

Comment on the paper of Esta Kaal and Kaja
Tampere on branding the Maritime Cluster

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- In this comment speech I will question the absolute value of branding as a process which guarantees wealth and success to the Central Baltic cluster .
- Today, the word 'brand' has a magic aura for many. For them brand is like the touch of Midas' hand in antique mytology.
- Several product brands have, indeed, brought 'friends, success, and prestige' to their owners while many city, region and nation brand campaigns may rather be good as warning examples only.



We often use the phrase 'the golden touch of King Midas' to refer to someone who has a good fortune

Some of us may believe that branding the organization works like the touch of king Midas.

In the Greek legend everything Midas touched was changed into gold.

However, in the legend King Midas starved due to his greed which changed the food and drink into gold

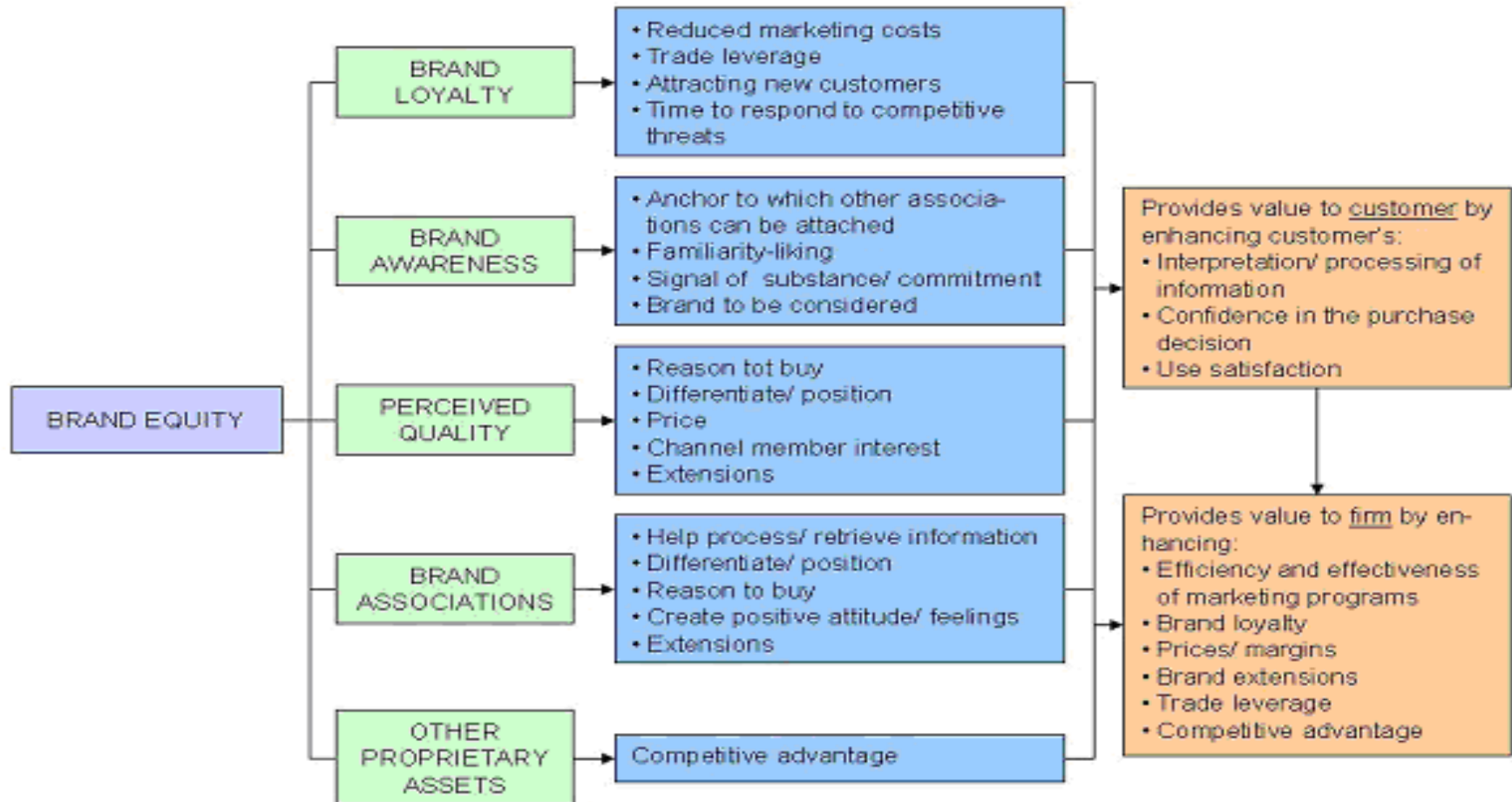
The legend of the golden touch of King Midas

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How would a strong brand look like?
The five constituents of David Aaker
(Building strong brands)





the great product

the brand image

customer experience

the three columns which hold up the
brand

In corporate mergers and acquisitions typically cultural differences are challenging

How will it be possible to overcome the problems due to cultural differences in a cluster-like network of independent and self-determining parties?

The obvious problems may arise from

- * cultural diversity of centres
- * cultural maladjustment of managers in charge
- * cultural differences in management/business style

internal branding for a cluster is an extra challenge

- shall the brand advantage be the same for all partners?
- who deals the cards?
- will it be possible to create a uniform corporate identity for all partners which is often seen as a condition of a strong brand?

another challenge for branding: effective distance between the partners

- effective distance between two sites is not distance in kilometres or nautical miles but sum of physical, economic, social or cultural and communicative distances between individuals and groups

Esta Kaal and Kaja Tampere summarize their report saying that the cluster under discussion is at the early stage of growth, or 'in the embryonic phase' and recommend a cluster brand to reduce the complexity and to make the cluster more comprehensible.

The brand approach, however, includes many challenges which do not automatically add value to the cluster.

It is good to remember that the Central Baltic Sea Maritime Cluster is not a product, not a service nor a juridically clearly defined region but a multidimensional complex in which a branding process might not bring higher brand equity or added value to all its member partners.