banking
Delta74	Banking
Delta75	Construction
Delta76	Construction
Delta77	Construction
Delta78	Umbrella Company
Delta79	Telecommunications
Delta80	E-Commerce
Delta81 & Delta 82	Technology

Appendix 4: Sample Transcript (Beta4 Interview)

-*First of all, thanks for accepting.*

-I thank you, for including us (smiling).

-*Firstly, could you please give some information about yourself? Then, I would say the company but actually about the club. Overall mission, vision, philosophy, size.*

-When we think about the company type, the clubs are actually anonymous shared ownership type companies.

-*What are the general business strategy activities? What are your goals about marketing activities? If you can summarise these.*

-Okay. I was born in XYZ in XYZ. I finished Economics in English at Istanbul University. Later for a period, I have worked for Delta43 Sports Club. I have started working for a consulting company named XYZ. After that, I gave a break to my work life and went to Italy for my master's degree. I have finished the International Business and Management master's degree. I have written my thesis. I have worked there for some time and returned to Turkey. When I came back, I have worked for Delta43 again for about 1 year. After that, Beta4's Delta45 project was starting and I became part of the team at that period. I have been working for Beta4 for about 4 years. Even if I had a sports club experience before; regarding the principles, the structure, as a sports club Beta4 has a very different identity and values. The perception style and management style of the sports clubs in Turkey is a bit vicious cycle for long years. They are very traditional and regarding marketing, they are not trying innovative approaches or trials. Thus, Beta4's turn of strategy and vision to a different route after the stadium innovation process was a very deep experience for me as well. Beta4's most important value as a club comes from its own values, deep-rooted historical structure, town culture; and all strategic plans, communication activities and marketing activities are based on those and fed by those values. It doesn't become part of any project or plan that contradict with those. That's why while making very innovative things, changing its vision; it is not in something that contradicts with its past. This is very valuable for us because our fans, our town, our history are more valuable than the daily successes. Sportive success, marketing activity, commercial income are of course the indispensable parts of a corporate company, professional structure but as I said we don't want to be part of something that contradicts or goes out of those values. Beta4, I believe with the professional sports people, has around 1.000 personnel. Other than that, in the sector it is in now; when we think about the rivals' positions, it is in very different strategies and plans. Let me tell that process with Alpha1 if you want.

-*Yes, actually globalisation.*

-Yes, globalisation. There is something working. When the new stadium project started, there is made a naming sponsorship with Alpha1. It started as 10 years, it should be 10 plus 5, yes stadium was planned as 10 plus 5 and it started with shirt sponsorship. I would not be fair if we only talk about Alpha1. We have globally valuable main sponsors like Delta46, Delta47, Delta16, Delta9. The stadium is at a very important geographic position in the world, at a very strategic point. Near the Bosphorus, in the middle of Istanbul, at the centre of all touristic attractions; it is a stadium that attracts anyone foreign or local at any age group not only the fans, everyone can see it and be part of it. It was inevitable to renovate it and when the stadium construction started, it was expected that it would have latency more than planned because of its location. That is why to manage the fans' expectation and impatience, it was important to make a very correct communication plan. We had great support from our sponsors about that point. Some activities to manage this at those times, the most important one was "XYZ". You would remember, "XYZ" talked with the fans during that period to manage the impatience of them, made them part of the process constantly, shared what we will do, where we are, the course of the construction live, at a point by making them part of it; we have protected ourselves from the possible negative reactions.

-*It was something Alpha1 had?*

-It was something Alpha1 managed… But of course, these are the works that are made by Beta4's feedback and directions. While doing that, our other sponsors made similar activities. Construction period, at the period when we coming to the end, "We have waited so long bro", "We are coming back home" started. Films that are in the same tone are made at Delta46, Delta47, Alpha1 and people –already seasonal tickets sales were finished years ago- people were impatiently counting the days to come back home and the big day came. We have opened our stadium in 2016 in April. We had 3 games remaining. We have opened our stadium by playing those last 3 games and…

-*The championship came…*

-We became champions. The following year, the championship came again. This is, of course, the result of a strategy that is planned for long years and expected. Nothing was surprising here, in means of marketing it was not but it was important to make it sustainable and to make it continue for us. Our researches show us Beta4 as a sports club, is a club fed by great sympathy by other team supporters also, loved, respected; President XX YY again as the most reliable president in the sector with the commercial activities, very radical marketing communications, he has won the respect and appreciation from everyone. We needed to make new activities in the following period. After being successful in Turkey, we have decided to set up a strategy based on globalisation after taking the interest of a bit Europe and the East. In the market research, we have conducted by asking "What kind of strategies we should choose?" we have realised we need to attract the women fans' interest, we realised the activities about children should be increased. Following that, we have realised we need to make an existence plan for the social responsibility projects; and actually as a result of these planning, we have climbed to top 5 after the biggest global companies of the world not only Turkey as a sports club with the most prestigious awards in marketing world such as Crystal Apple, Felis et cetera. As a corporate company which won the greatest number of awards. I believe it was a revolutionary success in Turkey for a sports club. It is satisfactory for us to see the communication we have made is realised and attracted attention from other sectors and in the marketing world seriously. At that point, we have been invited to several international seminars about the stadium construction process, marketing communication process and the projects we have won awards et cetera and we have told our story as a case. I can summarise like this. It became an introduction (smiling).

-If we pass to the brand alliance part. Actually, for you it goes on a bit like sponsorship, it might be out of sponsorship as well, do you make brand alliances? It is a bit certain but what kind of brand alliances you make? Is it within your sector or out of the sector? How that process goes on? What kind of process you follow when you are making a brand alliance? How long do the brand alliances go on and why do you need it? Why do you make that kind of alliances? Can you mention about these a bit? For example, how do you choose the brand? Is it important that they fit to your values? And similar... What kind of criteria you have and do your rivals make similar things? Do they make brand alliances?

-Yes… Like this, we can think Beta4 as a political party in terms of its influential power because its social value is people's way of defining themselves. People do not define themselves as brand, but they can identify themselves as a club. "I am Beta4er" they say. It is like saying "I am part of this view", "I believe in this religion". Being a team fan is the type of people's defining themselves spiritually in a way. In that way… It is like this all around the world. People identify themselves with the club and you have an impact in social meaning. According to the research we have conducted with a political party consultant Delta48, according to the outcome, if Beta4 was a political party it had the potential to run for the government if they haven't done something ridiculous. What does that mean? You have an influence on millions. It means the smallest social media share; the little marketing activity has a conversion from millions. When corporate companies tell about a success case, they mention about reach to 1 million; we sometimes mention about billion. This is something formidable. This is the power of course, a sports club on one side, and corporate companies from very different sectors on the other side. When you think for the corporate companies it is something very attractive for them. That's why usually we are the side who accepts. Usually the brands reach us but of course as our values are very important; we prefer the brands that correspond to our values, which is suitable to the global strategy that we have planned for the following term, that can add value to us as a brand and that would not contradict with us in any way. In that way, it is very valuable for us if the brand is the leader in its sector if they do not have any negative perception on their side, if they correspond to Beta4' social values. For example, in Alpha1 case; Alpha1 was a brand that tried to find its place in the telecommunications sector while there was a very serious rival in Turkey, while there was no mention of Alpha1. Actually, now in the telecommunications sector, generally people trust the brand without looking at A or B, they do not have the intention to change the brand if they haven't experienced something very negative, very extreme. We have that habit generally on the customer side. Alpha1 was a very new brand for the people. It is also valid for the other telecommunication companies. Even if they have proved themselves in the world, they have a very serious rival in Turkey. They have the need to create a very deep emotional bond on the customer side. They need to make an investment to create that loyalty, they need to develop a strategy. The biggest examples of this in the world is the investment in sports because as I said sports has the social impact as a political party; it has the power of creating an emotional bond with people. Alpha1 was aware that they needed sponsorship in that meaning. During the stadium construction, there was also a serious infrastructure investment. There was a serious necessity in terms of technological infrastructure. It cannot be more correct sponsorship than telecommunications rather than X, Y, Z sectors if we have the claim to have a smart stadium and as the work is at very high costs. While they want to create loyalty through us, we needed this type of requirement. In terms of that, it was corresponding highly, globally, the visions of the managers are corresponding to each other, the managers at that time are looking at the same side in terms of philosophy, it was a sponsorship that can be met in direction with the expectations. When we look at this point, actually when it is asked “which brand you think of when you hear sponsor?” in that Delta48 research, the answer was Alpha1 –it was around 70% I guess- including the other team fans. This is Alpha1’s success. It is the indication of high conversion of the sponsorship with Alpha1. We think we had a great contribution to them in terms of this. We also think we had serious support from Alpha1 in terms of infrastructure investment, communication activities.

-Alpha1 is a long-term example but generally how long do your alliances continue? Not all of them are as long as Alpha1 I think.

-Yes. I have specified that for now. Generally, Beta4’ sponsorship relation is based on Win-win rule. I have worked for other clubs as well. Thinking about the clubs I have worked for, or as I am in close relationship with others I can say, the clubs see sponsors as a source of income. There is an agreement that is signed on the table and there is money transferred into the bank account and in a way the story is left idle there. That is not loyalty alliance there. This is very different in Beta4, so ethical. If we have a sponsor in one sector, we are not coming together with a rival or a brand that would disturb them not only for sponsorship but also in a project or important cooperation; we also don’t want our name to be used. Because for us the sponsorship means putting an effort together for the same goal and to be remembered together if we don’t have any major problems in the long term. Delta46 example is perfect for this. They say “legendary sponsor Delta46 is always with Beta4” because Delta46 is on Beta4 shirt as long as we know ourselves, even older than us. It is also a gain for Delta46 to be remembered like that even on that nostalgic shirts, to be known as Beta4' natural supporter. It is also a global brand, it makes it in different sectors as well, especially in basketball but in Turkey, it is mostly remembered with Beta4. Alpha1 is like that for us now. Delta9 is doing it with all brands, I mean with many in terms of clubs. They do not want to be closer to one of them because of their strategy but as I said for us the brand alliances are minimum for 3 years generally. I will not name it, there might be companies that see it very bold at the first look when we are making sponsorships. Because usually they want to start the way and see what they will do but usually they are happy with the sponsorship they made with us and they extend it themselves. As we know it will be extended from the first place, sometimes we might flex our rules but usually, we start with 3-year contracts because we don't prefer the brand to be remembered with another brand. That's why we prefer to build a long-term relationship and flex it at the points we can use initiative, to support each other and if we will be in something, we ask for permission certainly. We continue in that reciprocal, as I said in terms of the good deed, in that win-win relation. Naturally, our brand alliances last long.

-*We can continue with a specific partner in the next section. Your main partners are obvious, you can give the answers by thinking them. For how long do you know the partner? How the partner was introduced to you? How much do you know about their resources, strategies, business context? While collecting that information, do they tell you or do you make research? I mean. You can think like that: A new brand is coming, for example from the automotive sector, do you make a research about the brand to understand if they fit your values or do they give you information? What types of resources do you use? Do the meetings with that partner continue face-to-face or through another company? Do both parties consider the common interest, or do they think "everyone goes to their way"? How much important to satisfy their demands? It is cooperation together in the end. And for example, there are questions following each other, who is managing the relation there? Who has the power there, on whose side is the power? How much is the participation from both sides? Is there a balance or "one side gives more;*

the other side gives less"? Are there other parties than two parties that manage the cooperation and who makes the coordination in that kind of relationship?

-We know Alpha1 5 years for example and Delta46 is a much longer partnership. No need to talk about all of them one by one.

-*No, it is enough to choose one of them.*

-We can continue with Alpha1 as it is our biggest sponsor, main sponsor. Alpha1 is in our life for 5 years. Our vice president, who is responsible for marketing, XX YY; is an ex-Alpha1 employee. It has progressed through Delta45 but XX YY is also in the process. The relations with Alpha1 started through Delta45 but XX YY became the head of marketing at those times and XX YY pursues the process. He already has close relation with XX YY – Alpha1's CEO at that time. That's why the story is like going into a new process with an old friend rather than meeting a new company. That's why the process progressed in a smooth way because XX YY and Mr. XX were close as well. This sponsorship progressed fast thanks to their closeness, open to each other as much as they can in a reciprocal way, transparent relation, the usage of the resources they have as much as they can, and taking the maximum risks with the initiatives they have; by creating the maximum budgets they can create and with the principal of supporting each other constantly.

-*Mr. XX supports Delta43 I guess.*

-I don't know, it might be. He might support Delta43.

-*Yes, because I remember he was trying to encourage people after their wins while he was CMO before he was CEO.*

-It might be.

-He wasn't getting enough reaction but anyways.

-Hahaha (laughing). We were not doing; we were not feeling like that. As he liked us, he was also coming to the matches. It started like that. How much do we know Alpha1? As I have said, Mr. XX who is the head of our marketing department was working for Alpha1 so he has information about the process, procedures, needs, resources, how the planning is done and how the process continues. That's why when there was something stuck, we already had the answers about how to act, "How to make it quicker?" but in a reciprocal way, we also had good support from their departments as well. Alpha1 has a complicated structure. You already know it very well. Each department has its own dynamic structure and each department is like a company itself. While it has that wide and open structure, the departments are so closed to each other. That's why it takes longer than us for that bureaucratic processes, internal flows, the approval of budgets, the clarification of things. But as Beta4 is the biggest and the main project in terms of sponsorship for them, they also made it flexible as much as they can and actually time to time we were free from the stories quicker that would take much longer normally because as I said the managerial process was in the story and they made the process quicker by the approval of upper management. Yes, this information we already had, the information we had about our partner; and of course, the interaction continued between the sub-departments. Because the upper management knows each other but there are other professional teams that manage this operation. In addition, Alpha1 is a company with high employee circulation. We also have similarly. But as I said we meet face to face. There are weekly meetings normally. They were at us. We have external third-party agencies. We meet with our agencies altogether. They have their own internal meetings, we also have. Sometimes we meet all together, sometimes they come to our meetings, sometimes we go to theirs. We progress the process like that, but all parties take part in the process generally through mail interaction or face to face once or twice a week.

It is important to satisfy our partner's needs. As I have said at the beginning, as the relationship continues on a symbiotic benefit way; they will open our way by taking initiatives as much as we make them happy, that's why we provide more playground to each other. It is like this with all our partners, not only with Alpha1. We have a similar relationship with all of them. Although this is an advantage at some points; it also causes us not to be able to stop at the points we need to stop. Because it is like trying to prevent misunderstanding, or hurting the line at some point, the relation. But there is a balance in a way. It is not a big problem for us to continue like that, we don't have a problem. I can say it is a balanced relationship. As they are Beta4 sponsors, one and others, Beta4 has the last word here. Because Alpha1 Park is also Beta4' stadium. We can accept we are the more dominant side as we have the last word in the balance for the name sponsorship, shirt sponsorship for all, not the initiative of Alpha1, of Delta46 or Delta47 or Delta9. Though, as I have said we try to continue in the principal of reciprocal balance. We never have a higher pitch in the talks that would irritate them, including XX YY. What would we say more? You ask me.

-*There is participation here… Actually, you touched those issues a bit. You said there are other actors, agencies.*

-Yes, we have agencies.

-*As I understand, you provide the coordination or your internal team…*

-Yes, the sponsorship team and marketing team provides the coordination. Alpha1 has a dedicated department called Beta4 Unit. We also have a different process with other teams in terms of the smart stadium but generally, the relation is through us. We also have a communication side in addition to marketing. On the communication side, more strategic statements related to this, how it will be transferred to the press, how they will be placed in the social media – we have a separate account for Alpha1 Park, Beta4 official account; we have mobile applications for Beta4 and Alpha1 Park. They all have different usage aim and different communication lines. They are all parts of the whole, but they address different needs. The communication side has some touches on those statements in that context. Except that, the operation is progressing usually through us.

-*Let me record this and then…This a bit like, what happens while it continues. The previous one was about how you choose, what happens, how you know them. This time it is about during the alliance, what kind of transactions you have, what is sacrificed on each side, how do you measure when it is time for the outcome? Questions about that. What types of values do you try to create, that's also there.*

-As I have always said from the beginning, the values of Beta4 topic; when we are giving briefs to them, we try to work in that way mutually. Of course, this is a sponsorship, the story here starts with the amount we take. They make a loaded investment for us. Alpha1 is a serious technology company, it is also very big in the world. Naturally, they have very important resources, there are hundreds of 3rd parties they work with. We can take support from them in terms of technology, agencies, and many other topics. Here is a stadium and from the internal monitors in the stadium to the internet infrastructure to the cabling, broadcast infrastructure and there are many more topics. Alpha1 has system rooms here. From scoreboard to led, there are many different topics that Alpha1 is interested in, not only the technical teams in the stadium but also the marketing and IT departments. It is really an overall business and naturally, we get support from each of them. In return of it, we provide them logo visibility, we also use their logo on our shirts, and we continue Alpha1's advertisements and communication activities all around the stadium. We also exist together on our social media accounts mutually. Similarly, on the internal monitors, led boards, scoreboards, the activities before the game; we also have a lounge in the stadium, and a studio. We also have some benefits in the museum and the stadium tour for some tariffs of Alpha1. They have lounges during the match, hundreds of seats. These all are the benefits that can be listed under the title of sponsorship rights. When we are making the sponsorship agreement, we are talking about the mutual expectations at the first step. After a valuation, we are working on the benefits we can provide to them. These are all the rights in the stadium, communication rights, logo visibility, logo usage, the activities at the training ground. Some of these are the things that can be bought and some of the benefits are defined as "dream" by them such as travelling with the team, going to away game, advertisement shooting, visiting the training, signed shirt. Also, some seasonal projects like football shoes, giving the shirt they have scored as a gift. We are giving them some rights that they can pursue through their own marketing activities. We also see in some companies like even if they do not have any sponsorship or connection; all a sudden, they can give shirts or match tickets in X company's marketing activity. They can give the right by asking X amount of money for that. We are never in that kind of things because while we have signed a million dollars' worth sponsorship package, it is not acceptable to provide X, Y, Z liras of benefit and get daily revenue out of that. We receive many offers like that, but we don't accept it because these are the special rights allocated for our sponsors. Here is a sponsor which mutually satisfy our needs, which takes the benefits we are providing to them. When we look at the mutual outcome, we get an important return. We also support communication by the way. Although Beta4 has a strong communication power, Alpha1 is making communication to a segment where Beta4 does not exist, to the segment where we do not intersect in other ways. We are trying to meet those people at a common point. As an outcome, as I have said, the fact that Alpha1 is the most known sponsor is the sign that we have contributed strongly to the brand awareness. On our side; the thing that our stadium gets awards around the world, the people's mention about the speed of internet here, about the match experience, and the comparison of us with the venues that are defined as attraction centres in addition to being a sports centre like Allianz Arena, Wembley, O2 arena around the world, the fact that they are collecting the awards from different competitions by using the name in the projects are all thanks to our sponsors in addition to the strategy plan. Because these all need serious financial investments and Beta4 –as other teams- have loans that are accumulated in the past, have problems about the financial structure; the sponsor is a very critical touch at that point. It is a very big component of where we are now.

-In terms of that experience there, the mutual relationship; do you have any examples about them? Like "it would be better if it were like that", "we would have better benefit if they have done that". Do you remember any such examples?

-I could not remember to be honest. Let me think about this.

-I think you have already answered some things here, like "what is the value proposition", "which party is intervening at what level", "are there other actors". There is this part, in this part thinking about the value you create together, which can it be? It can be more than one as well.

-I have looked at that question but I could not understand it much.

-It is like this. What is co-producer? They can produce a product together. Like in a brand alliance, Apple and Nike might come up with a product that enables the shoe communicates with the Apple device. They can produce something together; they can distribute something together. Co-promoter, when you think about the brand alliances of Alpha1, they can make it with Huawei they announce it together, the brand alliance. These are all about marketing communication.

-Yes, it can be co-promoter. Co-consumer? Experience creator, this can be. Because the thing we call smart stadium is totally about improving the fan's experience and providing an overall smart experience by the technological infrastructure, by showing their seat on the mobile application they use, by choosing what eat on the digital screens behind them when they go to the buffet, by watching the replay of the positions on the monitors in front of them when they are at their seats, by benefiting from the live stats on the led screens and scoreboards in the stadium, by following the match experience after connecting to the Wi-Fi when they come here, by watching the game broadcast on the mobile app, by participating in live surveys, giving feedbacks, by the fast process at the turnstile while coming in and going out. For example, there are urban legends that previously people were coming to this stadium 5-6 hours before with their provisions in their hands. At Inonu times, they were coming 2-3 hours before to find a place in the crowd for themselves. Now, we see an empty stadium 15 minutes before the game because people are aware that they can go to the stadium even at the last minute. They spend their time outside nicely, as it is at the centre of the city. They are walking from Carsi, Nisantasi, Taksim; they are entering the match at the last minute and sitting at their seats. They are watching until the last minute of the match and leaving the stadium in 2 minutes. Like this story, this experience is made that easy; from the stands behind the goals to the guy who sits at the most expensive seats, as this experience turned into something this balanced, for us this is that kind of outcome. Alpha1's support for this is very high. The technological infrastructure at the turnstile is important support by Delta49. Technical structure, architecture; they are all to create a new experience. And the fan lives the experience here, they can compare it with the past. The thing they compare is with the last year and the next year they will compare with this year. That's why for us it is not like "we are providing them with a very good experience" but it is like an evolving experience story that is discussed with the sponsors according to the fans' expectations. That is why we have a target to improve what we do today into something better for tomorrow. We are still working on them by the support of our sponsors. We are constantly discussing what else we can do to evolve this experience.

-*Then, I think it is also a bit of co-innovator.*

-Yes, exactly like that.

-*For example, if we think about that new project.*

-Yes, absolutely if we think about the new project.

-I am passing this section because most of them are answered. What type of value you create, what things are used. You have mentioned there are technological things as well, not only human.

-True.

-What roles are there, which resources and capabilities are used? Maybe at this point, we can talk about marketing capabilities; what do you allow them to use? You have mentioned a bit, it can be the areas that are used in the stadium.

-Yes, visibility.

-It can be the usage of your social media, website, they are all your marketing resources, but you also allow your partner in this respect if you are in a brand alliance.

-We allow them, but we always allow between our limits. For anything with Beta4 name, logo, shirt, any advertisement, or poster with Beta4 brand; whatever they do, certainly it should be approved by our teams. We check it, give revisions, make them do the corrections; then we evaluate again and we check all their broadcast plan et cetera with our communication that supports theirs in parallel as well, we make the story live. After all, our biggest asset is our football players in terms of brand value. Beta4 logo, the positioning of Alpha1 next to Beta4 logo but we also have celebrities, football players such as XXX, XXX, XXX YYY at his time. The ones who create their own brands, who are followed and watched by sympathy even by who do not like football. When you look at the world, Cristiano Ronaldo's personal brand value and revenue are much higher than Real Madrid. That is why these guys are an important asset for us. When you think like that, when they try to make their communication activities, advertisement and marketing strategies based on the football players; we also have defined guidelines. We manage the communication with the training facility, our sponsors never interact with them directly. We organise it, such as the shooting will be at that time at that day; or at that time, 5 fans who are using Alpha1 tariff will visit the camp or will eat with XXX or X,Y,Z will fly with the team. All the coordination is made by our teams and turning it into a story is progressed by the sponsor. The agency is with them at that time and makes the shooting for example. They are editing a story, they say "we will make the communication this way, is it okay with you?" We say okay and then this takes place in the press. This is also a plus we contribute to them in terms of communication.

-*What about the benefits or the impacts of these co-marketing activities on your branding or marketing strategy? Alpha1 makes many things, what types of returns you get according to your marketing strategy? Because you have your own marketing strategies such as "Come to Beta4", or like the new things you are making now. How the things they are doing impact your marketing strategy? It might be positive; it might be negative.*

-We have a challenge like this, the localisation logic of the sports clubs from the past to today. Breaking up that traditional structure and like World clubs, or let us say the elite world clubs, our target is there all the time, such as Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus. Even though Italy is a strong football country, Juventus is very traditional in its structure. It is not a country like the countries such as the Premier League or Spanish League. When you look at there, the things Juventus have done recently, probably you have followed, they try to position themselves more like lifestyle, fashion brand and they have changed their logo, marketing communication activities and raised the bar to a different level. I believe it was a radical movement for Italy. I admire it, I like it very much. The case is going to a good place when you support it with the sportive success, want it or not. We aim to carry this innovative vision to a different place like the elite clubs in the world.

While we are doing this, it is important for us to make a cooperation with the sponsors that will add prestige to us, which will carry our brand near our rivals in the world. We think Alpha1, as a global brand, added an important prestige to us; contributed to our global awareness when we put the brand next to ours in the world. For example, to explain better what I mean; we have done cooperation with Delta50, or Delta51 even if it does not bring any financial return, even we are not in any commercial activity with them. Or we had small cooperation with Delta52; they show their trailers on the video walls in our stadium when they bring a new movie. Delta50 is preparing exclusive lists for us, place Beta4 in them. What does it mean? When you put Beta4 next to the global brands like Delta52, Delta50 which are respected by everyone in the world, that are admired, which have their own fan groups; the simplest reaction you get from the fans is "oh, look at the vision". Because they cannot dream of the thing, "if we cannot go up to that point, our people work a lot to do that" whereas there is a club which has its own huge impact in the local market, and there are brands that have an impact in the global market. When we combine these two powers, that guy can get something in the Turkish market, advertise itself, convey itself to the segment it cannot reach; and we promote ourselves to the segment we cannot reach, we get prestige even if we cannot reach and usually we get good results. That is why Alpha1 is very valuable for us.

-In the last section, are there extra things you learn that contribute to the marketing, to the strategy during the alliances? Do you learn a specific skill for example, is there an example where you change the way of the things you do, during those 5 years with Alpha1 or with Delta46 for a long time? The clubs actually, at least in the past, were the sides which do not know much about marketing. They have started to learn after working with these corporate companies. They are more corporate now but do the alliances contribute to you in this respect?

-Absolutely. This type of brands have defined guidelines in the world and do not cross the lines of their corporate identity and manage all their activities in that frame. For us, the work for the corporate identity and the re-birth of the brand, putting that kind of guideline in front of us have started after we turned our vision to this side. The corporate identity we have created with our agency is something which has also won many awards, fed by our own values, based on our shirt. We have created a corporate identity with graphical aspects, types and shapes and it is admired very much. And now for example on our social media accounts, in the communications we make, in the stadium, in our plane or our bus, in our business cards; it is not that simple but we have created a comprehensive corporate identity. It has started to make an impact on people. Even on our Beta4a side, except our own shops, you know we have branches; even those branches turn to us and started to say “can we take those graphic patterns, we want to form our shop based on them”. We have started to see that corporate identity everywhere and I think it is very important to settle this as a brand, as a corporate structure in terms of visuals, in terms of corporate principles. I believe this type of sponsorships has a great influence on us to go to in this direction, this way.

Specifically, we have learned many things of course. I am saying it for all team, we have studied economics, we are familiar with the marketing world but do not have know-how about technology in general. Mr. XXX has it, of course, he has a telecommunications background. There is a stadium construction phase, we were in the process as if we were civil engineers at the same stages. We had helmets on our heads at some stages and discussed many topics like how the seat should be, where should be the cabling, how many antennas should be there, what we will do with Delta53 here. The team that lead us here was Alpha1’s technology team. On my side, the marketing activities of the smart stadium were managed through me. The internal screens, Delta53 project, “Stadium Vision”; Wi-Fi infrastructure, similarly in-seat TV screens, their advertisement sales, our mobile applications, Alpha1 Park and Beta4 applications, their developments, technical integration process, marketing strategy, loyalty platform. These were the worlds I was very unfamiliar with, for example. Being in these projects for 2-3 years added technical know-how to me. Specifically, we as a team headed towards here. On the other side, maybe we would not be in that big projects, that comprehensive communication activities, the projects that have a global impact like “Come to Beta4” latest for example. Before we were doing more local communications, more common projects, communication with sponsors; the story turned into something more comprehensive. I believe this is a new experience for all the team.

-*So actually, as a part of this question, that know-how you had with the brand alliances provided an advantage for you against the competitors.*

-Absolutely, absolutely like that and that is something you can feel. Even if they have an emotional bond with Delta43, Delta44; I hear from the fans that they appreciate what Beta4 does. We have feedback like the activities of the marketing team, the communication team created an observable difference. The presentation that gets the most attention, the one that is applauded most in the presentations we have attended, magazine events etc. is usually about our brand revolution. We also get the feedback clearly and that makes us happy. Recently, I will tell something very personal now, when I have studied for my master’s degree in Italy; one of the most admired professors of the school, we wouldn’t be able to take any appointments from her, she was extraordinary. We would like to write our thesis with her, she had rejected most of us. Recently she has sent me a message on Linkedin. “Dear XXX, would you remember me?” etc. Wouldn’t I remember my professor? (Smiles). She said, “I am following the marketing activities you are making; I want to use your story as a case in sports marketing. I would be happy if you would like to come as a guest lecturer. I have mentioned about you in the class”. I was so touched. My professor from how many years ago. 4 years passed after I left that school. She has sent me that kind of message, I was so touched. I have also told Mr. XXX. That means it is visible now, it is felt, people are following it. There are very positive comments to Mr. XXX from very serious global agencies, the giants of the marketing world. There is also valuable feedback in the international seminars. That is why we think we are doing something correctly. Of course, it is important to make it sustainable; it is not certain that the sportive success will continue every year, the ball is round in the end. We cannot do anything. The league is very competitive. There are 4 teams competing for the top places now. There are 1-2 points between them. We are the only club competing in the Champions League. We have a rival like Bayern Munich. You know we had a cooperation with Delta54 lately. They have decided to make champions league communication through Beta4 as it is the club with the highest reach for example. The Champions League is also sharing us a lot, this also took attention of other clubs. Because the number of likes and comments they receive is at the level of Real Madrid, Bayern Munich; even more time to time when they share Beta4 post. That is why you will see significant Champions League communication through Beta4 and Bayern Munich in the coming weeks. We are on the right path as we understand from this return, but would this sportive success continue? We might not be the champions this year, this is our 3rd year. It might be a worse year next season but our overall strategic plan is to continue the stability in the marketing communications that is appreciated by everyone, that is admired by everyone even if Beta4 is not successful in terms of sports facilities, even if it does not continue its stability of the moment., "What will Beta4 do now?", "With which project they will be on the foreground?", "What kind of impact they have globally?". In this respect, we want to look further by growing it geographically. We want to be on the foreground with this. We want them to be considered as important as the sports facilities in this market because Turkish fans always talk about sportive success. We have won, did this, et cetera. That is the agenda of the week. We do not want anything else to be talked about when we make "Come to Beta4" for example. If we can succeed this a bit, that means we have started to evolve this world. I wish the rivals also had this kind of vision and did these; I wish we stood up as Turkey in terms of sports I mean, in terms of sports communication. But it is more speculative, daily agendas, changing as in the politics; the story is similar in the sports as well. As I have said, we make more lasting, long term plans; follow the strategy and continue to work on creating that perception.

-*You can tell if you have something to say to sum up.*

-In the coming years, we will see Beta4 in global projects. We have cooperated with Delta55 on global media for the latest umbrella communication we have made, “Come to Beta4”. We will continue to distribute it via Delta55. We will try to have coverage in the Middle East, Arabic community, in China and in Europe as much as we can. Our communication activities will continue in this manner and we will continue to develop projects in this direction. We will have new sponsorships. These new sponsors will also be the ones which fit our principles. We will position Beta4 more as a lifestyle brand, we will be careful to choose the brands that will strengthen the new brand revolution story. I believe you will be watching new things with new projects during the summer period.

-*Follow Beta4, you say.*

-We will be following Beta4 (smiles). There are nice developments for all of us. You know them closely (smiles).

-*Thank you, it is almost 1 hour.*

Appendix 5: Screenshot from CAQDAS NVivo – Coding Nodes

Figure 48 Screenshot of NVivo Data Analysis