

Stockholm School of Economics

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Contributions of Internal Branding Practices to Corporate Brand Success

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate how *internal branding practices* can contribute to successful corporate brand building. The thesis is based on a case study of the successful Swedish brands Saab AB, SAS Sverige and Skanska. The results show that *core values* are a main building block of internal branding practices and that core values are united with cultural values with a dual purpose of adding value to customers and guiding employee behavior. Furthermore, the results point out that core values internally indicate how the *vision* is to be achieved and that the *vision* may be more useful as a management tool than internal branding tool. Subcultures appear to be present in all three cases and the results suggest that corporate brands are strengthened by internalizing a main *corporate culture* which allows cultural interpretations within subcultures and by assuring that subcultures co-exist in harmony. *Internal communication* seems to support corporate and internal branding by applying a pull-principle in communications, creating forums for personal interaction and facilitating employees' information search and processing. In terms of *human resource-contributions to brand building*, practices such as recruitment, phasing in of new employees, internalization of core values among current employees and internal brand evaluations are put forward. Moreover, two additional concepts of importance in corporate and internal branding were found: *acknowledgment* and *involvement*. A total of 14 propositions of how internal branding practices contribute to corporate brand success, summarized in a holistic model, are presented.

Keywords: Internal branding, corporate brand success, corporate branding, human resource management

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the study's background and summarizes the conducted literature review within corporate and internal branding research. In order to complement the knowledge obtained from the literature review and acquire empirically based information about the proposed problem area, a pre study was conducted (see 1.4). The study's purpose is presented in 1.5 and expected contributions are articulated in 1.6. Definitions can be found in appendix 1.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Today, markets are shaped by the increasing significance of intangible assets as sources of competitive advantage, and the growing importance of corporate branding (Martin et al., 2005). A central intangible asset that a company will not have to share with others is its *brand* (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007; Keller, 2003; Olins, 2000), and it has been argued that the future of corporate strategy lies in becoming truly *brand oriented* (Urde, 1994).

Corporate brands differ from product brands in various ways. For example, a corporate brand can include a wider range of associations than a product brand (Keller, 2000). According to Balmer (2001) the *corporate brand mix* consists of cultural, intricate, tangible and ethereal elements with brand building requiring commitment from all personnel. Specifically, corporate brands cater to multiple stakeholders, are delivered by the entire organization in *all* its actions, and are involved in more complicated and sophisticated organizational practices than product brands (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007; Ind, 2004; Webster & Keller, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Graham, 2001; Simoes & Dibb, 2001; Olins, 2000; de Chernatony, 1999; Ind, 1997).

A strong and well-managed corporate brand qualifies as a sustainable valuable resource (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Strong brands enable companies to command a price premium (Bendixen et al, 2004), foster greater customer loyalty (Baldauf et al, 2003; Mudambi, 2002) and support growth and greater profitability (Urde, 1994). Importantly, strong corporate brands attract and retain skilled employees as well as enhance employee commitment and loyalty (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Balmer & Gray, 2003). As marketing is more and more shifting towards the exchange of specialized skills and knowledge (Lusch&Vargo, 2006; McDowell et al, 1997); value is increasingly created through *employee-customer interaction* rather than statically embedded in output (Vargo&Lusch, 2004; King, 1991). Corporations are facing a future where their customers' choices will depend less on functional benefits and more on an assessment of the people behind products and services: "their skills, attitudes, behavior...and modes of communication - the entire corporate culture" (King, 1991, p.6). The core competencies and capabilities of employees are thus a great source of differentiation and a highly important factor in corporate branding (Ballantyne&Aitken, 2007; Ulrich, 1998; Becker et al, 1997). It is supposed that such brand related employee competencies are created through *internal branding practices*.

Corporate branding strategies are considered more common than product branding strategies in business-to-business markets (Anderson & Narus, 2004; Webster & Keller, 2004; Keller, 2003; Mudambi, 2002). This study refers to corporate brands in business-to-business (B2B) markets as well as corporate brands in service-based business-to-consumer (B2C) markets which have chosen such a branding strategy and have frequent direct contact with customers.

1.2 CORPORATE AND INTERNAL BRANDING

The academic interest in *corporate branding* as well as brand building in B2B-markets is steadily increasing. In a B2B-setting, topics such as strategic brand attributes (Beverland & Napoli, 2007; Thomson et al 1997/98), distinguishing characteristics of industrial branding (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007; Savén, 2006; Webster & Keller, 2004; Mudambi, 2002; McDowell et al, 1997) and the importance of emotional brand values in B2B markets (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004) have received interest. Furthermore, the B2B brand discourse has been expanded by investigating the role corporate brand image plays in the selection of new subcontractors as well as how subcontractors might pursue branding as an active communication strategy (Blombäck & Axelsson, 2007; Blombäck, 2005). Blombäck and Axelsson's research (2007) indicates that corporate brand building in a B2B context is valuable even in a "worst case scenario" for branding such as that of subcontractors.

Within corporate branding research, corporate brands and corporate branding practices have been defined and analyzed (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Simoes & Dibb, 2001; Olins, 2000; Ind, 1997), and corporate branding has been related to core values (Urde, 2003) as well as firm performance (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Furthermore, the role of corporate branding in the emerging service economy (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; King, 1991) has also received attention. As corporate brand management has been approached in a number of different ways, there is no consensus which concepts are appropriate for describing this phenomenon (Balmer, 2001). Certain authors give great attention to strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image as significant aspects of corporate branding (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2000; Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999; Dowling, 1993; Dowling, 1986). Others emphasize the importance of corporate or brand identity and bridging the gap between the internal identity and external image or reputation (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Ind, 1997).

An increasing number of researchers argue that *internal branding* is imperative in corporate brand building. Topics such as employees as main brand builders (Ind, 2004; Ind, 2003; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Rucci et al, 1998; Kennedy, 1977), the importance of employee understanding and commitment in brand building (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Urde, 2003; Tosti & Stotz, 2001; Thomson et al, 1999), the crucial role of internal communication (Mitchell, 2002; Thomson et al, 1999; Hogg et al, 1998) and the relationship between organizational structures and brand supporting behavior (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006) have all received interest. But although research interest is growing, there are indications that internal branding may not be self-evident in practice. In a recent survey conducted by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) less than 50 per cent of 105 surveyed B2B-firms had taken internal branding measures. This is noteworthy as employees, through their understanding and commitment, build the image of the organization in the minds of customers (Ind, 2003). Many companies overlook the importance of employees conveying the brand message regardless of their position within the firm (Bergstrom et al, 2002).

In relation to the significance of employees conveying the brand message in everyday actions there is an articulated need for *Human Resources* (HR) to become more engaged in brand building (Aurand et al 2005; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Martin et al, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Wilson, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Ulrich, 1998; Becker et al, 1997; Ind, 1997). The role of *organizational leaders*, such as the CEO, in brand building has also been highlighted in recent work (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Urde, 1994).

1.3 PROBLEM DEFINITION

Although the interest in corporate branding is increasing, there are few studies concerning how to build successful corporate brands. A number of authors have initiated efforts to increase knowledge within this field (e.g. Kay, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999; Tilley, 1999), but the presented frameworks are not all based on empirical findings, which supports current statements that there is a lack of empirical research on the topic of building successful corporate brands (Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999). Furthermore, current research does not give adequate attention to employees as important corporate brand builders or the contributions of internal branding. Ind (2003) argues that employee performance may be an overlooked aspect of marketing. Classical models of brand management do not sufficiently recognize the importance of aligning employee values and behaviors with desired brand values and behaviors (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004; Urde, 2003; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Thomson et al, 1999). There is also little research concerning the impact HR-practices can have on internalizing desired brand values and behaviors among employees (Aurand et al, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Today, marketing is shifting towards the exchange of specialized skills and knowledge (Lusch&Vargo, 2006; McDowell et al, 1997) and brand value is increasingly created through employee-customer interaction (Vargo&Lusch, 2004; King, 1991). This implies that employee brand understanding and commitment will increasingly differentiate successful corporate brands in various industries from less successful brands in the future. Therefore, knowledge of how internal branding practices can contribute when building corporate brands should be expanded. Identifying internal branding practices which appear to contribute to success would provide an important basis from which to carry on research within this field and potentially offer interesting implications for practitioners which may develop brand building in practice.

1.4 PRE STUDY: IMPRESSIONS FROM BRANDING EXPERTS

In order to complement the knowledge obtained from the literature review and acquire firsthand information about corporate and internal branding in practice, three interviews with expert practitioners were conducted (see appendix 3). The participating companies were chosen on the basis of their experience, authority and topicality within corporate and internal branding in Sweden. The interviewees were Linda Hellström, brand management consultant at **Differ**¹, Robert Scherman, Managing Director of **Superbrands Sweden**² and Carin Lembre, HR Manager at **Springtime**³. In order to encourage brand management efforts within companies, the organization Superbrands ranks the 300 strongest brands in 82 countries each year⁴. In line with Kay (2006), Knox and Bickerton (2003) and Hankinson and Hankinson (1999) Robert Scherman, Managing Director of Superbrands Sweden, emphasizes that strong brands need recognition as a reward for their work and that there is a demand for advice concerning how to succeed in brand building⁵:

¹ Differ is further presented in chapter 3

² Superbrands is described in more detail in appendix 2 and chapter 3

³ Springtime is further presented in chapter 3

⁴ The price ceremony for the Business Superbrands Award 2008 took place at Berns, Stockholm, September 25th, 2008. The author was invited to this event by Superbrands Sweden's Managing Director Robert Scherman.

⁵ See e.g. "*Superbrands Sverige - ett urval av Sveriges starkaste konsumentvarumärken*" and "*Business Superbrands - ett urval av Sveriges starkaste B2B-varumärken 2008*"

*Superbrands has two main purposes. Firstly, to be an independent authority identifying the strongest brands on the market. And secondly, to inspire firms to succeed in their brand building efforts.*⁶ **Superbrands**

However, Superbrands bases its ranking on corporations' *brand image* among external stakeholders. The organization does not evaluate internal brand building and solely ascertains that a high ranking is a consequence of some kind of effective brand building activities:

*We do not study how firms actually create and practically implement branding strategies. We provide the results of firms' brand building activities and solely establish that a high ranking is a consequence of their work. This [brand building] work has resulted in a positive and strong image.*⁷ **Superbrands**

The fact that Superbrands does not look into internal branding practises when presenting best practice brand builders may support the notion that there are insufficient guiding principles how to build successful corporate brands.

During the interviews the complexity of corporate branding and the need for core brand values to influence the entire organization was exposed. Importantly, firms who believe that they are engaging in brand building may actually not entirely understand this phenomenon:

*Many firms practise three worn down core values. In these firms top management believes that employees simply carry these three core values with them all day long. But they are only fancy words, which do not mean anything if they are not related to desired organizational behavior. It is imperative that staff behavior strengthens the brand.*⁸ **Springtime**

As stated by Carin Lembre from Springtime brands seem to be strengthened by assuring desired organizational behavior which highlights the importance of employees as brand builders. The pre study indicated that there may be a lack of understanding of employee importance in corporate branding, which coincides with statements by Lynch and de Chernatony (2004), Gotsi and Wilson (2001), de Chernatony (1999) and Thomson et al (1999):

*There is a lack of understanding within the business world when it comes to the importance of employees in brand building and business development. Truly well-implemented internal branding practices are very rare. But these practices are highly needed within corporate brand building.*⁹ **Differ**

In order to engage employees as brand builders, Linda Hellström from Differ spoke of the interaction between corporate culture and the corporate brand:

*When working with B2B clients we create brand platforms which can be used as tools in the creation and strengthening of organizational culture.*¹⁰ **Differ**

⁶ Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

⁷ Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

⁸ Carin Lembre, Springtime, September 22nd, 2008

⁹ Linda Hellström, Differ, September 16th, 2008

¹⁰ Linda Hellström, Differ, September 16th, 2008

In relation to building the corporate culture and corporate brand Carin Lembre from Springtime also highlighted the importance of organizational leaders:

*It is every leader's role to live the corporate brand. Leaders must set an example for employees. It is the small, everyday actions that matter. This is where top management can inspire fellow co-workers and also correct them if they are not acting in line with the desired corporate culture.*¹¹ **Springtime**

Corporate culture appears to be viewed as highly important in corporate and internal brand building by the interviewed experts from Differ and Springtime. Also, both participants spoke of the importance of involving the HR department in corporate brand building. For example, Linda Hellström at Differ argued that HR-practices may enhance brand building activities:

*It is very important that HR is involved in brand building. Brand building activities have to be done in collaboration with HR; otherwise the effect will not be as great.*¹² **Differ**

The belief that HR has an important role to play within corporate and internal branding thus appears to be shared by the interviewees from Differ and Springtime and the researchers Aurand et al (2005) and Gotsi and Wilson (2001). This increased the author's interest in investigating possible synergies between HR-practices and internal branding.

1.5 PURPOSE

First, the literature review (see e.g. Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999) and Robert Scherman from Superbrands indicated that there are few empirical studies or presented theories concerning how strong corporate brands are built and how they can be further strengthened. The pre study put forward that corporate branding is complex and that some firms who believe that they are engaging in successful corporate branding may actually not entirely understand this phenomenon. Therefore, an empirical investigation of best practice corporate branding may provide beneficiary knowledge for both academics and practitioners. Secondly, the importance of employees as brand builders and the interaction between corporate culture and the corporate brand were emphasized during interviews with Linda Hellström from Differ and Carin Lembre from Springtime. Their opinions are also supported by several researchers' work (see e.g. Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Ind 2003; Tosti & Stotz, 2001; Thomson et al, 1999). It thus appears as if internal branding practices are an essential element in corporate branding. An investigation of how internal branding practices can contribute to corporate brand success is therefore considered a valuable input to current research. Finally, the pre study and literature review indicate that HR-involvement in internal branding may offer valuable contributions to corporate branding. As there is little conducted research on this topic (Aurand et al, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001) it is hoped that the current knowledge of the possible synergies between internal brand building and HR-practices may be increased.

The purpose of this study is to identify *ways in which internal branding practices can contribute to successful corporate brand building.*

¹¹ Carin Lembre, Springtime, September 22nd, 2008

¹² Linda Hellström, Differ, September 16th, 2008

1.6 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

It was highlighted in 1.2 that a number of researchers believe that internal branding is an imperative aspect of corporate branding. The expected main contribution of this study is to expand knowledge of how internal branding practices can contribute to successful corporate brand building, by conducting an empirical case study of internal brand management in best practice firms. Since many corporate branding models today are conceptually derived (Balmer, 2001) it is especially important to expand theory with further empirical studies within corporate branding. Current internal branding models put forward concepts such as culture, communication or commitment as central factors in corporate and internal brand building. It is hoped that this study can expand those concepts and investigate concrete practices that are valuable when internalizing desired values and behaviors among employees. Moreover, it is of interest for practitioners to learn if certain corporate branding practices may have to be modified to better suit an internal environment. Finally, it is also hoped that the knowledge of HR-contributions to corporate and internal branding may be expanded.

1.7 CLARIFYING COMMENTS

All participating companies received top rankings in the Swedish *B2B-Superbrands 2008*, but it is acknowledged that 2 out of 3 case companies are active in both B2B and B2C-markets. The author believes that internal branding is relatively more important when engaging in a *corporate branding strategy* (which all case companies do) compared to a product branding strategy and when companies have *frequent direct contact with customers* - regardless of being a B2B or B2C-company and regardless of industry.

The importance of *synchronizing internal and external brand building* should be commented although such aspects are not directly part of the study. Internal brand building strives to internalize desired brand values and brand behaviors among employees in order to deliver brand value to external stakeholders. Internal branding practices should thus be guided by and coordinated with external branding practices (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Aurand, 2005; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Mitchell, 2002; Balmer, 2001; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Ind, 1997).

2. THEORY

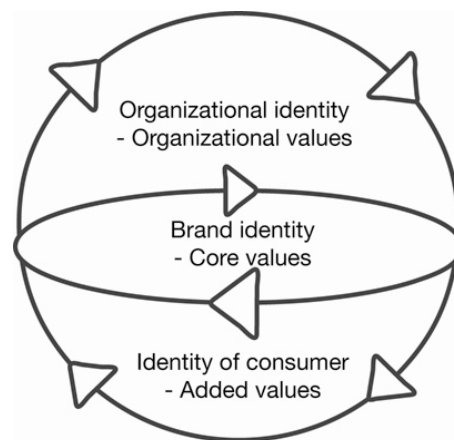
A number of branding theories appear most relevant in relation to the study's purpose and will be presented below. The theoretical models are illustrated in their entirety, but certain concepts will not be presented further in this study (*see footnote*)¹³. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 directed research questions 1-4 and 2.3 directed research question 5. The research questions are presented in 2.4.

2.1 CORPORATE BRANDING

2.1.1 Core values

The importance of focusing inwards when building corporate brands has been highlighted in recent work by Urde, which focuses on *core values* as the main building blocks of corporate branding (Urde, 2003). According to Urde (2003), successful corporate brands are built when there is a strong relationship between the organization, its members, and the brand. There are three different types of values which should be identified and developed and corporations should focus on internal value creating processes in brand building:

- Values that are related to the organization (what it is and stands for)
- Values that summarize the brand identity (core values)
- Values that are experienced by customers (added value)



Source: Urde, 2003

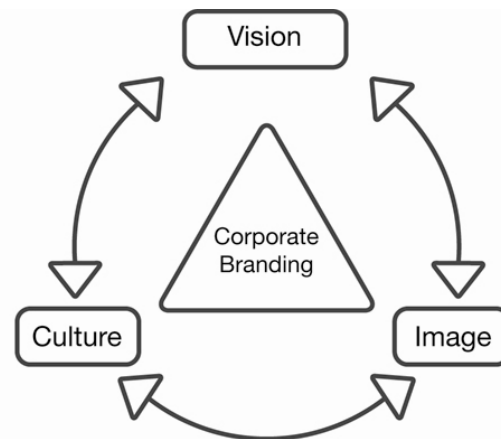
Urde (2003) claims that organizational values and core values do not have to be the same and that organizational values can be more internally focused. In the initial stages of the branding process, organizational values should be translated into core values which guide the

¹³ *Brand commitment* was not investigated in a direct research question, but as Burmann & Zeplin (2005) state that commitment is generated by *communication* and *brand related HR-practices* and as both these concepts are investigated in the study the author believes that brand commitment is indirectly studied. The author believes that *image*, *corporate design* and *leadership* are all important concepts within corporate and internal branding. *Image* (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001) was excluded since the main purpose was to investigate internal branding. *Corporate design* (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006) was excluded as Balmer (2001) states that there is an excessive focus on graphic identity in current research. *Leadership* (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005) was excluded due to spatial limitations. The author believes that internal branding should be developed and supported by top management and implemented by lower level leaders.

organization's efforts. In a second step, core values should be translated into added value for customers. Importantly, Urde (2003) states that core values are central to internal brand building as the goal for the organization is to live these values. Therefore, it is important that employees understand the core values and are in agreement about them. If this is achieved, the common values converge to give the corporate culture its character (Urde, 2003).

2.1.2 Vision-Culture-Image model

Hatch and Schultz (2003; 2001) share Urde's (2003) belief that brands should be built from within the company as they declare that nothing is more powerful in forming brand images than external stakeholders' direct and personal encounter with the organization. The strategic importance of corporate branding therefore lies not only in its positioning of the company, but in creating internal arrangements (e.g. organizational structure, physical design and culture) that support the meaning of the corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Managers should analyze and build the corporate brand by using the concepts *strategic vision*, *organizational culture* and *corporate image* (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001):



Source: Hatch & Schultz, 2003

Successful corporate brands build their vision from redefinitions and reinventions of core values rather than revolutionary shifts from one set of values to another. Such successful brands also assure that their internal culture supports the vision and that the vision and culture are aligned with stakeholders' image of the corporation. In particular, the *gaps* between vision, culture and image should be evaluated to better align them (Hatch & Schultz, 2001):

- *Vision - Culture gap*: how are managers and employees aligned?
- *Culture - Image gap*: how are employee attitudes and behaviors aligned with outside perceptions?
- *Vision - Image gap*: is management taking the firm in a direction that stakeholders support?

A *vision-culture gap* may build up if senior management moves the company in a strategic direction that employees do not understand and support. A *vision-image gap* may develop when there is a conflict between outsiders' images and wants and senior management's strategic vision. And a *culture-image gap* may grow if external images of the company are not supported when stakeholders are directly in contact with the organization.

2.1.3 Brand identity

When conducting a study within the field of corporate branding, it is important to mention that certain authors argue that *identity* is the central concept in corporate brand building (see e.g. Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Ind, 1997). However, Balmer (2001) argues that there is a “fog” surrounding the concept of corporate identity as there is no consensus concerning which elements identity comprises of. For example, *corporate identity* is explained as “how a company expresses and differentiates itself in relation to its internal and external stakeholders” (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2000) whereas *organizational identity* refers to “how organizational members perceive and understand who they are and what they stand for as an organization” (Hatch & Schultz, 2000). Due to this theoretical ambiguity, models which focus explicitly on identity have not been directly included when formulating the research questions. Balmer (2001) proposes that identity may be divided into a mix comprising of: *strategy*, *structure*, *communication* and *culture*. The author has included all of these elements in the study by applying frameworks presented by Hatch and Schultz, 2003; 2001 (strategy and culture), Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006, Burmann and Zeplin, 2005 (structure, culture, communication) and Bergstrom et al, 2002 (culture and communication). Therefore, although not directly referring to identity, the author implicitly acknowledges this concept.

2.2 INTERNAL BRANDING

According to Bergstrom et al (2002) the core elements of internal branding are *effective brand communication to all employees*, *convincing employees of the brand’s value and relevance* and *linking every job in the organization to delivery of the brand essence*. Bergstrom et al (2002) claim that these core elements should be implemented through an approach labelled “the 5 Cs” (below). Commitment, culture and communication are included in this study.

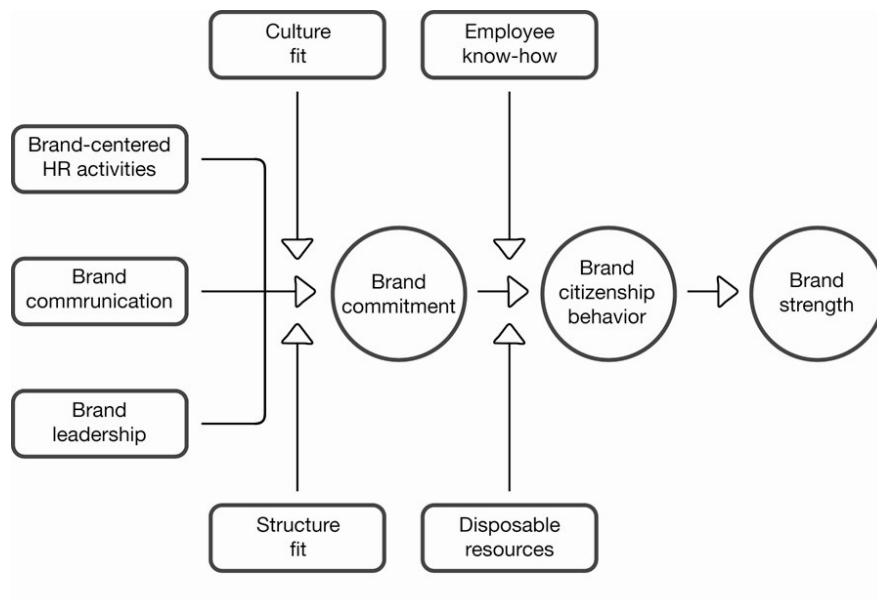


Visual representation adapted from Bergstrom et al, 2002

2.2.1 The driving forces of brand commitment

Customers’ brand experiences are driven by *all* customer-brand touchpoints. Many of these touchpoints are determined by employees - and not only those in the marketing and sales department. Bergstrom et al (2002) believe that corporations must create a genuine sense of shared understanding and commitment among employees. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) agree as they state that positive brand experiences can be ensured if all employees display brand citizenship behavior based on strong brand commitment. *Brand citizenship behavior* outlines what it means to “live the brand” and includes both internal and external behaviors that enhance the strength of the brand. *Brand commitment* explains the psychological processes that lead employees to show brand citizenship behavior. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) have found that brand commitment is generated by *brand-centered HR activities*, *brand*

communication and *brand leadership*. These three variables as well as the four context factors: *culture fit*, *structure fit*, *employee know-how* and *disposable resources* are considered the building blocks of internal brand management:

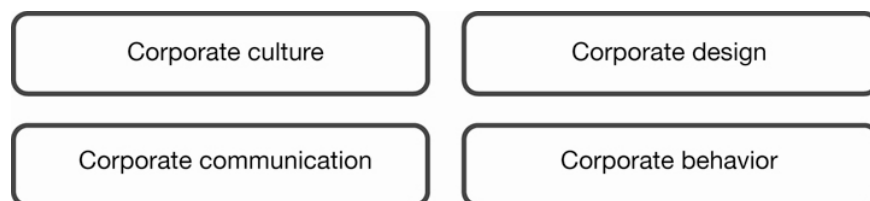


Source: Burmann & Zeplin, 2005

Brand-centered HR activities, brand communication and brand leadership will only lead to brand commitment if the corporate culture and corporate structures are in line with the brand (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). If there is not a brand-culture fit, employees will not accept the brand identity as the culture highly influences their attitudes and behaviors. The brand values must thus be aligned with the corporate culture.

2.2.2 Corporate culture

Corporate structures are resources and rules that employees can draw upon in their everyday work (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) propose four *organizational structures* which support successful internal brand building and aid employees to link everyday tasks and behaviors to the brand:



Visual representation adapted from Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006

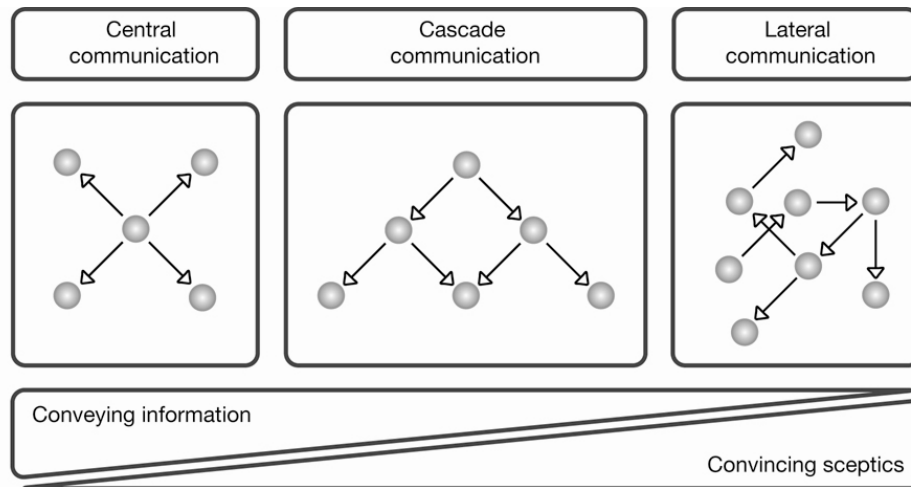
Out of the structures above, corporate culture and corporate communication are included in the study. *Corporate culture* is a useful platform to develop the corporate brand and communicate its promise to employees (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). Successful brands capitalise on a synergy between the brand and culture where every employee is provided with a framework for brand related behavior by drawing on culture (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). According to Hatch and Schultz (2003, p.1047), organizational culture consists of *values, beliefs* and *basic assumptions*. Corporations must distinguish between *desired values* and the *practised values* at work in the organization (the current culture). Organizational culture is a source of competitive advantage only when brand values are respectful of organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Bergstrom et al (2002) argue that culture can be strengthened by continuously communicating internally why the brand is meaningful and relevant. Employees should be explicitly requested to share the values in order to contribute to the corporation's success.

Wilson (1997) argues that it is naïve for managers to consider culture as a corporate resource that can be easily managed and manipulated. In particular, it may be unrealistic to expect cultural consensus within an organization. In research conducted by Wilson (1997) it was found that attitudes, norms and behaviors varied from branch to branch within an investigated major bank and also, on a somewhat lesser scale, between different levels of branch staff. The *differentiation perspective* within corporate culture research (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997) recognizes that all firms have *subcultures* which share similar values and assumptions and that the extent to which such subcultures conform to the culture desired by senior management will vary. Culture is a product of group experience and will therefore be found within a definable group with a significant history (Wilson, 1997). Usually such a group is associated with functional or geographical groupings. According to Wilson (1997), what is unique about an organization's culture is the particular mix of subcultures within the organization. Subcultures in an organization may co-exist in *harmony, indifference* or *conflict* with each other (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997).

2.2.3 Internal communication

Bergstrom et al (2002) believe that organizations should ensure frequent *internal communication* and utilize multiple communication channels in order to build the corporate brand. Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) emphasize that non-contradictory corporate communication increases the credibility and strength of a brand. They also argue that many internal branding efforts fail due to a lack of convincing communication. Although a company employs a wide range of communication tools, it is not certain that what was defined at the top actually reaches employees further down the hierarchy. A number of tools have been claimed as useful in order to familiarize employees with brand values, such as distributing a brand book, appointing brand ambassadors, organizing workshops and ensuring frequent communication (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004).

Burmam and Zeplin (2005) declare that there are *three main types of internal communication* (see figure below):



Source: Burmann and Zeplin, 2005

These “types of communication” are interpreted as different *communication methods* in this study as they are seen as explicit instruments in internal branding. *Central communication* is usually spread by the Communications department, which often applies a *push principle* and creates written materials which are distributed to employees. Such communication should be complemented by utilizing media which enables a *pull principle* (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). E.g., an intranet where employees actively seek for information may be very useful. *Cascade communication* starts at the top of the organization and is passed down through the hierarchy. This method is more time consuming, but information is perceived as more convincing and credible as it is provided by a direct superior as opposed to a central department (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). *Lateral communication* consists of informal transmission of information between employees regardless of their position within the firm. According to Burmann and Zeplin (2005), this is the most powerful type of internal communication, because information from peers is more likely remembered and accepted. Lateral communication is difficult to control and make use of in internal branding, but one promising approach appears to be *storytelling* (Denning, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Tilley, 1999).

The importance of internal communication is also highlighted by Thomson et al (1999). In their research, internal brand strength is conceptualized in terms of intellectual and emotional buy-in. *Intellectual buy-in* refers to the extent to which employees are aware of and aligned with brand and business strategies and goals and understand how such goals can be affected. *Emotional buy-in* describes employees’ commitment to the organization and its goals, and represents emotional attachments to the organization. Thomson et al’s (1999) research reveals that intellectual and emotional buy-in should not be taken for granted and that intellectual buy-in may be easier to establish than emotional buy-in¹⁴. Thomson et al (1999) argue that internal communication strengthens intellectual and emotional buy-in. Their research showed that employees who increase their ranking of the company’s internal communications from a 6 to 8 out of 10 may potentially have doubled their intellectual and emotional buy-in.

¹⁴ In terms of intellectual buy-in, 39 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they understood what they needed to do in their own job to support organizational goals. 27 per cent strongly agreed that they had a clear sense of their organization’s vision. Concerning emotional buy-in, 27 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they were committed to giving their best to help their organization succeed and 9 per cent strongly agreed that their views and participation was valued by their organization.

2.3 THE ROLE OF HR IN BRAND BUILDING

Brewster et al (2000) have presented evidence from a survey of strategic human resource-practices in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, the UK and Ireland (in Brewster & Holt Larsen, 2000, p. 49-54). The results revealed that Sweden had the highest percentage of personnel managers as members of top management or the board (75 per cent of companies had a personnel manager in such a position). Brewster et al (2000) also found that Sweden had the highest number of organizations with a written personnel strategy (70 per cent). As a contrast to these figures, written policies for employee communication were only present in 45 per cent of companies and the HR department was only involved in implementation of strategies in a mere 5 per cent of the surveyed Swedish companies. Therefore, it is believed to be of interest to investigate how involved the HR function is in implementing corporate branding strategies and how much the HR department cooperates with the Communications department in successful corporate brands.

In order for employees' behavior to reflect brand values it is essential for organizations to align their human resource (HR) practices with brand values (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). But although there is a need for HR involvement in internal brand building there is little research concerning the impact HR can have on delivering the brand promise (Aurand et al, 2005). Aurand et al (2005) have found that a strong relationship exists between HR involvement in internal branding and the *incorporation of the brand into work activities*. Furthermore, they found that employees have a *more positive attitude towards the brand* when there is HR involvement in internal branding.

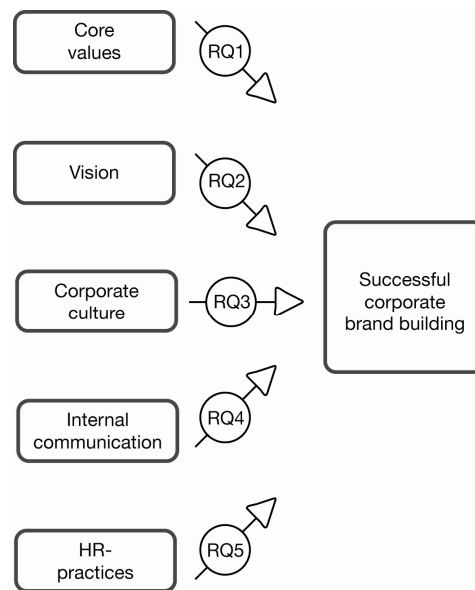
According to Martin et al (2005), the HR occupation has encountered certain problems in legitimising its role in business. The authors explore the potential for HR to draw on branding literature and propose that:

- A brand which is strong internally will improve the external image and reputation of an organization
- A strong internal brand identity can be established through the existence of sophisticated HR policies
- An effective branding message will be facilitated by the establishment of a cross-functional branding team of which HR professionals are part

HR has been argued to contribute to brand building in various ways. The HR department should ensure that applicants with a high personal identity-brand identity fit are *recruited* (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Furthermore as the HR department is often responsible for some kind of orientation training for new employees, HR can contribute to brand building through *phasing in of new employees* (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Brand training has a major influence on employees (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001) and must convey the brand's heritage and vision, its values, capabilities and personality. In the later stages of employees' careers executive programs should also be implemented to complement the initial training program (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Finally, the HR-function should design *performance appraisal* and *remuneration structures* in a manner which strengthens the corporate brand (Gotsi and Wilson, 2001).

2.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There is currently no accepted theory which points out how internal branding influences *corporate brand success*. However, the concepts above have been emphasized by researchers within the field and seem to have gained acceptance as valuable within corporate and internal branding. Therefore, the author believes that a study of these concepts offer the greatest potential to develop current knowledge of the ways in which internal branding practices can contribute to corporate brand success. *Core values* (Urde, 2003) as well as *vision* (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001) have been argued as building blocks which lay the foundation of corporate branding. Furthermore, *corporate culture* has been highlighted as an essential building block in corporate and internal branding which guides employee behavior (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2001). *Internal communication* is also proposed as a vital element in internal branding, which influences brand commitment and strengthens the brand internally (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Thomson et al, 1999). *HR-involvement in brand building* has been argued to influence brand commitment (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005) as well as increase the incorporation of the brand into work activities and increase employee brand attitude (Aurand et al, 2005). In relation to these researchers' works it is of value to identify how the four presented branding concepts as well as HR-practices, when implemented as internal branding practices, can contribute to corporate brand success:



The following five research questions have thus guided the study (RQ1-5):

1. How can *core values* contribute to corporate and internal branding?
2. How can *vision* contribute to corporate and internal branding?
3. How can *corporate culture* contribute to corporate and internal branding?
4. How can different *internal communication methods* contribute to corporate and internal branding?
5. How can *HR-practices* contribute to corporate and internal branding?

3. METHOD

The study was initiated by reviewing current literature within corporate and internal branding in order to develop appropriate research questions. The research questions guided the selection of cases and directed the design of interview questions used in data collection consisting of interviews. They also influenced the collection of documents and web based information. Cases were studied individually in order to write individual case reports. This facilitated data analysis and assured greater validity and reliability. Importantly, data analysis was guided by the research questions.

3.1 OVERALL RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH

The purpose to identify “ways in which internal branding practices can contribute to successful corporate brand building” is best served by a qualitative research method as it allows an investigation of underlying organizational and managerial processes (Merriam, 1994). A case study research method is suitable when investigating contemporary and complex phenomena within a real-life context (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994). Moreover, contributing to and building theory through case study research has been stated as appropriate in the early stages of research on a specific topic (Eisenhardt, 1989). As was stated in chapter 1 corporate and internal branding research is considered to be in such an early stage. The study was conducted in a *mainly deductive manner* with established theories guiding the research design (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994). A deductive approach was chosen to become familiarized with current research and those concepts which have gained agreement and respect within the areas of corporate and internal branding (Yin, 1994). During data analysis the author realized that it was necessary to utilize an *inductive approach* in those cases where the theories selected in a deductive manner could not fully explain findings. Thus, in chapter 5 the discussion has been complemented with certain theories not presented in chapter 2.

3.2 PRE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

Three pre study interviews were conducted in order to learn more about the researched topic and real-life problems faced by practitioners. As the author was considering the use of the *Business Superbrands 2008 ranking* as a suitable grading of successful B2B-brands, it was of fundamental importance to conduct an interview with the organization behind the ranking, Superbrands Sweden. Furthermore, it was judged as important to conduct interviews with experts in the fields of brand management and internal communications respectively. The companies Differ and Springtime were considered to fit these profiles. Three interviews was regarded a sufficient number in order to gain a general understanding of corporate and internal branding in practice and enable replication (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, the interviews posed an opportunity to practice interview skills to improve the quality of interviews during the main study.

Superbrands’ (see appendix 2) core programs consist of Superbrands B2C & Superbrands B2B, where the leading brands in respective fields are ranked every other year. The ranking procedure is commenced by the independent research firm SIFO Research International and continued by an independent Brand Council. The Brand Council ranks each brand on a scale of 1-20 on three main variables operationalized by nine subvariables in total¹⁵. The nine variables all refer to a brand’s external image and determine its success¹⁶. As the ranking’s research design and investigated variables have been developed by Nielsen and accepted by

¹⁵ See appendix 2

¹⁶ Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

SIFO Research International¹⁷, the author trusts that they reflect brand strength and success. Therefore, the Business Superbrands 2008 ranking is considered a valid template of successful Swedish B2B-brands.

Differ (www.differ.com) is a brand consultant bureau. The company's expertise in corporate branding was evaluated by investigating its customer base. As Differ has worked with prominent B2B-companies engaged in corporate branding strategies, such as Skanska, Tetra Pak and Ericsson, the company was considered an appropriate brand management expert in relation to the undertaken study. Differ was also judged to realize the value of activating the brand among employees¹⁸.

Springtime (www.springtime.nu) is a public relations and communications firm. Springtime was chosen as the company believes that strong brands are built from within the organization¹⁹, which is in line with the study's purpose. Springtime was judged to offer valuable knowledge concerning the role of HR and organizational culture in corporate brand building. Furthermore, the author was interested in learning more how organizations can achieve involved and committed employees through internal communication.

3.3 COLLECTION OF PRE STUDY DATA

In order to meet with the person able to provide the most knowledge within the researched area, a description of the study and its purpose as well as the interview questions were sent to Differ, Springtime and Superbrands Sweden in advance. The respective organizations then selected the most suitable interviewee²⁰. All three interviews were conducted in person, lasted between 1 - 1 ½ h, and were tape recorded in order to enable a transcription of the results.

Company	Company Description	Interviewee	Date	Place ²¹
Differ	Brand Consultant Bureau	Linda Hellström, Brand Consultant	Sept 16 th , 2008	Differ, Stockholm
Springtime	PR and Communications Firm	Carin Lembre, HR Manager	Sept 22 nd , 2008	Springtime, Stockholm
Superbrands Sweden	Brand Ranking Organization	Robert Scherman, Managing Director	Sept 16 th , 2008	Svea Reklam, Stockholm

3.4 ANALYSIS OF PRE STUDY DATA

The pre study data analysis consisted of examining and categorizing data from the three conducted interviews (Yin, 1994). A number of categories had first been created in relation to the utilized interview questions. These categories were then reviewed and extended with new categories that arose during the semi-structured interviews. This resulted in the identification of 5 main categories under which similar statements were collected together:

¹⁷ Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

¹⁸ www.differ.com

¹⁹ www.springtime.nu

²⁰ Linda Hellström, Carin Lembre and Robert Scherman were introduced in 1.4

²¹ See appendix 5

1. Superbrands
2. Corporate branding practices in Sweden today
3. The importance of employees and internal branding
4. Organizational culture
5. The importance of involvement from top management and HR in corporate branding

During the literature review, a number of statements from various researchers' work were copied and categorized in order to organize current knowledge of corporate and internal branding. The findings from the three interviews were compared to each other and also to the collected statements from theory in order to achieve replication (Yin, 1994). In this process it became apparent that there was certain agreement between topics claimed to be in further need of research by academics and perceived problems in practice (presented in 1.4).

3.5 MAIN STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

3.5.1 Selection of cases

In case study research *theoretical sampling* should be applied in order to choose cases which are likely to replicate or extend emergent theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). A *multiple-case design* was chosen as Yin (1994) states that using a minimum of two cases greatly increases the quality of a study since it enables replication. With this in mind, three cases were chosen for investigation. The author intended to select companies from different industries. If the study could still arrive at common conclusions from the three cases it was deemed that the external generalizability would be increased (Yin, 1994). Choosing three cases may be contrasted to the suggested minimum of four cases by Eisenhardt (1989). The main reason for not choosing four cases was that the author wanted to interview a number of respondents in each organization and therefore investigating four cases was judged as an excessive endeavour in the given time period.

Importantly, it was believed that *successful B2B-brands were more likely to engage in internal branding practices than less successful B2B-brands*. This belief was based on findings from closely related research. In recent research, Hankinson and Hankinson (1999) found that strong corporate brands have strong corporate cultures. As culture is defined as deeper values and assumptions held by *people* in an organization (Kotter & Heskett, 1992) the author believes that a strong culture is closely related to successful internal branding practices. Furthermore, in Tilley's characterization of leadership brands (1999, p. 182) strong brands are stated to "embody their meaning in all that they do". The author believes that being able to reflect brand meaning in all actions is unlikely achieved without efficient internal branding practices. This is also affirmed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Ind (2004) who argue that *employee* brand commitment is the basis of strong corporate brands.

In order to achieve a selection of successful B2B-brands, the Business Superbrands 2008 ranking of the 100 most successful brands in Sweden²² was used as a population from which to select the three cases. It was considered that any out of the 100 highest ranked Superbrands could be seen as a best practice firm within corporate branding. Therefore, the 15 companies where contact information could most easily be retrieved were contacted by an email which included a description of the study and its purpose. Importantly, companies from *different industries* were contacted for two reasons. First of all the author wanted to investigate if

²² See e.g. www.superbrands.com/sweden

certain internal branding practices could be proposed as important for successful corporate branding *regardless of industry*. And secondly, the author presumed that more honest and rich answers would be given if no direct competitors were included in the study. When it became apparent that the first two companies in the study, *Skanska* and *SAS Sverige* had a Swedish origin the author realized that a Swedish context would increase the study's significance for the participating companies and lead to more relevant findings for Swedish practitioners. To ensure this Swedish context, the third selected company was *Saab*. The companies represent different industries and are of a satisfactorily comparable age. They differ in size, but all have geographically spread-out workforces which should offer the potential to analyze potential similarities in internal branding practices across industrial borders.

Company	Nationality	Founded	Industry	Employees	Superbrands Ranking 2008
Saab	Swedish	1937	Defence / Civil Security	13 700	No. 11 in total (No. 3 in Heavy Industry)
SAS Sverige	Swedish	1946	Commercial Aviation	2 000 (1000 are cabin personnel)	No. 19 in total
Skanska	Swedish	1887	Project development / Construction	60 000	No. 56 in total (No. 1 in Building and Construction)

3.5.2 Presentation of case companies

Today the Saab brand is used by two parties: Saab AB (www.saabgroup.com) and Saab Automobile AB. Saab Automobile is since 1995 not part of Saab AB, but is wholly owned by General Motors. In this study all references concern **Saab AB** (Saab). Saab serves a global market with products, services and solutions ranging from military defence to civil security²³. Its customers are governments, authorities and corporations. The Saab Group is decentralized and organized in 14 business units. Saab's vision is: *"By power of innovation, competence and creativity, our vision is to be a leader in the global evolution, expanding the defence industry to overall human security"*²⁴. The company's core values are:

- Expertise (Kunnande)
- Trust (Förtroende)
- Ambition (Vilja)

Scandinavian Airlines, SAS, (www.sas.se) was founded by a merger of three national airline companies from Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In 2004 **SAS Sverige** became a sovereign joint-stock company within the SAS group. The company's main target group is frequent flyers, regardless if they are business travellers or travelling privately²⁵. SAS Sverige's vision is *"to become the leading and most copied airline in Europe"*²⁶. SAS Sverige wants to be seen as the most innovative and modern airline, which is always one step ahead of competitors. The company strives for "Service and Simplicity" for customers with the core values:

²³ www.saabgroup.com

²⁴ www.saab.brandportal.se/

²⁵ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th, 2008

²⁶ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th, 2008

- Reliability (Pålitlighet)
- Simplicity (Enkelhet)
- Consideration (Omtanke)
- Commitment (Engagemang)

Skanska (www.skanska.se) is one of the world's largest corporations in project development and construction, present in Europe, the US and Latin America²⁷. The parent company, Skanska AB, is located in Stockholm, Sweden, and in Sweden operations are carried out in four business units (representatives from Skanska AB and Skanska Sverige AB have been interviewed). Products and services include commercial, residential and infrastructure development and construction. Skanska's focus areas are: green, customer satisfaction, safety and people. The company's brand attributes²⁸ are:

- Knowledge (Kunskap och kompetens)
- Big heart (Ett stort hjärta)²⁹

3.5.3 Creation of interview questions

The study's research questions were developed into interview questions which were used in data collection. A common criticism to case studies is that the investigator fails to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures (Yin, 1994). A first set of interview questions were created at an early stage of the study, which the author then realized did not sufficiently offer a possibility to provide adequate answers to the research questions. In order to alleviate this problem, the author reviewed current corporate and internal branding research and explored how variables had been investigated in such research. In those cases where no empirical research had been conducted, the author looked into the accepted elements that different variables have been stated to comprise of. After these reviews, the interview questions were re-created and thus believed to be better operationalized. The questions were formulated in a straightforward manner to facilitate the respondents understanding and encourage more precise responses (Yin, 1994). They were also discussed with the contact person in each company and feedback was received that the questions were clear. Some translated examples of interview questions can be found below³⁰:

<p>Research question 1: Core values</p> <p>What are Saab's core values and how do employees learn about these core values? What is the role of core values within brand building at Saab?</p>
<p>Research question 2: Vision</p> <p>What is SAS Sverige's vision and how do employees learn about the vision? What is the role of the vision within brand building at SAS Sverige?</p>

²⁷ www.skanska.se

²⁸ In this study the author interprets brand attributes as equivalent with core values, see chapter 4

²⁹ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th, 2008

³⁰ A full list of interview questions in Swedish can be found in appendix 6 and 7.

Research question 3: <i>Culture</i>
Which cultural values and behaviors are desirable among Skanska's employees and how do they learn about these values and behaviors? How are such values and behaviors connected to brand building?
Research question 4: <i>Internal communication</i>
Which methods are used in brand-related internal communication at Saab? How does internal communication support corporate and internal branding at Saab?
Research question 5: <i>HR-practices</i>
How is the HR-function involved in brand building in SAS Sverige?

The six participants who were directly responsible for corporate or internal branding, internal communication or HR practices responded to the same interview questions (appendix 6). A specific set of interview questions were created for the three non-brand responsible participants as the author wanted to investigate how well-informed they were about branding strategies and practices as well as how much they used internal communication forums (appendix 7). The same main questions were used in these interviews except for a number of questions which concerned specific internal branding practices or communication forums in their respective companies.

3.6 COLLECTION OF MAIN STUDY DATA

The main source of data consisted of interviews, but in order to increase the validity and reliability of the main study, data was also collected from other sources (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989):

Saab	SAS Sverige	Skanska
4 Interviews	4 Interviews	4 Interviews
www.saabgroup.com	www.sas.se	www.skanska.se
Saab Brand Portal	Leadership policy	www.skanska.com
Internal magazine Spirit	Employee policy	www.skanska.com/graphicprofile
Personnel policy	Code of conduct	"Ready, set, go" booklet
Power point presentation "Saab Employer Branding"	Brand booklet "Framtidsresan, SAS Sverige 2011"	Power point presentation "Skanska brand review"
	Booklet "SAS Sverige Bruksanvisningen"	

The criteria used to select interview participants from each company were:

- Three people should be interviewed to enable data triangulation (Yin, 1994)
- One interviewee should have direct responsibility for corporate branding
- One interviewee should have direct responsibility for internal branding, internal communication or HR-practices
- One interviewee should be a *non-brand responsible* employee (marked by the symbol * below)
- All interviewees should be internally approved as able to provide the most accurate information about the organization's brand management activities

In order to find the individuals that matched the selection criteria best, the three companies were involved in the selection process. The list of interviewees can be found below (also see appendix 4 and 5):

Saab AB

Interviewee	Title	Date	Place / Type of interview
Anders Blom	Brand Manager Corporate Communications	Oct 8 th 2008	Head Office, Stockholm
Anders Blom	Brand Manager Corporate Communications	Nov 10 th 2008	Head Office, Stockholm
Mia Nilsson	Head of Employer Branding	Nov 13 th 2008	Telephone interview
Peter Adolfsson*	Director Security Operations	Nov 11 th 2008	Telephone interview

SAS Sverige AB

Interviewee	Title	Date	Place / Type of interview
Andris Zvejnieks	Vice President Communications	Oct 7 th 2008	Telephone Interview
Andris Zvejnieks	Vice President Communications	Oct 27 th 2008	Head Office, Arlanda
Andreas Binz	HR Specialist	Oct 27 th 2008	Head Office, Arlanda
Anna Wahlgren*	Cabin Crew Coach	Nov 12 th 2008	Telephone interview

Skanska AB and Skanska Sverige AB

Interviewee	Title	Date	Place / Type of interview
Maria Lomholt Skanska AB	Group Brand Manager	Nov 19 th 2008	Head Office, Solna
Lina Berndtsson ³¹ Skanska AB	Manager Group Internal Communications	Nov 12 th 2008	Telephone interview
Fredrik Johansson* Skanska Sverige	Market Communicator, Attraction & Recruitment	Oct 3 rd 2008	Head Office, Solna
Fredrik Johansson* Skanska Sverige	Market Communicator, Attraction & Recruitment	Nov 21 st 2008	Telephone interview

In total, twelve interviews were conducted with nine participants from Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska. Six interviews were conducted in person and six per telephone. All respondents were interviewed between 45 min - 2 h and all twelve interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Two interviews were conducted with Anders Blom from Saab and Andris Zvejnieks from SAS Sverige as they requested an initial meeting before the main interview. Fredrik Johansson from Skanska Sverige was interviewed twice as certain interview questions had been further developed since the first interview with him on October 3rd.

The interview questions were sent to all participants in advance so that they could better understand the purpose of the study. The author believed that this would facilitate communication, as the participants could get a feeling for the author's knowledge within the

³¹ Lina Berndtsson left her position at Skanska during the course of this study

area and provide more in-depth answers. It is acknowledged that this may have offered the participants a chance to alter their answers, but the author judged that the positive gains from sending the questions in advance were greater than this risk. Participants were informed that the interviews would be conducted in a semi-structured manner where questions were not static but a general framework which would guide the interview (Yin, 1994). The research questions were not attended to in any particular order and the formulation of the questions was not always exactly the same as the written questions. The author allowed interviewees to speak freely about issues and used follow-up questions which were natural in relation to the previously discussed topic. Before ending the interview, the author made sure that all interview questions had been satisfactorily attended to. The interviewees were also asked to add any important facts that they felt had not been brought to attention. Recording the interviews allowed a direct reconstruction of interviews as they were all transcribed in detail. Some field notes were also created in order to build overlap between data collection and analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). The most important use of documents and web based information was to confirm and augment the evidence from interviews (Yin, 1994). It is realized that the documents may have been written for a specific purpose and audiences other than those of the case study, but they are still considered crucial in order to strengthen validity and reliability.

3.7 ANALYSIS OF MAIN STUDY DATA

With the intention of better addressing the research questions and revealing needed adjustments to data collection, the data was collected and analyzed simultaneously. Data analysis took its starting point in the research questions and the main method of analysis was *cross-case synthesis* (Yin, 1994). This method enabled both within-case and cross-case analysis (Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989).

1a) As a first step, an *individual data base* was constructed for each of the 12 interviews with the 9 participants.

1 b) The responses from the three participants in each company were then compared to each other in order to create a *case data base* (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994). By doing so, similar and dissimilar results from the three interviews began to emerge within each company in line with the *pattern matching* technique described by Yin (1994). The interview data was also compared to other sources of data which had been obtained. Tables consisting of the research questions were created for each case data base and the evidence was placed underneath each research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). If results were not uniform within a case, this was clearly commented.

2 a) As a second step, each case data base was compared to the other two case data bases as well as to the theoretical models within corporate and internal branding and HR-practices. Documents were created which displayed the data from the three cases according to relevant research questions. The analysis of the documents made it possible to draw cross-case conclusions by searching for *within-group similarities* and *inter-group differences*.

2 b) If two or more cases supported the same theory, replication could be claimed (Yin, 1994) and generalizability was extended. It was investigated if theories seemed to be supported or rejected by cases. Results that were non-uniform when compared to current theoretical models provided an opportunity to challenge such models and develop current knowledge.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.8.1 Validity

Construct validity is defined by Yin (1994, p. 34) as “establishing the correct operational measures for the concepts being studied”. In the author’s view this construct has a lot in common with the definition of *internal validity* which refers to “the extent to which the study’s results correspond with reality” (Merriam, 1994, p. 177). Within corporate branding and business identity research there is presently no consensus which concepts are appropriate for describing this phenomenon (Balmer, 2001). As there is no agreement of different concepts’ precise meaning or the relationship between concepts, one cannot uncritically use the terminology in the research design. The ambiguity of the terminology affects how concepts are defined, studied, understood and spread in academia and practice today. This may have decreased the quality of the conducted study, as the author’s definition of the studied concepts may not be shared by the participating interviewees - or those interpreting the results of the finished report.

However, the author has implemented a number of suggested measures to increase construct validity. First, the author conducted a detailed literature review to learn more about the researched variables and how they could be investigated in a satisfactory manner, which has been stated to strengthen construct validity (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, as was stated in 1 b) above, multiple sources of data were used in order to enable *data triangulation* which increases validity (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989). Merriam (1994) further states that in order to strengthen validity the presented re-construction of reality must be trustworthy for those who have participated in the study. This was ensured by first providing participants with interview questions before the actual interview so that they could collect their thoughts. Then to further strengthen construct validity and internal validity the respondents were asked to evaluate and correct a draft of the context and citations that would represent their involvement in the study before the report was finalized (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994). Internal validity is also considered to have been strengthened as similar responses were obtained from different interviewees, both within cases (1 b) and between cases (2 a). Thus, construct validity and internal validity are considered to be satisfactory.

External validity is defined as “establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized” (Yin, 1994, p. 34). It is important to note that case studies are considered generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations. The case study method’s main goal is to expand and generalize theories in line with *analytical generalization* as opposed to statistical generalization (Yin, 1994). External validity was increased by applying the replication logic suggested by Merriam (1994) and Yin (1994) (2 b). In line with Merriam’s recommendations (1994), the external validity was also strengthened by providing a rich description of the results for those interested in transferring the results to their own situation (see chapter 4). The findings relating to research question 1, 3 and 4 were supported in all three companies. The findings relating to research question 2 were supported in 2 out of 3 companies. Thus, the generalizability of the presented model of how internal branding practices may contribute to corporate branding (in chapter 5) is deemed to be high regardless of industry affinity. The presented model is viewed as a contribution to the creation of general guidelines for successful corporate brand building, and organizations interested in strengthening their corporate brands are able to apply those aspects of the model which they deem most suitable in their own situation. The proposed model may be particularly applicable for larger corporations with an international presence or spread-out workforce as the research

is based on such companies. The external validity relating to research question 5 is deemed as satisfactory as the findings relating to valuable HR-practices were supported either in 2 out of 3 or all three companies. The proposed contributions from HR-practices to brand building are thus considered as significant across industrial borders. But the author recommends that further research of HR-contributions to corporate and internal branding is conducted in order to develop current knowledge.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability “demonstrates that the operations of the study can be repeated with the same results” (Yin, 1994, p. 34). According to Merriam (1994), there are multiple interpretations of what is happening, or multiple realities, which indicates that there are no fixed points of reference from which one can repeatedly begin investigations. Yin (1994), on the other hand, states that reliability should be carefully strengthened by minimizing the errors and biases in the study so that later investigators can arrive at the same findings and conclusions. According to Yin (1994) the reliability problem should be approached by making as many steps as operational as possible. Therefore, the author aimed to increase reliability by carefully documenting all procedures and developing thorough *case data bases* as well as triangulate data (Merriam, 1994; Yin, 1994) (1 b). The case data bases consist of interview questions, tape recorded interviews, transcriptions of interviews, notes based on interviews, internal documents from companies and documented analysis of data. These data bases are available in electronic form to future researchers. Furthermore, to increase reliability a chain of evidence has been maintained as recommended by Yin (1994): there are sufficient citations to relevant portions of the case study database in the report (chapter 4), the circumstances under which evidence was collected, such as the time and place of interviews, is revealed (3.6, appendix 5) and the link between the research questions and the presented evidence is clearly indicated (chapter 4). As the recommendations by Merriam (1994) and Yin (1994) have been followed to strengthen reliability, reliability is considered satisfactory.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the study's main results are presented and analyzed. The presented citations reflect the participating companies' current situation and have been approved by all participants. The citations have also been verified by other sources of data when possible. Research questions 1 and 2 are considered to share such overlap that they are best presented together.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION

The results in Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska are briefly summarized in the table below³². Since the results were replicated to a sizeable extent in all three cases, the author judged that it was important to avoid repetition in data presentation. The results for all three companies are therefore presented and analyzed in relation to each *research question* below as opposed to a presentation of results in each company followed by a comparative analysis of the three cases. Cross-case similarities and differences are thus continuously analyzed in sections 4.2 - 4.6.

Summary	Saab	SAS Sverige	Skanska
Core values are a main building block in corporate and internal branding	X	X	(X)
Top management seems to strive to unify core brand values and cultural values	X	X	X
Vision appears to be used more as a management tool than explicit internal branding tool	X	X	-
Subcultures appear to co-exist in harmony and strengthen the corporate brand	(X)	-	X
Internal communication is highly utilized in internal branding	X	X	X
Acknowledgment appears to be an important element in internal branding	X	X	X
Involvement appears to be an important element in internal branding	(X)	X	(X)
HR-practices seem to contribute to branding within recruitment, brand training and internal evaluations	X	X	X

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 - Core values and Vision

4.2.1 Core values

First, it was of interest to identify the participating companies' *core values* and investigate how these values contribute to corporate and internal brand building. The Corporate Brand Managers from Saab and SAS Sverige (see footnote)³³, as well as internal documents³⁴, indicate that these companies perceive core values as a main foundation of brand building:

Saab has three core values which guide our work: expertise, trust and ambition. They are based on how we want to be perceived as well as how we plan to achieve our vision. If we

³² X = results are present in case, (X) = results are partially present in case, - = results are not present in case

³³ Those responsible for corporate branding in the three companies all have different titles. In those instances where 2 or 3 responses coincide, the participants may jointly be referred to as Corporate Brand Managers

³⁴ E.g, Saab Brand Portal and www.saabgroup.com and SAS' "Framtidsresan" and "Medarbetarskap"

*translate these values into concrete actions we can positively influence perceptions of our company and develop our brand in a desired manner.*³⁵ **Saab**

*Our core values are reliability, simplicity, consideration and commitment. We want to be perceived as reliable and considerate, our services should be seen as simple and we should be recognized as committed to our work and customers. These values reflect how we want to be perceived and how we should act; this is something all employees can relate to.*³⁶ **SAS Sverige**

In Saab and SAS Sverige it appears as if core values are implemented with the same purpose: to *influence external perceptions* of the brand and *guide employee behavior*. The importance of translating core values into concrete actions was highlighted both by Saab's Brand Manager Corporate Communications and SAS Sverige's Vice President Communications. This suggests that core values not only contribute to corporate brand *positioning*, but importantly act as a *cultural element*. Statements by the participants and internal documents³⁷ reflect a desire to *unite brand values and cultural values* in order to strengthen the brand.

Skanska's Group Brand Manager labelled the foundation of brand building efforts differently as she referred to *brand attributes* as opposed to core values³⁸:

*On the one hand we want to be perceived as a highly knowledgeable, competent and international market leader within our industry. But we are also a company with a big heart; we care about employees, customers and society and are deeply committed to environmental issues, ethics and safety.*³⁹ **Skanska**

The author argues that Skanska uses the term "brand attributes" for concepts which when compared to practices in Saab and SAS Sverige appear to be equivalent with core values. During the interview with Skanska's Group Brand Manager the brand attributes "Knowledge" and "Big Heart" were stated to be used both to influence external perceptions of Skanska in relation to its competitors and as a means to guide employee behavior. Furthermore, the document "Översyn av Skanska's varumärke" reflects a desire to unite the corporate culture with the brand attributes. The author thus considers the labelling and implementation of brand attributes equivalent with core values and concludes that a distinct number of values are used as a foundation of corporate and internal brand building in all three companies. Core values appear to contribute to brand building by *influencing external perceptions* of the brand and *guiding employee behavior* as part of corporate culture.

It is interesting to note that *core brand values* are well-known by all three non-brand responsables and implemented in work activities by participants from Saab and SAS Sverige:

*Ambition, expertise and trust. Yes, I know our values and feel comfortable with them. I am certain that everyone else at my department feels the same way, we often talk about it. These values are part of our job, they guide our actions*⁴⁰. **Saab**

³⁵ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

³⁶ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

³⁷ E.g. Saab brand portal and SAS Sverige's "Framtidsresan"

³⁸ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, December 18th 2008

³⁹ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

⁴⁰ Peter Adolfsson, Saab AB, November 11th 2008

*Reliability, commitment, simplicity and consideration - I definitely know them. I use our values when I communicate internally and with customers. I think they are a good representation of what SAS Sverige stands for, and should stand for. I transmit these values to employees in the employee development meetings that I am responsible for.*⁴¹ **SAS Sverige**

*You mean Big heart and Brain? Previously, these values were mostly used internally, but now we are going to use them externally as well. We would like to reflect a truer image of our company, and especially the combination of being knowledgeable and caring.*⁴² **Skanska**

These results appear to further substantiate the valuable contributions of core values in internal branding. The author speculates that core values are easily accessible to employees, as they often are summarized in a few words which employees can remember.

4.2.2 Vision and Core values

In several interviews core values and *vision* were discussed in relation to each other. Even though vision was recognized as important by the Corporate Brand Managers in all three companies, opinions differed concerning how useful the vision is in *internal branding*. For example, SAS Sverige's Vice President Communications recognized that the vision may not always be understood by employees:

*Our vision is to become the most copied airline in Europe. Sometimes it is difficult to explain this internally. It is not self-evident that all employees understand why we would want to be copied; that the vision is a driving force to always remain ahead of competitors. Therefore, there is a risk that the vision becomes a management term which means a lot to us, but not to employees.*⁴³ **SAS Sverige**

The Corporate Brand Managers at Saab and SAS Sverige as well as Saab's Head of Employer Branding comment that internal branding should focus on *how to achieve the vision* instead by implementing core values:

*In internal brand building I believe the core brand values are more important to implement among employees than the vision. The vision should be a driving force, but it is somewhat difficult to grasp, abstract even. I think that employees can relate to the core values more easily in their everyday work and start applying them in their actions.*⁴⁴ **Saab**

*I definitely believe that the three core values are more useful internally than the vision. But it may be that I feel stronger for them than the vision because I was part of defining them. I agree with the words competence and creativity in our vision, but I'd rather use the core values in my work.*⁴⁵ **Saab**

*Core values are more useful than the vision when building a corporate culture and in internal branding. The vision provides a long term image of what we would like to be. The core values tell us more explicitly what we need to do in order to reach that vision.*⁴⁶ **SAS Sverige**

⁴¹ Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, November 12th 2008

⁴² Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, November 21st 2008

⁴³ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁴⁴ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁴⁵ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

⁴⁶ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

Saab and SAS Sverige thus emphasize the company's core values as a highly important internal branding element, and it seems as if both companies consider *core values a more useful internal branding tool than the vision*. The interview with Skanska's Group Brand Manager, on the other hand, contrasted these results as she appeared to find the concept of vision less complex internally:

*We need the vision to know where we are heading. And when we know where we are heading, we need to know how to get there and that is where the brand attributes come in. These attributes reflect: "how we do things around here to achieve our goals". The vision and the brand are definitely connected.*⁴⁷ **Skanska**

However, Skanska's Manager Group Internal Communications indicated an opinion more in line with the statements of participants from Saab and SAS Sverige:

*One could say that the vision is being developed right now. When the final wording is presented I am convinced that it will be straightforward and simple. But I don't think that the vision will become an internal slogan or anything like that.*⁴⁸ **Skanska**

Skanska's Group Brand Manager appeared to place equal emphasis on vision and core values during the interview, whereas the Manager Group Internal Communication doubted that the vision would become useful internally. It is plausible that the Manager Group Internal Communication's active involvement in internal brand building has influenced her view of which concepts are valuable in internal branding. Furthermore, as her opinion is shared by Corporate Brand Managers from Saab and SAS Sverige the author is inclined to place greater emphasis on her view of how core values and vision contribute to internal branding than the Group Brand Manager's view. The author thus concludes that the vision is valuable when top management formulates the strategic direction for the corporate brand, but that the *vision in its current form is not perceived as an explicit internal branding tool*.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3 - Culture

Participants from all three companies - with corporate brand responsibility as well as HR or internal communications responsibility - all agree that if a company has chosen a corporate branding strategy, *corporate culture* becomes a vital part of the brand which *transmits desired brand values and behaviors* to employees⁴⁹:

*If a company has chosen a corporate branding strategy, culture becomes a vital part of the brand and must be included in the brand. In my opinion, issues relating to the brand and issues relating to culture often are the same in corporate branding.*⁵⁰ **Saab**

*The culture we want to build is based on "Service and Simplicity" and our four core values. Our main challenge is to enforce the initiated cultural turnaround. The new competitive environment has led to cultural changes as customers demand a new kind of service. Providing such service requires a different behavior than we are used to.*⁵¹ **SAS Sverige**

⁴⁷ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

⁴⁸ Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB, November 12th 2008

⁴⁹ Anders Blom and Mia Nilsson, Saab, Andris Zvejnieks and Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB

⁵⁰ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁵¹ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

From the statements above it seems as if culture acts as an organizational structure which stores brand related information and aids management in continuously building the corporate brand *without being personally involved in all brand building activities*. However, it seems as if a unified corporate culture may not be unproblematic to achieve in large, international companies or companies with a spread-out workforce such as SAS Sverige:

*With the old brand profile, sales personnel were supposed to convey feelings, explain the destination, and maybe give a personal restaurant recommendation. Today, out of respect for those waiting in line, sales personnel should ensure that the sale is made quickly without small talk. There is no time for conveying feelings as service and simplicity are important now. This change is quite difficult to grasp for employees who have worked many years at SAS.*⁵² **SAS Sverige**

It thus seems as if SAS Sverige's employees have not gotten used to the enhanced customer focus and find it unfamiliar to interact with customers based on how the competitive environment and air travel experience has changed. This leads the author to believe that there currently are *manager-employee culture gaps* within SAS Sverige.

When further analyzing the results, it appears as if *subcultures* are present in all three companies as opposed to one unified culture which is shared by all organizational members:

*There are definitely different subcultures within SAS Sverige. There has been a problem that cabin personnel have not received feedback from managers. Because of this, they have created their own culture separate from management where they feel that they have to take care of themselves. This may lead to an "us" vs. "them" problem. We are working to unite the culture now because we believe that it is central for employee motivation and customer satisfaction.*⁵³ **SAS Sverige**

*The results of the internal focus group interviews that I conducted showed that there is a main culture within our decentralized organization. No matter if one works in California or the Czech Republic, there is one culture. But of course certain cultural elements are stronger in different parts of the world; there are subcultures within the main culture. This is a good thing, since we need a strong local presence to succeed in our industry.*⁵⁴ **Skanska**

*One of the main reasons for uniting Saab under the same brand [which was initiated a few years back] was that top management realized that each business unit had their own vision, values and culture. To become and act as one Saab and face current market conditions we cannot have that amount of different internal cultures. We are agreeing on a new culture right now, but it is a difficult process which requires both patience and understanding.*⁵⁵ **Saab**

It seems as if norms, values and behaviors vary between different *business units* at Saab and Skanska and that variations occur between different *functional groups* at SAS Sverige. At SAS Sverige, top management may have to evaluate if the cabin personnel's subculture is presently harming brand building efforts as cabin crew members do not appear to have accepted the "new way of doing things". If their cultural values differ from desired brand values, the corporate brand image may be distorted when customers come in contact with the

⁵² Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th, 2008

⁵³ Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th, 2008

⁵⁴ Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB, November 12th 2008

⁵⁵ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

SAS Sverige brand. The results from Skanska indicate a more uniform corporate culture⁵⁶. Subcultures appear to be viewed as positive and even necessary by Skanska in order to become a market leader. At Saab the corporate culture has historically not been unified, which has rendered brand building less effective⁵⁷. Top management has therefore recently decided that the culture must be harmonized to a greater extent if the brand is to be strengthened. To conclude, corporate culture appears to *aid brand managers in the transmission of brand values and behaviors* to employees. There are no unified corporate cultures in the investigated successful corporate brands as *subcultures* are present in all three cases. In Skanska subcultures appear to be an asset in brand building, whereas subcultures in Saab and SAS Sverige do not appear to satisfactorily contribute to corporate brand building at the moment.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4

4.4.1 Internal communication

Internal communication is regarded an essential element of internal brand building in all three companies and they all utilize multiple *internal communication methods and channels*⁵⁸:

Saab	SAS Sverige	Skanska
Overlapping results:		
Intranet, Saab net	Intranet, SAS Portal	Intranet
Internal magazine Spirit	Internal magazine Inside	Internal magazine Coast to Coast
Internal magazine Transfer		Internal magazine Worldwide
Code of conduct	Code of conduct	Code of conduct
Informational web-films	12 minute film of breakfast meetings at crew base	“Ready, set, go” film given to new employees
	12 minute web-TV each month with current news	
Brand road show - internal open lectures	Framtidsresan internal training: e-learning and workshop	Brand review training session for marketers / communicators
	Customer interaction workshop	Open brand review lectures
Company specific results:		
Brand portal	Breakfast meetings once a month for all employees	Focus group interviews with employees and students
Brand value posters	CEO newsletters	Message grids (communication guidelines in tabular form)
Personnel policy	Employee development meetings	News hub
www.saabgroup.com	Employees in marketing communications	“Ready, set, go” booklet given to new employees
<i>Planned in the future at Saab:</i>	Employee policy (“Medarbetarskap”)	Site branding
<i>Identify brand ambassadors</i>	Framtidsresan booklet and CD	Introductory course for new employees
<i>Internal brand booklet</i>	Leadership policy (“Ledarskap”)	www.skanska.com/graphicprofile
<i>Storytelling</i>	Market council incl. employees	
<i>Workshops</i>	Monday meetings with leaders	

⁵⁶ Although the author did not have access to the study on which the Manager Group Internal Communications based her statement concerning the uniform corporate culture

⁵⁷ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁵⁸ Sources: interviews, documents and web pages. Four of Saab’s future communication forums are presented.

	SAS Sverige continued	
Company specific results:		
	“SAS Sverige Bruksanvisning”	
	Storytelling	
	Thursday meetings at crew base every week for cabin crew	
	Walk a mile in my shoes - visiting other departments	

As can be seen above, Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska share overlap between certain communication *channels* and *methods*:

- Implementing an *intranet*
- Distributing an *internal magazine*
- Formulating a “*code of conduct*” document
- Providing information to employees not solely in written form, but also through *films*
- Engaging in some kind of *open brand lecture* or *brand building workshops*, although not on a regular basis
- Utilizing organizational *leaders* to spread messages further in the organization

Central communication methods seem to dominate the overlap between the three companies with information supplied through an intranet, internal magazine, code of conduct document or film. Interestingly, only SAS Sverige has created an internal brand booklet, which has been distributed to all employees. Although *leadership* is not included in the study, the author would like to mention that all three companies agreed that top management is in need of help from leaders at lower levels in order to succeed in internal branding efforts⁵⁹. Brand-related information is thus supplied to employees through leaders, who receive information from top management, in all three companies. All three companies have also engaged in some kind of *open lecture or workshop activities* where employees from different levels within the organization can interact and discuss brand-related issues. This indicates that top management has made an effort to communicate directly with staff.

It seems as if *web-based channels* such as the *intranet* or *brand portal* provide future possibilities to develop internal communication. Saab’s Head of Employer branding explained that the company’s brand portal is not static and that she and others can add information to it⁶⁰, and Skanska Sverige invites employees to blog on the intranet⁶¹. As another *interactive form of communication*, Saab plans to use *storytelling* in internal branding in the future⁶² and at SAS Sverige storytelling has already become a strategic tool in internal branding⁶³. Corporate stories have been documented and sorted underneath each core value. These stories are available for those who want to exemplify the corporate culture externally or internally.

Participants from all three companies underline that employees must be motivated to *search for information on their own*.⁶⁴ The intranet is specifically emphasized in brand building at

⁵⁹ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, Anders Blom, Saab, and Maria Lomholt, Skanska

⁶⁰ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

⁶¹ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, October 3rd 2008

⁶² Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁶³ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, December 14th 2008

⁶⁴ Mia Nilsson, Saab, Andreas Binz and Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, and Lina Berndtsson, Skanska

Saab and Skanska, whereas SAS Sverige has a problem with the cabin personnel not spending enough time on the ground to take as much part of the information on the intranet:

*Employees mainly come in contact with the brand and our values through the intranet, Saab net, and our web page. The intranet contains tools, documents, directives and policies which employees may need. It is continuously updated with news, almost every day actually.*⁶⁵ **Saab**

*The intranet is our most important channel for internal communication. It contains all information and tools which employees may need. Here they can download our logotype, visit our media bank, find our values, read stories about when Skanska has been at its best and review presentations.*⁶⁶ **Skanska**

*The intranet can be reached from any computer in the world; each employee has a code key. But our main challenge is to assure that cabin personnel actively search for information; they do not attend to information as much as our employees on the ground do.*⁶⁷ **SAS Sverige**

As SAS Sverige does not have the same possibility to use the intranet in internal branding the company has focused on creating *meeting forums*, such as “meetings at crew base on Thursdays” and enabling *personal interaction* between employees. The company also appears to have evaluated *in which way employees prefer to search for and process information* and has developed regular TV-programs for those less inclined to read written materials:

*SAS Sverige’s greatest challenge is that employees are spread-out, which makes it a lot more difficult to create buy-in for the brand. We try to create as much possibility for dialogue and interaction as possible.*⁶⁸ **SAS Sverige**

*We have a meeting every Thursday at crew base which is held by one of the leaders. It is focused on dialogue and bridging the gap between top management and cabin personnel. Apart from these Thursday meetings we also have breakfast meetings once a month for all SAS Sverige’s employees. We film these breakfast meetings and post a 12-minute summary on the intranet and run this 12-minute summary on a TV-screen at crew base. Many of our employees are not inclined to pay attention to written information; therefore we have started using other media, such as TV.*⁶⁹ **SAS Sverige**

In line with SAS Sverige’s efforts, Skanska has also implemented methods to *simplify employees’ information search and processing* as the company provides a *news hub*, where employees can subscribe to relevant news to their email. Skanska is also creating a *message grid* where all information relating to how the brand should be communicated internally and externally will be collected in tabular form:

*We have a hub, where employees and external stakeholders can subscribe to customized news, e.g. news relating to a specific country. News alerts are sent by email, but can also be received by sms if this is preferred.*⁷⁰ **Skanska**

⁶⁵ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁶⁶ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

⁶⁷ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁶⁸ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 7th 2008

⁶⁹ Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, November 12th 2008

⁷⁰ Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB, November 12th 2008

*We are developing something called a message grid; it is a table of the messages we want to convey concerning our brand attributes, focus areas etc. The concern version refers to the bigger picture. Then each unit is supposed to develop the message grid one step further. Collecting our desired messages and how we should communicate in tables like this will be a very useful tool for us.*⁷¹ **Skanska**

Saab has not yet implemented all of the company's planned branding practices as the Brand Manager Corporate Communications is fairly new in his position. But one can observe that he seems to share SAS Sverige's view that *personal interaction* is essential in internal branding:

*One should not forget the importance of personal meetings in internal brand building. I like to call it being a brand missionary; one becomes a brand priest when meeting with employees.*⁷² **Saab**

*I would like to use workshops more in the future. First we should conduct workshops with top management to finalize the new brand platform and then we should conduct workshops which reveal who our brand ambassadors internally are. These ambassadors are needed when developing programs and methods to internalize practices among employees.*⁷³ **Saab**

It appears as if central communication methods contribute to corporate and internal branding in all three companies by *supplying desired brand-information to employees*. It also seems as if more interactive communication methods such as brand lectures or workshops have contributed to brand building in all three companies by enabling employees from different levels and functions to *more freely discuss and develop their brand knowledge*. In SAS Sverige and Saab *forums for personal interaction* are stated to play an important role when transmitting brand-related information internally. Furthermore, all three companies agree that employees must be motivated to *search for information on their own*. During the past few years, SAS Sverige and Skanska have started implementing communications channels *that simplify employees' information search and processing* as an effort to develop and strengthen the corporate brand. The author thus concludes that such initiatives offer important contributions to brand building.

4.4.2 Channels used by non-brand responsables

During the interviews, the author tried to establish which communication channels were most utilized by the non-brand responsables:

*I use Saab net all the time in my work. I also participated in the brand road show lecture. I thought that it was a good work shop that also gave us a chance to talk to top management about the presented issues. I have visited the Brand portal, but not that much.*⁷⁴ **Saab**

*I look at our intranet every day, read our magazine "Inside" and participate at Thursday meetings at crew base. I was very positive towards the SAS Sverige certificate workshop and use the booklet Framtidsresan once in a while. I think it is a great example of how all important information can be collected in one document.*⁷⁵ **SAS Sverige**

⁷¹ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

⁷² Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁷³ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁷⁴ Peter Adolfsson, Saab AB, November 11th 2008

⁷⁵ Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, November 12th 2008

*I use Skanska Sverige's intranet every day. On the intranet I have access to information about different departments, our vision, code of conduct and contact information. I also read our magazine "Worldwide". I use the message grid in my contact with external communications suppliers so that we always secure that the correct graphic profile is conveyed.*⁷⁶ **Skanska**

The results indicate that the participating non-brand responsables in all three companies utilize *centrally supplied information*, provided through the intranet, the most. It thus seems as if central communication channels where employees can search for the information they currently need offers valuable contributions to internal brand building. But it should be noted that such centrally developed channels are also most accessible for employees in all three companies. *Brand lectures* and *workshops* are positively mentioned by participants from Saab and SAS Sverige. The non-brand responsables explained that such efforts enable them to develop and deepen their understanding of the brand. At SAS Sverige, the Cabin Crew Coach also emphasized the *Thursday meetings* at crew base as an important forum where employees from different levels in the organization can discuss organizational and brand issues.

It is important to note that the non-brand responsables were selected by the companies and that they therefore most probably represent *highly informed employees* who are interested in brand building. The author therefore speculates that some internal communication efforts probably fail to reach employees far away from top management at Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 5 - HR contributions to corporate branding

4.5.1 HR involvement in corporate branding

Before presenting the results relating to perceived contributions from HR-practices to corporate brand building, it is of interest to mention how the HR-function is involved in brand building in the investigated companies. The Corporate Brand Managers at Saab and SAS Sverige recognize that the HR-function should be involved in corporate brand building:

*I am currently developing the collaboration with the HR department; I want to work more closely together with this department.*⁷⁷ **Saab**

*This document, Framtidsresan, is proof of cooperation between the Information, Market and HR department.*⁷⁸ **SAS Sverige**

As a contrast, Skanska's Group Brand Manager did not mention the HR department, but emphasized the importance of the Communications department when transferring information:

*We have a forum called the Communication Council. In this council, all those responsible for communications and marketing on a national level meet personally twice a year. We delegate the responsibility to transfer information within each business unit to the Communications Manager in the respective unit.*⁷⁹ **Skanska**

⁷⁶ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, November 21st 2008

⁷⁷ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁷⁸ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁷⁹ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

Concerning differing perceptions, it is also interesting to contrast responses within each company. As can be seen above, SAS Sverige's Vice President Communications explains that there is an established cooperation with the HR-department, but the HR specialist at SAS Sverige reflects a desire to become more involved in brand building activities:

*The HR and internal communications departments unfortunately do not cooperate that much. From the HR perspective, there is a heavy focus on labor law. Hence, the information department has focused on some of the cultural issues. Our cooperation could be much better.*⁸⁰ **SAS Sverige**

One could thus speculate that the Communications department is more satisfied with current brand building cooperation than the HR department in SAS Sverige. The results in Saab reflect a similar situation where the company's Head of Employer branding acknowledged the Communications department's efforts to increase cooperation, but explained that Communications and HR sometimes have different viewpoints. In line with this notion, Skanska's Manager Group Internal Communications, who has a background in HR, recognized the improved cooperation between the departments but also stated that cooperation could be improved:

*We collaborate with the Communications department in projects such as the employee satisfaction survey. We have realized in our "employer branding team" that HR and Communications view brand management differently. We have had to discuss different issues and find a way to agree upon things.*⁸¹ **Saab**

*I felt that the cooperation between the Communications and the HR department grew stronger through the conducted brand review. HR should be involved in issues concerning core values; otherwise the cooperation is not optimal. The cooperation with other departments can always be improved.*⁸² **Skanska**

The results point out that *HR involvement in corporate brand building* seems to be neither self-evident nor entirely uncomplicated in Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska. The HR departments in all three companies do not appear to be clearly involved in corporate and internal brand building (with the exception of employer branding, see 6.3) and HR-practitioners seem to desire a greater involvement in branding efforts or a further development of current cooperation with the Communications department.

4.5.2 Contributions of HR practices to corporate brand building

The results in Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska show that HR-practices can contribute to internal branding through brand-related *recruitment*:

*We discuss the recruitment process a lot. Our messages are definitely connected to who we want to attract. Saab must find people that truly identify themselves with our values and apply them as a general frame of reference.*⁸³ **Saab**

⁸⁰ Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁸¹ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

⁸² Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB, November 12th 2008

⁸³ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

*Unfortunately we haven't been able to recruit that much these past few years, but when we do it is a critical competitive advantage to have truly service-minded staff with the right profile, attitude and social skills to transmit our values.*⁸⁴ **SAS Sverige**

*The HR department looks at what applicants value in life, and if their values are in line with what Skanska offers, and wants to offer customers.*⁸⁵ **Skanska**

The importance of brand-related recruitment is specifically visible in Saab and Skanska, where there is a developed Employer Branding function⁸⁶ responsible for attraction and recruitment issues. Attracting and hiring “the right people” appears to be viewed as highly important for corporate brand development and success.

The results also suggest that HR-practices can contribute in *phasing in of new employees*. SAS has not recruited new cabin personnel for the past eight years⁸⁷, but the booklet “Framtidsresan” and the employee policy pamphlet, which the HR department has been involved in creating, are meant to be used in employee introductions⁸⁸. At Skanska new employees e.g. receive the booklet “Ready, set, go” and participate in a two-day introductory course hosted by the HR function⁸⁹ and at Saab new employees are encouraged to read the personnel policy created by the HR department⁹⁰.

Corporate Brand Managers at Saab and SAS Sverige explain that HR-practices are not solely important in phasing in of *new* employees, but are also valuable when internalizing brand values among *current* employees, and in brand-related internal training for them⁹¹:

*Values should not be either a branding or HR issue; it is relevant for both departments to internalize brand values among employees.*⁹² **Saab**

*The information and HR department jointly created the Framtidsresan booklet and then the HR department implemented the training that led to the SAS Sverige certificate.*⁹³ **SAS Sverige**

At Saab and SAS Sverige it was also mentioned that HR-practices may build the corporate brand through *evaluating brand understanding and commitment among employees*. At Skanska, perceived HR-contributions shares similarities with this view as the participating Market Communicator Attraction and Recruitment believed that HR practices can strengthen the corporate brand by assuring that the brand promise is based on *true internal capabilities*:

*The employee survey measures total satisfaction, our personnel policy and values, and Saab as a work place. The HR department is responsible for this survey. I think that they could measure more variables related to the brand.*⁹⁴ **Saab**

⁸⁴ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁸⁵ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, October 3rd 2008

⁸⁶ Employer branding represents a firm's efforts to promote a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

⁸⁷ Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, November 12th 2008

⁸⁸ Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁸⁹ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, October 3rd 2008

⁹⁰ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

⁹¹ Anders Blom, Saab and Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige

⁹² Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

⁹³ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁹⁴ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

*I evaluated the “SAS Sverige certificate” training program. Among the administrative personnel we achieved our goals to create greater understanding and commitment. Among cabin personnel we achieved our goals to a certain extent.*⁹⁵ **SAS Sverige**

*If the marketing department was to handle branding efforts entirely alone, I think there would be a risk that we promised more than we could live up to. HR is very valuable in evaluating what can actually be achieved in order to assure that promises are kept.*⁹⁶ **Skanska**

It appears as if HR-practices are valuable in traditionally mentioned areas such as *recruitment and phasing in of new employees* in all three companies. Participants from all three companies also state that HR-practices can contribute to brand building by developing more effective internal branding practices which are based on *evaluations of brand understanding and commitment among employees*, as well as *internal capabilities*. When analyzing the results in Saab and SAS Sverige further, it also appears as if HR-practices are valuable in *internalization of brand values / brand training* for current employees.

4.6 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

As a final note, the results indicate that two concepts which were not directly encountered in the literature review of corporate and internal branding research⁹⁷ may be important in internal branding: *acknowledgment* and *involvement*.

4.6.1 Acknowledgment (Erkännande)

The importance of *acknowledging employees* in brand building was reflected in all three companies. Participants from Saab and Skanska discussed the importance of providing employees' with the possibility to put forward personal feedback and suggestions, and actually see the results of such feedback in brand building and organizational development:

*The results from our employee satisfaction survey are discussed in each department in the business units, and employees are able to directly interact with their managers and discuss their feedback to our company. The results are not the main point here; it is creating a dialogue about these issues between managers and employees.*⁹⁸ **Saab**

*In an internal survey we saw that employees felt that it was important that we reflected a Skanska which is warmer and more modern. When we changed the graphic profile employees therefore reacted very positively. The employees felt that the new graphic profile was proof that they had been acknowledged.*⁹⁹ **Skanska**

It thus seems as if employees' opinions and contributions should be recognized in order to strengthen corporate brands. In SAS Sverige acknowledging employees has even been taken one step further. Here, top management not only acknowledges employees' suggested organizational developments in the “Market council”, but also communicates to employees and external stakeholders that the employees are the essence of the corporate brand:

⁹⁵ Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

⁹⁶ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, October 3rd 2008

⁹⁷ It is plausible that these concepts could be found in *management* or *behavioral science* research not reviewed by the author

⁹⁸ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

⁹⁹ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

*When we launched the campaign for "Nya Europaflyget" we used images of our employees in all marketing communications. This was communicated internally and became a great internal boost; that pilots and stewardesses were chosen to represent SAS Sverige. It was a signal from top management that the cabin personnel are the company's most valuable resource when it comes to building the brand.*¹⁰⁰ **SAS Sverige**

The results lead the author to conclude that *acknowledgment* is an important internal branding element in Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska. All three companies strive to make sure that employees know that their feedback and contributions are valued when building the organization and brand. It appears as if acknowledgment may be an instrument to increase employee commitment as acknowledged employees are more motivated, better understand their role in corporate brand building and can achieve personal development within the organization. *Personal development* was commented as important in relation to employee commitment to the organization and brand by participants from all three companies¹⁰¹.

4.6.2 Involvement (Delaktighet)

Actively *involving employees* in business development and in business functions other than their own in order to strengthen the corporate brand is evident in SAS Sverige:

*After the e-learning and workshop we implemented a program called "Walk a mile in my shoes", which is still running. This program enables employees to voluntarily spend one day with a co-worker from an entirely different department and learn about their work. Many employees from sales support have joined cabin crew members for day on board in order to learn more about the product they are selling. This is a great way to get a bigger picture of our business and brand.*¹⁰² **SAS Sverige**

*After the yearly employee satisfaction survey the cabin crew puts together a team of twenty stewards and stewardesses who are appointed to analyze the employee satisfaction results and come up with direct suggestions how employee satisfaction can be enhanced in areas with the lowest scores. Their recommendations are presented at crew base and to top management.*¹⁰³ **SAS Sverige**

The emphasis on involvement in SAS Sverige may be related to the company's current cultural gap between managers and cabin personnel analyzed in 4.3. It seems likely that a higher level of involvement in brand building would affect employee commitment and increase cabin crew members' acceptance of top management's proposed cultural values. Also, by involving themselves in company and brand development, employees become more empowered and can increase their chances of influencing top management's decisions.

Employee involvement in brand building was also mentioned in Saab and Skanska, but to a lesser degree than in SAS Sverige:

We have not started involving employees to receive ideas from them yet. But historically, employees have provided many valuable ideas. When you let employees get involved and meet people from other functions, you increase internal understanding and knowledge. Getting

¹⁰⁰ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

¹⁰¹ Mia Nilsson, Saab, Andreas Binz and Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, and Maria Lomholt, Skanska

¹⁰² Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

¹⁰³ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

*employees involved is essential; solely informing them is not as effective when striving for motivation and commitment.*¹⁰⁴ **Saab**

*My colleague was responsible for a brand review which was presented last year. In this review we evaluated how our employees felt about the Skanska brand and its future development. This information has guided our current corporate brand building.*¹⁰⁵ **Skanska**

All three companies involve employees in internal evaluations and business development and try to increase their understanding of various organizational functions, although to a different extent. It is concluded that *involvement* is a highly important element in internal branding in SAS Sverige and that the concept is also stated as important in the other two companies. It seems as if employees are more likely to reflect brand commitment and be motivated to strengthen the corporate brand when feeling *involved in the company and brand*.

¹⁰⁴ Anders Blom, Saab AB, November 10th 2008

¹⁰⁵ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

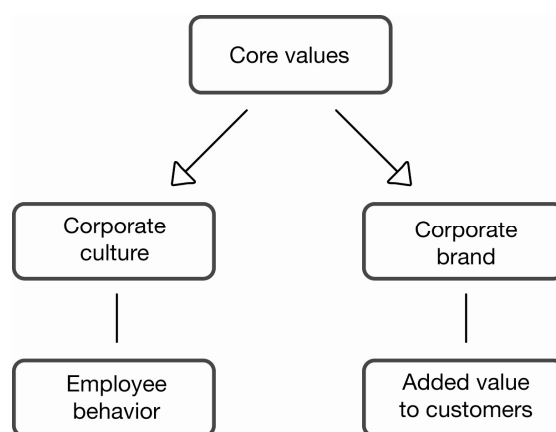
5. DISCUSSION

Below, the findings that are considered most interesting and important are discussed. The replications in chapter 4 indicate that many concepts and practices are valuable in corporate and internal branding across industrial borders, and therefore the discussion will be held at a general level as opposed to a discussion in relation to each industry. Research questions 1-3 are discussed together as the findings relating to core values, vision and corporate culture share overlap.

5.1 RQ 1-3: CORE VALUES, VISION AND CORPORATE CULTURE

5.1.1 Core values and Vision

The results in Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska show that *core values* are a foundation of corporate and internal branding practices, which substantiates research by Urde (2003). It is also apparent that the core values have been transmitted to the participating non-brand responsables (although they should be seen as highly informed). Such internalization of core values may not be self-evident in Swedish companies. In a study conducted by TEMO in 2002¹⁰⁶ only 31 per cent of employees believed in their employers' vision and values. Hatch and Schultz (2003) argue that brand values must be *respectful of* organizational culture and cultural values. And according to Urde (2003) *organizational values* and *core values* do not have to be the same, as organizational values can be more internally focused. The study seems to develop these theories, as the investigated companies appear to *unite brand values / core values* and *cultural values / organizational values*. These best-practice brands thus appear to make small distinctions between “the internal self” and “what is offered to customers”. To a growing degree, customers' choices depend less on functional benefits and more on the people and corporate culture behind products and services (King, 1991). Therefore, it is increasingly important to make sure that what is promised externally is also what the company represents internally. Core values seem to have a dual purpose in all three companies: to communicate the essence of the brand and create *added value for customers* and represent an organizational structure, or cultural element, which *guides employee behavior*. By uniting brand values and cultural values employees' understanding and commitment can be increased as there is no confusion regarding internal vs. external values and behaviors.



Contributions of core values

¹⁰⁶ Svenska Dagbladet Näringsliv, August 19th, 2002

According to Hatch and Schultz (2003; 2001), *vision* is one of the building blocks of corporate branding. The author found it interesting to investigate if this concept could offer valuable contributions in internal branding, but it appears as if vision may be more useful as a *management tool* than internal branding tool. All three companies agree that the vision sets the course for the company and should guide top management in corporate branding, which substantiates work by Hatch & Schultz (2003; 2001). But specifically Saab and SAS Sverige appear to believe that the vision does not convey straightforward brand-related information to employees and that it may be complicated to internalize the vision among employees. It thus seems as if *vision-culture gaps* (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001) are a risk to successful corporate brand building. It should be commented that the formulation of Saab's vision is fairly abstract (see 3.5.2) and that SAS Sverige's vision could be seen as contradictory and difficult for employees to grasp (see 3.5.2). Furthermore, in Skanska there seems to exist different views among participants concerning if the vision is yet formulated or not (see 4.2.2). These results indicate that the *formulation* of the vision affects its value as an internal branding tool. In Saab and SAS Sverige the Corporate Brand Managers instead highlight the companies' *core values* as an important internal branding tool which reflects *how the vision is to be achieved*. The belief that companies should focus on core values to achieve the vision corresponds with de Chernatony's (1999) reflections concerning vision.

The discussion is summarized in the following propositions (P1a-1d and P2):

Proposition 1a: Core values can strengthen corporate brands if they are *united with cultural values*.

Proposition 1b: Core values contribute to external corporate brand building by *adding value to customers*.

Proposition 1c: Core values contribute to corporate and internal branding by acting as an organizational structure or cultural element which *guides employee behavior*.

Proposition 1d: Core values contribute to corporate and internal branding by internally indicating *how the vision is to be achieved*.

Proposition 2: An *abstractly formulated vision* contributes to corporate branding more as a *management tool* which sets the strategic direction for the company than an internal branding tool which can guide brand-related employee behavior.

5.1.2 Corporate culture

Corporate Brand Managers in all three companies agree that a strong corporate culture is an essential element of corporate and internal branding and strive to build a *main corporate culture*, which is in line with current research (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2001). It appears as if the management participants believe that culture is a more implicit and *self-sustaining contributor to internal branding* than e.g. internal communication. Culture strengthens the brand by *transmitting desired brand values and behaviors to employees* and can be viewed as part of the foundation of the organization and brand.

However, the results show that it may be unrealistic to expect cultural consensus in an organization, which substantiates research by Wilson (1997). The results thus lean towards the *differentiation perspective* in corporate culture research (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997) as *subcultures* are recognized in all three cases. It seems as if the extent to which subcultures conform to the culture desired by senior management will vary (Wilson, 1997). In SAS Sverige, top management may have to evaluate if subcultures presently *co-exist in conflict* with each other (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997) and if the cultural turnaround has been initiated without sufficient intellectual and emotional buy-in (Thomson et al, 1999) as cabin crew members have not fully accepted the “new way of doing things”. Thus, in SAS Sverige, culture may currently not transmit the desired values and behaviors to employees. The results from Skanska show that different subcultures seem to *co-exist in harmony* (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997) and the different subcultures are even explained as *beneficial* when striving to become a market leader and building the brand in various geographical markets. At Saab, it seems as if subcultures possibly *co-exist in indifference* (Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1997). The company’s subcultures appear to share some similarities, but top management has recently realized that its subcultures may still be too diverse and that the culture must be *harmonized* in order to strengthen the corporate brand.

Researchers seem to disagree regarding the extent to which individual interpretations of brand and cultural values should be allowed. Harris and de Chernatony (2001) have studied the relationship between *perceptual congruity* and *brand performance*. They propose that brand team members with similar characteristics, perspectives and values increases brand performance. Hankinson and Hankinson (1999) seem to agree with this as they present the following example of a strong corporate culture: “*New employees at XX are immersed in extensive training programs where they learn about the company’s underlying values and beliefs, they are encouraged to question their previous values and beliefs and learn new (XX) behaviors*” (Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999, p. 137). The author speculates that there is a fine line between *restraining* corporate culture and *enabling* corporate culture. In contrast to the theories above, Ind (2003) believes that organizations should *empower employees* through more freedom and less control. Successful corporate brands let their core ideology pervade the organization but do not specify how employees should behave at all times.

All participating companies strive to unify their corporate culture, but allow certain cultural interpretations of the main culture (especially Skanska and Saab). Culture acts as an organizational structure which builds the brand *without direct management involvement*. This may be in line with *organizational learning theory* where organizational learning is seen as more than simply the sum of the learning of its members (Crossan et al, 1999). This means that knowledge is stored in the organization even if individuals leave. Such storage of brand related information appears to be important in the creation of strong corporate brands. However, subcultures are present in all cases which implies that it is unrealistic to strive for *complete* cultural consensus within an organization. Instead corporate brands seem to be strengthened when *subcultures co-exist in harmony* within a main cultural framework. The discussion is summarized in the following propositions:

Proposition 3a: Corporate culture contributes to corporate and internal branding by acting as a *self-sustaining organizational structure* which transmits brand-related values and behaviors to employees.

Proposition 3b: Corporate culture can strengthen corporate brands if the main cultural framework *allows cultural interpretations within subcultures*.

Proposition 3c: Corporate culture can strengthen corporate brands if *subcultures co-exist in harmony*.

5.2 RQ 4: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The results show that *internal communication* is an essential element of internal branding in all three companies, which substantiates prior research (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Thomson et al, 1999). The companies combine *central, cascade* and *lateral communication methods*, which is recommended by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). All three companies focus on central communication, possibly because it can be controlled to the greatest extent. Interestingly, the non-brand responsables appeared to utilize the central information channels with no critical approach towards the supplied information¹⁰⁷. This may contradict Burmann and Zeplin's (2005) model which states that central communication *conveys information* whereas information needs to be communicated from peers in order to *convince sceptics*. It may be so that the Swedish context has influenced the results. Burmann and Zeplin's study was conducted in Germany, where organizations appear to be more hierarchical than in Sweden. Possibly, employees and management are closer in Sweden, which influences *employees' acceptance and perceived credibility of central information*.

The centrally supplied *intranet* was highly utilized by all three non-brand responsables. During the conducted interviews the author interpreted that the non-brand responsables *valued searching for the information they needed in their work on their own*. In Saab and Skanska it also appears as if employees may have gained a deeper understanding of how the brand relates to their everyday work through *interactive media* such as the intranet or brand portal. In line with employees appreciating the possibility to search for relevant information on their own, Corporate Brand Managers in all three companies also emphasized the importance of employees taking personal responsibility to acquire brand-related information. The results thus appear to support Burmann and Zeplin's (2005) argument that central communication may be rendered more effective by using media which enables a *pull-principle*, where employees *actively seek for brand- information on their own*. The results also indicate that internal branding may be rendered more effective if companies evaluate the manner in which employees prefer to *search for and process information*. This is in line with statements by Mitchell (2002) and Ind (1997) who claim that employees should be viewed as internal customers who can be segmented and targeted with tailored communication. SAS Sverige and Skanska appear to have taken these notions into account when providing employees with communication channels *which simplify information search and processing*, such as TV-programs instead of written materials or a message grid which summarizes all communicative guidelines both internally and externally.

Communication methods which enable *personal interaction* were emphasized as important internal branding tools in Saab and SAS Sverige. E.g. *storytelling* was mentioned as valuable by both companies, which may confirm storytelling as a promising *lateral communications method* which strengthens the brand (Denning, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Tilley, 1999). In particular, SAS Sverige has developed forums for lateral communication to a greater extent than the other two companies. The company offers employees more informal communication forums such as weekly meetings, the Market Council where employees are directly involved in business development and the "Walk a mile in my shoes" program where

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that centrally supplied information channels are most accessible and the non-brand responsables were selected by the companies

employees meet colleagues from other departments and organizational levels. Workshops and meeting forums seemed to be particularly valued by non-brand responsables from Saab and SAS Sverige. When analyzing their responses it appears as if such *personal interaction* with brand managers as well as colleagues from other departments and functions enabled them to *deepen and develop their understanding of the brand*. The discussion is summarized in the following propositions:

Proposition 4a: Central communication methods which apply a *pull-principle* contribute to corporate and internal branding by *motivating employees to search for and apply brand-related information in their work*.

Proposition 4b: *Forums for personal interaction* contribute to corporate and internal branding by enabling employees to *develop and deepen their brand understanding and commitment*.

Proposition 4c: Internal communication can greater contribute to corporate and internal branding if corporations *evaluate how employees prefer to search for and process information and design communication channels accordingly*.

5.3 RQ 5: HR-CONTRIBUTIONS TO BRANDING

A rising number of researchers are articulating a need for HR to become more engaged in branding activities (Aurand et al 2005; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Martin et al, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Wilson, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Ulrich, 1998; Becker et al, 1997; Ind, 1997). It is therefore interesting to note that the HR department is not highly involved in corporate branding even in the investigated best-practice companies. Instead, HR efforts related to brand building seem to be more focused on *employer branding* (see 6.3). It thus appears as if Martin et al's (2005) statement that HR has encountered certain problems in legitimising its role in business may be true.

However, participants from all three companies agreed that HR-practices can contribute to brand building. The results in all three companies substantiate Burmann and Zeplin's (2005) and Gotsi and Wilson's (2001) suggestions that HR-practices can contribute through brand-related *recruitment* and in *phasing in of new employees*. In recruitment it appears as if the HR department is expected to pay attention to the fit between personal values and brand values in order to strengthen the corporate brand, which substantiates Burmann and Zeplin's (2005) discussion of recruitment. In phasing in of new employees, the HR-department appears to focus on *central communication* through written documents or introductory lectures. The author speculates that such communication is seen as the most efficient method in order to ensure that the brand is correctly presented and internalized among new employees.

The statements from Saab's and SAS Sverige's Corporate Brand Managers that HR-practices are valuable in *brand internalization / brand training for current employees* is in line with Aurand et al's (2005) recent findings. Their research indicates that there is a strong relationship between HR-involvement in internal branding and the *incorporation of the brand into work activities* and *a more positive attitude towards the brand*. It thus appears as if employees are better trained, motivated and guided in brand building if the HR department is involved. In particular, efforts at SAS Sverige where the HR department organized the internal training workshops that led to a SAS Sverige certificate for employees may indicate that lateral communication methods connected to branding may be an interesting future

development for the HR-function. Finally, the results also indicate that HR-practices may be valuable in order to develop more effective internal branding practices. Such practices should be based on *evaluations of current brand understanding and commitment among employees* and on evaluations of prior brand building initiatives. The HR-function thus appears to have an *internal auditing function* in all three companies, which is a contribution that may not have received adequate attention in corporate and internal branding research. The discussion is summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 5: HR-practices can contribute to corporate and internal branding through:

- *Brand-related recruitment*
- *Phasing in of new employees*
- *Brand training or brand internalization among current employees*
- *Internal brand auditing*

5.4 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS - Acknowledgment and Involvement

Researchers such as Burmann and Zeplin (2005) have focused on *organizational factors* which influence *brand commitment*, such as internal communication, leadership and brand related HR-practices. The author believes that such organizational factors may have received disproportionate attention in corporate and internal branding research. Although organizational factors are important, companies should also evaluate the *internal factors* that influence commitment. Companies must understand the underlying factors which motivate employees to stand behind the brand and organization and design communication and internal practices accordingly.

The study's results indicate that *acknowledgment* is an important internal branding element at Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska. Corporate brand building is a long-term endeavor and without acknowledgement employees may not feel encouraged to continuously build and strengthen the brand. Without acknowledgment it is also likely that corporate subcultures will differ to a greater extent from top management's desired culture, as there is a smaller sense of belonging to the same organization and striving to jointly achieve organizational goals. Participants with a HR background or current HR responsibility in all three companies commented on the importance of closeness between leaders and employees and highlighted that leaders must acknowledge employees' work and give them personal feedback¹⁰⁸. The author assumes that *personal development* is one of the main driving forces for employees when joining and staying in an organization. Without acknowledgment, personal development is less likely to come about, as employees will not be informed about the results of their work.

The results also indicate that strong corporate brands are built *together with employees*, especially in SAS Sverige. *Involving* employees in brand building is briefly mentioned by some researchers (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2004; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Ind, 1997), but the author feels that this concept may not have received enough attention in corporate branding research. If one accepts the importance of employees' *brand commitment* as a decisive factor which influences corporate brand strength (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Bergstrom et al, 2002), the importance of involvement becomes even more apparent. The author considers it unlikely that employees would reflect brand commitment without feeling involved in the company and brand. Employees cannot be commanded to reflect desired

¹⁰⁸ Mia Blom, Saab, Andreas Binz and Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, and Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige

values and behaviors; they must feel that their contribution to building the company and brand makes a difference and that their opinions are valued.

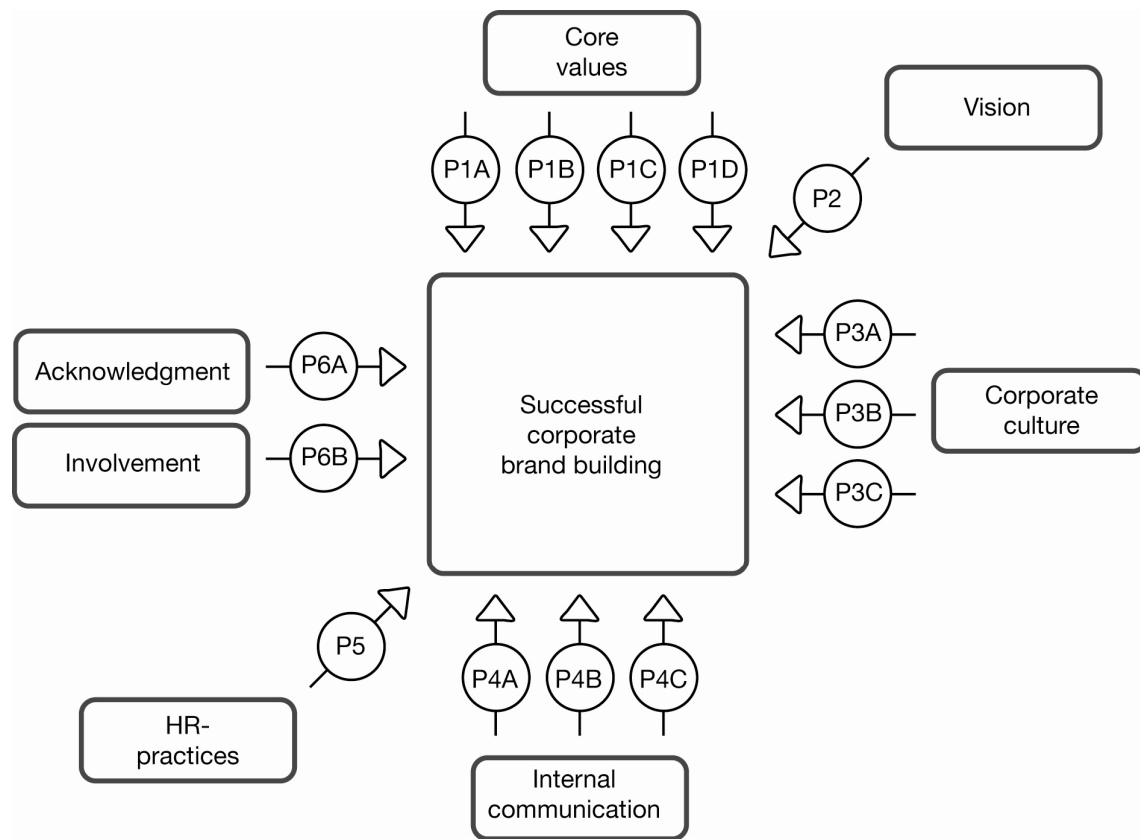
The author speculates that *acknowledgment* and *involvement* may positively influence Thomson et al's (1999) *intellectual* and *emotional buy-in*. The researchers use statements as: "I can see how my job performance affects my organization's success" and "My views and participation are valued by my organization" in their research. These statements can be related to this study's findings, as these concepts relate to *acknowledging employees' performance* in brand development and *valuing active employee involvement* in brand building. Furthermore, as discussed in sections above, the author speculates that acknowledgement and involvement may influence *brand commitment* positively. This is in line with Thomson et al (1999), who state that brand commitment is built if employees feel that their contribution is valued, that their needs are recognized and that their participation makes a difference to them personally and to the organisation as a whole. The connection between involvement, or *participation*, and commitment has also been commented by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). The discussion is summarized in the following propositions:

Proposition 6a: Corporate brands are strengthened if employees are *acknowledged* in company- and brand building and development.

Proposition 6b: Corporate brands are strengthened if employees are directly *involved* in company- and brand building and development.

5.5 THE AUTHOR'S PROPOSED MODEL

In prior chapters it has been stated that current theory offers limited models of how corporate brand success may be influenced. While studying prior research within corporate and internal branding the author identified a number of concepts which were believed to offer a possibility to expand current knowledge of how to build successful corporate brands. This led to the formulation of five research questions (RQ1-5) relating to how *core values*, *vision*, *corporate culture*, *internal communication* and *HR-practices* can contribute to corporate brand success. Furthermore, during the course of the study two additional practices also arose as important in corporate and internal brand building: *acknowledging* and directly *involving* employees in brand building and development. The author's proposed model of the ways in which the studied internal branding practices can contribute to successful corporate brand building is presented below (p.50). The propositions 1a-d, 2, 3a-c, 4a-c, and 5 respond to research questions 1-5. The propositions 6a-b relate to the study's additional findings.



Proposed contributions of internal branding practices to corporate brand success

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the main contributions of the study are briefly summarized and some implications for practitioners are suggested. The chapter is concluded with critique of the study and a presentation of suggested future research.

6.1 MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

This study has contributed to corporate and internal branding research by *empirically* investigating how internal branding practices can contribute to successful corporate brand building. As the results are supported in all three cases to a great extent, *the study should provide an interesting basis for further research* concerning how to build and develop successful corporate brands regardless of industry. The research has been conducted in the light of *employees as highly important corporate brand builders*, which has been called for by several researchers (see 1.3). This has enabled the author to offer some suggestions as to how employees' values and behaviors may be aligned with desired brand values and behaviors, such as e.g. focusing on core values as a foundation of internal branding practices, evaluating how employees prefer to search for and process information and exploring how acknowledgment and involvement may influence brand commitment. Furthermore, the conducted study has contrasted and developed prior research, e.g. by indicating that *core brand values and cultural values should be united* to strengthen the corporate brand and by *contrasting the notion of one corporate culture* in corporate brand building. Concerning HR-involvement in corporate and internal branding, it does not appear as if this business function has a fully developed role in brand building in the investigated companies. However, *four HR-practices* were still presented by participants as valuable in brand building and it is hoped that this study may initiate a desire among companies to further evaluate and develop HR-contributions to internal branding.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

First of all, Corporate Brand Managers should benefit from evaluating how the author's 14 propositions are relevant and valuable in affecting success in their own situations. It is hoped that this study may bring about discussions of how the presented internal branding practices may contribute to the respective corporate branding strategies at hand. As the well-known and highly ranked¹⁰⁹ case companies have openly shared information about their internal branding efforts and which practices they have selected as the basis of their brand building, the study is deemed to offer practitioners guidance and inspiration in their own corporate brand management. For example, the study indicates that Saab, SAS Sverige and Skanska all clearly strive to create correspondence between external perceptions of the company and direct encounters with organizational members and that this is achieved by focusing on core values which minimize potential confusion about internal and external values and behaviors.

As an interesting implication, Corporate Brand Managers may have to accept that the notion of *one corporate culture* may be difficult to achieve in large corporations or corporations with spread-out workforces. Instead, it is likely that recognizing various subcultures within the organization and utilizing their respective strengths in brand building (although within a main cultural framework) would increase the brand's strength internally, and thus also increase its external strength.

¹⁰⁹ Business Superbrands 2008

Interestingly, the study seems to reflect that best-practice corporate brand building is carried out more and more *on employees' terms*. Practitioners may therefore further strengthen their corporate brands if employees are viewed both as *part of the corporate brand* and as *internal audiences* which should be informed of the brand's value and how this value can be affected. This may be specifically important in the development of *internal communication methods* as well as in the *acknowledgment* and *involvement* of employees in brand building. Although the contributions of leadership to corporate and internal branding have not been explicitly studied¹¹⁰, the conducted interviews lead the author to believe that corporate brand building should be carried out by appointing leaders throughout the company who deliver brand related messages directly to employees, acknowledge their contributions to the organization and brand and directly involve them in everyday brand building activities.

Concerning the contributions of HR-practices to corporate branding, practitioners may benefit from involving the HR-function not only in more traditional areas such as *recruitment* and *phasing in of new employees*, but also in more explicit brand building activities such as *internalization of core values among current employees* and in *internal brand auditing*. In this way, internal branding practices are likely to be rendered more effective and the corporate brand strengthened.

6.3 AUTHOR'S COMMENT: CURRENT EMPLOYEES

If one looks at the corporate and internal branding models presented in chapter 2 (e.g. Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Urde, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001), they are related to *current employees*. Employees, through their understanding and commitment, build the image of the organization in the minds of customers (Ind, 2003). The author believes that brand understanding and commitment correlates with *the amount of time* an employee has spent in the organization and taken part of brand related information and activities.

During data collection it became apparent that attracting *new employees* was considered highly important in two out of three companies. The author interviewed HR-participants responsible for *Employer branding* at Saab and Skanska, but a specific *internal branding department or position* was not present in any of the companies. Could this mean that these large Swedish corporations, and possibly others, believe that attracting new employees is more important than internalizing business and brand strategies among current employees? The author does not question the importance of securing an efficient employer branding function, but would like to see a greater balance between this function and an internal branding function. The importance of employee retention to business success has been argued by Story (2002) as well as Finegold et al (2002). The author argues that current employees are relatively more valuable in corporate brand building than newly attracted employees and believes that corporate brands are strengthened by *a high rate of employee retention*. In order to successfully develop corporate brands, the collective knowledge and skills accumulated over time should be utilized. If corporations focus excessively on employer branding directed at potential employees, the wrong signals may be sent to current employees concerning their value to the organization. This may diminish intellectual and emotional buy-in (Thomson et al, 1999) and thus decrease the brand's strength internally. And if the brand is not strong internally, it is less likely to be strong externally. The author's thoughts seem to be supported

¹¹⁰ As the author mentioned in chapter 2, "leadership" was reluctantly excluded from the study due to the thesis' spatial limitations

by Rucci et al (1998), who describe the American retail chain SEARS' efforts to assure employee satisfaction and retention. By focusing on current employees SEARS achieved a dual goal: a more compelling place to work and a more compelling place to shop. Rucci et al (1998) propose that "attitude about the job" and "attitude about the company" indirectly leads to employee retention through an effect on employee behavior.

6.4 CRITIQUE

The study's *construct validity* should be commented as the ambiguous terminology within the field of corporate branding may have affected the study's quality. The fact that there is no agreed meaning of concepts or established knowledge of the relationships between concepts affects how they are defined, studied and spread in academia and practice. It should therefore be acknowledged that the author's definitions of the studied concepts may not be shared by the participants in the study, and that this may have affected construct validity. However, the author has followed the suggested measures by Yin (1994) and Merriam (1994) to increase construct validity and therefore judges that the validity has been strengthened.

It may also be criticized that the author initially included a larger amount of concepts in the study than those presented. Possibly, the author should have understood earlier that the scope of the study was too wide and formulated a larger number of interview questions relating to those concepts that were of greatest interest instead. Nonetheless, the author believes that the concepts and practices which are presented and analyzed in the study were investigated sufficiently as they received most attention during interviews and were also analyzed through the use of documents and web-based materials.

Furthermore, the contributions of *leadership* to corporate branding and the role of organizational leaders in internal branding were not included in the study due to spatial limitations. It may be argued that this is a weakness, as both immediate supervisors and managers at higher levels act as direct vehicles in the implementation of internal branding practices in all three cases.

6.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

The author's *propositions* and *proposed model* should be tested in future studies including a larger number of cases and respondents. It would be interesting to conduct further case studies in order to investigate to what extent the proposed model may be generalized within the represented industries as well as between other industries. It may also be of interest to study if generalization can be extended to smaller corporations and companies with a non-Swedish origin. Moreover, a comparative study of internal brand building practices in companies with successful and less successful corporate brands (as defined herein) may also be of interest.

Core brand values, corporate culture and cultural values have been highlighted by a number of researchers (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Urde, 2003; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2001). The author therefore deems that it may be especially valuable to further clarify *the desired relationship between core brand values and cultural values*.

To further explore how successful corporate brands are built future studies should also include a larger number of non-brand responsables to evaluate *how well brand information has been dispersed in organizations*. Such a study would offer the possibility to reveal specific

difficulties in internalizing desired brand values and behaviors in various companies and investigate how these difficulties may be overcome.

It would also be of value to complement Burmann and Zeplin's study (2005) with further investigations of *how brand commitment is built*. E.g., the contributions of *acknowledgment*, *involvement* and *leadership* in creating brand commitment should be further explored.

As a final important note, the study's findings concerning current *HR involvement* in corporate brand building and potential gains from involving *HR-practices* in corporate and internal branding should be complemented with future research, as this field has not been investigated to a satisfactory extent (Aurand et al, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001) and may be of great value for corporate branding practitioners.

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8. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - DEFINITIONS

A **brand** is “a shorthand descriptor for the technical, economic, service, and social [including emotional] benefits that a particular supplier’s market offering delivers to targeted market segments and customer firms” (Anderson & Narus, 2004, p. 136). Ultimately, a brand is something that resides in the minds of people (Ind, 2004, p. 28; Keller, 2003, p. 13).

Branding involves “creating mental structures and helping consumers [business customers] organize their knowledge about products, services [or corporations]” (Keller, 2003, p.13). It entails “adding a higher level of emotional [and functional] meaning to a product, service [or company], thereby increasing its value to customers and other stakeholders” (Bergstrom et al, 2002, p.134).

A **corporate brand** refers to branding the entire organization and its products and services as opposed to branding single products or services. “A corporate brand involves the conscious decision by senior management to distil and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. A corporate brand proposition requires total corporate commitment to the corporate body from all levels of personnel” (Balmer, 2001, p.281).

Corporate branding involves creating a positive image and reputation for the company as a whole (Keller, 2003, p.15). When the focus of branding efforts shift from products to the corporation, corporations and their members are exposed to far greater scrutiny, which means that “organisational behaviour, even at the level of everyday employee interactions, becomes visible” (Hatch & Schultz, 2003, p.1044).

Corporate identity refers to how a company expresses and differentiates itself in relation to its stakeholders and targets both external groups and employees (Hatch & Schultz, 2000, p.13). It comprises of elements such as culture, strategy, structure, communication, history, business activities and market scope (Balmer, 2001, p.254).

Corporate reputation is defined as “the enduring perception held of an organization by an individual, group or network” (Balmer, 2001, p. 257). [Certain authors believe that] reputation is more stable than image and represents a distillation of multiple images over time (de Chernatony, 1999, p. 159). These authors also believe that the objective of corporate brand management is the acquisition of a favourable reputation among key stakeholder groups.

“The consensus from the academic literature suggests that **corporate culture** is the visible and less visible norms, values and behaviour that are shared by a group of employees which shape the group’s sense of what is acceptable and valid. Norms, values and behaviors are generally slow to change and new group members learn them through both informal and formal socialization processes” (Wilson, 1997, p.89). “The visible aspects of culture encompass behaviour patterns, physical and social environment and written and spoken language used by the group” (Wilson, 2001, p.355). In this paper, **corporate-** and **organizational culture** are synonymous.

Employer branding “represents a firm’s efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, pp.501).

Human Resource Management is “a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques” (Storey, 1995, p.7). Human resource management is thus focused on “the interplay between people, tasks and organizations (Brewster & Holt Larsen, 2000, p. 2).

Image is “the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. That is, it is the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an object, such as a company, brand or product” (Dowling, 1986, p. 110). Certain authors believe that the objective of corporate brand management is the creation of a positive image among stakeholders.

An **Intangible asset** is defined as “an identifiable non-monetary asset that cannot be seen, touched or physically measured, which has been created through time and/or effort [which is] identifiable as a separate asset” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible_asset, November 21st 2008).

Internal branding (internal brand building or internal branding practices) is defined as all internal practices, procedures and activities with the purpose of internalizing desired brand values and brand behaviors among employees. According to Bergstrom et al (2002, p.135) the core elements of internal branding are: effective brand communication to all employees, convincing employees of the brand's value and relevance and linking every job in the organization to delivery of the brand essence.

Internal marketing is seen as “those activities that improve internal communications and customer consciousness among employees and the link between these activities and external marketplace performance” (Hogg et al, 1998, p. 880).

The author believes that internal branding and internal marketing are closely related.

Organizational identity refers to how organizational members perceive and understand who they are and what they stand for as an organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2000, p.15) as well as how employees feel about their organization (Balmer, 2001, p.254). According to certain authors the concept shares similar characteristics with **corporate culture** and **corporate personality** (Balmer, 2001, p.254).

Service is defined as “the application of specialized competences through deeds, processes and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself” (Lusch & Vargo, 2006, p. 283). The described service-economy does not necessarily refer to an increasing amount of services being provided, but to developing and delivering what customers truly value; and focusing on building the company's **capability to serve**.

Vision “defines the desired or intended future state of a specific organization in terms of its fundamental objective and/or strategic direction” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_planning, October 25th, 2008).

APPENDIX 2 - Superbrands

Superbrands Sweden's (www.superbrands.com) definition of a Superbrand is: "In comparison with its competitors a [B2B] Superbrand offers substantial emotional and / or functional benefits to customers, that customers (consciously or unconsciously) recognize, want and are willing to pay extra for"¹¹¹. In its current form, the organization was founded in 1994 and it has been established in Sweden since 2004¹¹². Its core programs consists of Superbrands Business-to-Consumer & Superbrands Business-to-Business, where the leading brands in respective fields are ranked every other year and a yearly book with case studies of successful brands is published¹¹³. The ranking procedure is commenced by the independent research firm SIFO Research International and continued by the so called Brand Council. The members of the Brand Council differ from year to year and consist of senior executives from branding, advertising, media, retail and marketing. In 2008 some of the members were Robert Scherman, Managing Director Superbrands Sweden, who was interviewed in this study, Pia Grahm Brikell, CEO Svenska Reklamförbundet, Anders Ragvald, Branding Manager Swedbank, Louise Leo, Marketing Manager Microsoft/MSN and Anna Markelius Plyhr, Marketing Manager Accenture¹¹⁴. The study in 2008 began by SIFO Research International (SIFO) compiling a list of 1700 B2B-brands established in the Swedish market. SIFO then handed over 400 selected brands in all main sectors to the independent Brand Council, which ranked each brand on a scale of 1-20 on three main measures (1-3) operationalized by nine variables in total (a-i). The nine variables below refer to a brand's external image and determine its success¹¹⁵. The 100 brands with the lowest scores are eliminated, the surviving 300 brands are awarded a "Business Superbrands" status for a two year period, and the top 100 brands are ranked from 1-100.

- 1. Authority (Auktoritet)**
 - a) Heritage (Arv)
 - b) Trust (Förtroende)
 - c) Innovation (Innovation)
- 2. Identification (Identifikation)**
 - d) Affinity (Samhörighet)
 - e) Consideration (Omtanke)
 - f) Nostalgia (Nostalggi)
- 3. Approval (Godkännande)**
 - g) Prestige (Prestige)
 - h) Acceptance (Acceptans)
 - i) Role Models (Förebilder)

APPENDIX 3 - Examples of pre study interview questions

1. Vad är Superbrands syfte och visioner?
2. Hur har ni valt de variabler används i studien?
3. Vilka dimensioner är viktiga för att skapa starka B2B varumärken?
4. Uppfattar ni att de företag som har fått en hög ranking arbetar aktivt med Corporate Brand Management och i så fall på vilket sätt?
5. Har ni tagit med i studien hur de anställda uppfattar sitt varumärke och hur de förmedlar värde till kunderna?
6. Berätta om Differ och hur ni arbetar med corporate branding och internt varumärkesarbete.
7. Är corporate branding ett aktuellt ämne och i så fall varför?
8. Uppfattar du att svenska företag arbetar aktivt med Corporate Brand Management?

¹¹¹ www.superbrands.com

¹¹² Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

¹¹³ www.superbrands.com/sweden

¹¹⁴ www.superbrands.com/sweden

¹¹⁵ Robert Scherman, Superbrands Sweden, September 16th, 2008

9. Känner du till studien/rankingen SuperBrands? Vad är din uppfattning om SuperBrands?
10. Vilka processer anser du är viktiga då man bygger starka B2B varumärken, kan dessa generaliseras över bransch-gränserna?
11. Finns det några B2B branscher i vilka du anser att varumärkesarbete är extra viktigt?
12. Är internt varumärkesarbete ett aktuellt ämne och i så fall varför?
13. Anser du att en välfungerande internkommunikation är företagsledningens ansvar?
14. Vad är din uppfattning om kopplingen mellan företagets visioner, organisationskultur och varumärkesarbete?
15. Vad är din erfarenhet av att utveckla organisationsskulturer?
16. Hur stor vikt läggs vid de anställdas betydelse för varumärkesarbetet i svenska företag idag enligt din uppfattning?
17. Hur viktigt anser du att medarbetarnas förståelse för strategier och engagemang i företaget är?
18. Hur kan man påverka medarbetares faktiska beteende? Hur kan man inkorporera varumärkesvärderingar i arbetsprocesser?
19. Har du kommit i kontakt med företag där det finns en koppling mellan HR-avdelningen och marknadsavdelning i en gemensam satsning på varumärkesarbete?
20. Vilka är de viktigaste funktionerna som HR och internkommunikation fyller i ett företag? Kan du beskriva några processer som du tycker är viktiga?

APPENDIX 4 - Main study participants

Saab AB

Peter Adolfsson has a military background and is Director Security Operations at Saab AB since two years. He has worked at Saab AB for ten years in total and before his current position he worked with marketing for eight years. One of Peter's main tasks is to protect the Saab brand and Saab's employees. He is responsible for security abroad, security when employees travel, direct security on site in different countries, education in matters concerning personal- and brand security, environmental analysis and also even bringing employees home if they are in need of such assistance. Peter's job is to make sure that those organizations which want to disgrace the Saab brand and its employees because the company is present in the defence industry do not manage to do so.¹¹⁶

Anders Blom is Brand Manager Corporate Communications and Public Affairs since 2008. Previously he has worked as a brand management consultant and at Alecta. His main responsibility at Saab AB is to strengthen the corporate brand, both internally and externally in terms of building brand image. He is also responsible for sponsorship and CSR issues. During the fall Anders will become more familiarized with Saab AB in order to manage brand positioning and brand identity efforts. The communications department has created a cross-functional team to better manage internal and external communications. The team, which consists of a number of department managers such as Anders himself, is directed by the Head of Corporate Communications.¹¹⁷

Mia Nilsson has worked at Saab for six years, and in HR-related positions for a total of twenty years. Mia has worked as a personnel director, but since about a year she is Head of Employer Branding. This position was created about 3-4 years ago. Employer branding includes working with positioning the company in the minds of potential employees, such as students. The Employer Branding function lies within the HR department. Mia's main task is to develop visions, strategies and action plans. Implementation is carried out by the HR-center which is a shared services function that assures that practices are implemented in a similar way in all business units.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Peter Adolfsson, Saab AB, November 11th 2008

¹¹⁷ Anders Blom, Saab AB, October 8th 2008

¹¹⁸ Mia Nilsson, Saab AB, November 13th 2008

SAS Sverige

Andreas Binz is a HR specialist in SAS Sverige. There are three such specialists in SAS Sverige. Currently he is responsible for a number of areas such as recruitment, diversity, equality and work environment as his two colleagues are both on parental leave, but his main speciality is behavioral science. Andreas is also responsible for the employee satisfaction survey, Pulsen, and was responsible for the internal training program “Framtidsresan” which led to a SAS Sverige certificate. Due to the current financial situation Andreas cannot plan training programs to the same extent at this time.¹¹⁹

Anna Wahlgren started working at SAS in 1986 as a stewardess. She became a purser (team leader on board) in 2004 and a Cabin Crew Coach in 2005. The Cabin Crew personnel are divided into four groups, and each group has their own manager and two coaches. Her manager is part of the directorate of about forty leaders which are updated by top management each week. Anna shares the responsibility for about 200-210 cabin personnel with the other coach in her team. Her role is mainly administrative, but every ninety days she participates in flying service in order to remain certified to work on board. Anna is responsible for employee development meetings.¹²⁰

Andris Zvejnieks is Vice President Communications in SAS Sverige, the Swedish airline in the SAS Group. He is responsible for internal and external communication, PR, marketing communications - and the SAS brand. The Marketing Manager reports to Andris. The SAS Group is decentralized and the concern is the owner of the brand. Andris has been delegated the responsibility for the brand in Sweden by SAS Sverige's CEO. He calls himself a franchisee in Sweden working with the shared brand and says that he is given clear guidelines how to do so. Strategies are created in the concern, and then Andris is responsible for tactical efforts in Sweden.¹²¹

Skanska AB and Skanska Sverige AB

Lina Berndtsson has a background in psychology and business administration. Lina started working at Skanska AB in 2007 and her first job within the company was within Diversity, Attract and Recruit. She was appointed Manager Group Internal Communication in 2008 and worked for about six months in this position before deciding to move to Germany for personal reasons. Her responsibilities as Manager Group Internal Communications included managing internal communication channels, such as the intranet, printed documents and transmitted internal messages.¹²²

Fredrik Johansson works in one of Skanska's five business units (including the parent company) in Sweden, Skanska Sverige. Skanska Sverige's main business area is construction. Fredrik is a Market Communicator at the Attraction & Recruitment department with a background in marketing and brand management studies. He is responsible for employer branding aimed at students and young professionals. In his work, Fredrik is responsible for issues such as: where Skanska should advertise, how messages should be created and in which way Skanska should communicate. He makes sure that the company web page and job advertisements are in line with guidelines. He is also responsible for student relations, sponsorship issues, external surveys and competitor analyses.¹²³

Maria Lomholt started working in Skanska about four years ago and was part of building the first real marketing department within the company. She has currently been appointed Group Brand Manager temporarily; Charlotta Herte who is our permanent Group Brand Manager is on parental leave until September 2009. In her permanent job Maria has worked with image communication within Skanska Residential Development.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Andreas Binz, SAS Sverige, October 27th 2008

¹²⁰ Anna Wahlgren, SAS Sverige, November 12th 2008

¹²¹ Andris Zvejnieks, SAS Sverige, October 7th 2008

¹²² Lina Berndtsson, Skanska AB, November 12th 2008

¹²³ Fredrik Johansson, Skanska Sverige AB, October 3rd 2008

¹²⁴ Maria Lomholt, Skanska AB, November 19th 2008

APPENDIX 5 - Interview facts

Pre study

Linda Hellström, Brand Consultant, *Differ*. September 16th 2008, Differ, Kungsgatan 66, Stockholm. Length of interview: 1 ½ h.

Carin Lembre, HR Manager, *Springtime*. September 22nd 2008, Springtime, Holländargatan 13, Stockholm. Length of interview: 1h.

Robert Scherman, Managing Director, *Superbrands Sweden*. September 16th 2008, Svea Reklam, Apelbergsgatan.60, Stockholm. Length of interview: 1h.

Business Superbrands Awards, September 25th 2008, Berns, Stockholm

Saab AB

Peter Adolfsson, Director Security Operations, *Saab AB*. November 11th 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 45 min.

Anders Blom, Brand Manager Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, *Saab AB*. October 8th 2008, Saab, Kungsbron 1, Stockholm. Length of interview: 1 ½ h.

Anders Blom, Brand Manager Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, *Saab AB*. November 10th 2008, Saab, Kungsbron 1, Stockholm. Length of interview: 2h.

Mia Nilsson, Head of Employer Branding, *Saab AB*. November 13th 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 1h 15 min.

SAS Sverige AB

Andreas Binz, HR Specialist, *SAS Sverige*. October 27th 2008, Sas Sverige, Östra Skogsvägen 1, Arlanda. Length of interview: 1h.

Anna Wahlgren, Cabin Crew Coach, *SAS Sverige*. November 5th, 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 1h.

Andris Zvejnieks, Vice President Communications, *SAS Sverige*. October 7th, 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 30 min.

Andris Zvejnieks, Vice President Communications, *SAS Sverige*. October 27th 2008, Sas Sverige, Östra Skogsvägen 1, Arlanda. Length of interview: 2h.

Skanska AB and Skanska Sverige AB

Lina Berndtsson, prior Manager Group Internal Communications, *Skanska AB*. November 12th 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 1h.

Fredrik Johansson, Market Communicator Attraction & Recruitment, *Skanska Sverige AB*. October 3rd 2008, Skanska, Råsundavägen 2, Solna. Length of interview: 1 ½ h.

Fredrik Johansson, Market Communicator Attraction & Recruitment, *Skanska Sverige AB*. November 21st 2008, telephone interview. Length of interview: 30 min.

Maria Lomholt, Group Brand Manager, *Skanska AB*. November 19th 2008, Skanska, Råsundavägen 2, Solna. Length of interview: 1 ½ h.

APPENDIX 6 - Examples of interview questions, brand responsables

1. Berätta om XX historia, organisation samt ditt ansvarsområde inom ert företag
2. När uppfattar du att XX påbörjade arbetet med att bygga företagets varumärke?
3. Uppfattar du att XX har intensifierat sitt varumärkesarbete under 2000-talet? Om ja, hur?
4. Vilka avdelningar är involverade i varumärkesarbetet? Har det skett någon omstrukturering av organisationen för att bättre kunna hantera varumärkesarbetet?
5. Hur delaktig är HR-avdelningen i varumärkesarbetet? I vilken utsträckning samarbetar kommunikationsavdelningen och HR-avdelningen i varumärkesarbetet?
6. Anser du att varumärkesutveckling är företagsledningens ansvar? Hur tar sig företagsledningens ansvar uttryck hos XX?
7. Finns det något speciellt mötesforum där varumärket diskuteras på ledningsnivå?
8. Hur mycket arbete har XX lagt ner på sin grafiska profil, exempelvis logo, färgval, typsnitt, presentationsmaterial, prints etc?
9. Hur vill XX positionera sitt varumärke? Vilka rationella och känslomässiga associationer ska externa parter få? Hur förmedlas insikt om dessa associationer till medarbetarna?
10. Har XX något formulerat "varumärkesdokument"? Om ja, vem tar del av det och hur har det bidragit till ert varumärkesarbete? Kan jag få ta del av dokumentet?
11. Kan du ge något exempel på att ert varumärke har bidragit till långsiktiga kundrelationer, konkreta affärer och lönsamhet?
12. XX blev rankat som Sveriges YY starkaste B2B varumärke 2008 av organisationen Superbrands. Varför tror du att ni fick en sådan bra placering?
13. Vilka värderingar står XX varumärke för? Hur förmedlas insikt om dessa värderingar till medarbetarna? Vilka tar del av informationen?
14. Vilka beteenden är önskvärda för XX medarbetare? Hur förmedlas insikt om dessa beteenden till medarbetarna? Vilka tar del av informationen?
15. Vilka är XX visioner och strategier för framtiden? Hur förmedlas insikt om dessa strategier till medarbetarna? Vilka tar del av informationen?
16. Hur görs medarbetarna medvetna om hur företagets logo och grafiska profil ska användas vid intern och extern kommunikation? Finns det exempelvis några speciella mallar att utgå ifrån?
17. Görs medarbetare delaktiga i utformningen av den operationella verksamheten? Exempelvis gällande utformningen av informationsspridning, målformulering och utvärdering av organisationens egna arbete?
18. Finns det program hos XX som syftar till att medarbetarna kan umgås utanför arbetstid, skapa sociala relationer till varandra och känna samhörighet med företaget?
19. Vilka redskap använder XX i sin internkommunikation vad avser uppbyggnaden av företagets varumärke? Hur har dessa redskap bidragit till varumärkets styrka?
20. Hur viktig anser du att XX interna kommunikation av sitt varumärke är?
21. Får medarbetarna någon träning i eller information kring hur de på bästa möjliga sätt kan interagera med externa parter för att uppfylla kundernas behov?
22. Uppdateras medarbetarnas kunskap om varumärket, företagets värderingar samt önskvärt kundbemötande via kontinuerliga utbildningar?
23. Finns det något forum där medarbetare kan ställa frågor om varumärket och diskutera frågor rörande sitt eget arbete?
24. Har XX något redskap för att medarbetarna ska få en förståelse för varandras arbetssituationer? Finns det något forum där medarbetare kan dela med sig av sitt engagemang och lära sig av varandras erfarenheter?
25. Har ni mätt hur nöjda medarbetarna är?
26. Har XX som tydligt mål i sin rekryteringsprocess att anställa medarbetare som har en bra "fit" med varumärket? Om ja, hur tar sig detta i uttryck?
27. Hur utvärderas arbetet med varumärket? Finns det några mätbara mål som ni arbetar efter?
28. Gör XX några mätningar gällande förståelse för varumärket bland medarbetarna?
29. Blir medarbetarna utvärderade och belönade på basis av faktiskt beteende i relation till varumärkesutvecklingen?

30. Har XX utvärderat skillnader mellan den interna- och externa bilden av företagets varumärke? Om ja, vad var resultatet i utvärderingen och kan jag få ta del av den?
31. Används utvärderingar av externa perceptioner av varumärket/företaget vid utformningen av framtida kommunikation och interaktion med externa grupper? Vem är ansvarig för detta?
32. Hur viktigt är det att företaget levererar exakt det som kommuniceras externt? Vad gör XX för att garantera att det som utlovas också levereras?
33. Finns det någon medarbetare utan direkt varumärkesansvar, som jag kan få intervjua?
34. Finns det något område där XX är i extra behov av en analys av sina egna insatser?
35. Hur vill XX att jag hanterar citat och annan information i uppsatsen?

APPENDIX 7 - Examples of interview questions, non-brand responsables

(The questions below were used in the interview with SAS' non-brand responsible participant)

1. Vad arbetar du med och hur länge har du arbetat på SAS? Hur mkt kundkontakt har du?
2. Är det relevant att prata om SAS varumärke i relation till ditt arbete? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
3. Har du tagit del av information, som beskriver ert varumärke? Om ja, vilken information fick du och vem fick du den av?
4. Fick du information om SAS värderingar och förväntningar på dig som medarbetare redan vid anställningstillfället? Pratade ni om SAS varumärke under anställningsprocessen?
5. Vilken är företagets huvudsakliga kanal för informationsspridning om varumärket? Saknar du någon information om ert företag och varumärke?
6. Vad tyckte du om utbildningen Sas Sverige certifikatet? Har det påverkat din förståelse för ert varumärke? Har det påverkat ditt dagliga arbete?
7. Vilka är era grundvärderingar?
8. Använder du era värderingar som riktlinjer i ditt arbete? Kan du ge något exempel på det?
9. Har du fått information eller riktlinjer gällande hur dessa värderingar ska uttryckas när du interagerar med kunder? Om ja, tyckte du att informationen var värdefull?
10. Har du fått information om SAS målsättningar och framtidsvisioner? Om ja, vilka är de?
11. Känner du att du kan få gensvar för dina idéer kring ditt arbete, företagets värderingar samt företagets målsättningar och framtid? Om ja, till vem framför de dessa idéer?
12. Vad tycker du om "Marknadsrådet" och SAS arbete med att delegera ansvar till "Ledarna"?
13. Har SAS något internt forum där du kan interagera med andra medarbetare och dela erfarenheter beträffande ditt arbete, era värderingar och din relation till SAS?
14. Hur ofta besöker du ert Intranät och tittar på er web-tv?
15. Träffar du ofta medarbetare från andra avdelningar än din egen? Om ja, tycker du att det har bidragit till din förståelse för andras arbetssituation?
16. Har du deltagit i "Walk a Mile in my shoes"? Känner du många som har gjort det?
17. Har du vid något tillfälle lärt en annan medarbetare om era värderingar och hur företaget vill att man ska vara som SAS anställd?
18. Känner du att du vet vad som krävs av dig för att agera i enlighet med SAS målsättningar och den bild som SAS vill att kunder ska ha av företaget?
19. Vad tyckte du om att SAS använde kabinpersonal i reklamen för det nya Europaflyget?
20. Vilken typ av feedback på dina prestationer får du? Känner du att denna feedback hjälper dig att förstå ert varumärke och hur du kan arbeta för att stärka det?