

A Conceptualization of an Internal Branding Process Model:

Ethnographic Case Study of F-Secure’s Brand Project

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Abstract

Researchers and practitioners have noted the importance of internal branding even though many organizations are struggling in harnessing employees to build and strengthen the corporate brand image (Baker et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2009). Many different fields of branding, marketing, and management research share the same goal but have different ways or approaches for accomplishing it. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to conduct an internal branding process model which is not limited only to a certain field of study, approach or subfield. By combining, connecting and linking similarities and recurrent aspects, the model aims to find a way how different fields of research may support each other and by that offer deeper and more comprehensive managerial implications for practitioners and decision makers. The aim is to answer questions of what kind of internal branding process is needed for turning employees into brand champions, and how can a company analyze their current state of internal branding and utilize that analysis.

This paper provides an overview of the previous academic literature related to internal branding. Based on the previous research and theories, a comprehensive internal branding process model is formed. The process starts from an organization's ambition and approach to branding, i.e. brand orientation. Brand orientation includes attributes that support the building and leveraging of internal branding mechanisms, and those mechanisms effect on the perceptions of employees. Finally, employee's psychological state work as a mediator on how well employees respond on internal branding. The result of the process is employee brand-building behavior which refers to acting as a brand champion. The model and its parts represent an ideal concept of what attributes have taken into account and managed when aiming for employees' brand-building behavior through internal branding.

The empirical part of this paper consists of the employment of the model on Finnish cyber security company F-Secure. Using an ethnographic case study method this paper provides an empirical example on how the model can be applied in practice and used as a framework type of analyzing method. As its best, the model can help an organization to recognize what kind of practices they already have, what could be developed, and what are the areas that need more attention and efforts in order to harness employees to act as brand champions.

Keywords internal branding, employee brand-building behavior, brand champions

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Tiivistelmä

Sisäisen brändäyksen merkitys on noussut vahvasti esiin akateemisessa tutkimuksessa sekä yrittäjämaailmassa (mm. Baker et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2009). Silti monet yritykset eivät kykene tai osaa hyödyntää työntekijöitään vahvemman yritysbrändin rakentajina ja viestijöinä. Monilla eri brändäyksen, markkinoinnin sekä liikkeenjohdon ja organisaatiokulttuurin tutkimussuuntauksilla on sama tavoite, mutta erilaiset lähestymistavat sen saavuttamiseksi. Täten tämän tutkimuksen päätavoitteeksi muodostui rakentaa sisäisen brändäyksen prosessimalli, joka ei rajoitu ainoastaan yhteen tutkimussuuntaukseen tai lähestymistapaan. Tarkoituksena on eri suuntauksia yhdistelemällä löytää samankaltaisuuksia ja toistuvia teemoja, joiden yhdistäminen yhtenäiseksi prosessiksi tarjoaa kokonaisvaltaisemman sisäisen brändäyksen mallin ja johtopäätökset ammattilaisille ja päätöksentekijöille. Tätä tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään, millainen sisäisen brändäyksen prosessi vaaditaan, jotta yritys voi valjastaa työntekijänsä brändilähettiläiksi, sekä miten yritys voi analysoida sen hetkistä sisäisen brändäyksen tasoa ja miten hyödyntää tuota analyysia.

Tutkielma alkaa katsauksella aiempaan akateemiseen sisäisen brändäyksen kirjallisuuteen. Uusi, kokonaisvaltaisempi sisäisen brändäyksen malli rakentuu aikaisempiin tutkimuksiin ja teorioihin nojaten. Prosessi nähdään alkavan yrityksen tahtotilasta ja orientaatiosta brändäykseen. Brändiorientaatio rakentuu muun muassa yrityksen arvoista, artefakteista, konkreettisista toimista ja brändiarkkitehtuurista, jotka osaltaan tukevat sisäisen brändäyksen mekanismien rakentamista ja hyödyntämistä. Sisäisen brändäyksen mekanismit puolestaan vaikuttavat työntekijän käsityksiin ja näkemyksiin, kuten bränditietouteen ja siihen sitoutumiseen. Lopulta työntekijän psyykinen tila ja tulkinta vaikuttaa siihen, kuinka hyvin työntekijä vastaa sisäisen brändäyksen mekanismeihin. Prosessin lopputuloksena on työntekijän brändiä rakentava toiminta; brändilähettiläänä toimiminen. Malli esittää ideaalin konseptin siitä, mitä yrityksen tulisi ottaa huomioon sisäistä brändäystä toteutettaessa.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus käsittelee mallin kokeilua suomalaisen tietoturvayhtiö F-Securen brändiprojektin analysoimiseen. Etnografista tapaustutkimusmenetelmää hyödyntäen tutkimus tarjoaa empiirisen esimerkin siitä, kuinka mallia voidaan soveltaa käytäntöön ja käyttää viitekehyyksen omaisesti. Parhaimmillaan malli voi auttaa yrityksiä tunnistamaan millaisia käytäntöjä yrityksessä on käytössä, mitä voisi kehittää, ja mitkä osa-alueet vaativat enemmän huomiota ja resursseja, jotta yritys voi valjastaa työntekijänsä toimimaan brändilähettiläinä.

Avainsanat sisäinen brändäys, työntekijä brändin rakentajana, brändilähettiläisyys

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1. Introduction and motivation

“All company employees are fundamentally brand builders.”

(Tuominen et al. 2016)

In the area of rapid changes and technological development, ever faster imitation of product innovation and emulation of competitors' functional advantages result in increasingly similar product offerings and harder competition (Burmam et al. 2009; de Chernatony & Cottam 2006). That arises a question of how a corporate brand can compete against and differentiate from its competitors?

Researchers and practitioners have noted the importance of internal branding even though many organizations are struggling in harnessing employees to build and strengthen the corporate brand image (Baker et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2009). Nowadays, as there is a call for transparency and trust, it is important that organizations understand how to get employees to deliver an experience that is consistent with the reality, customer expectations, and the brand image desired by the organization (Miles & Mangold 2004). Stories, experiences and feelings are becoming increasingly important for consumers and are used for creating more value for customers. Therefore, especially frontline employees can help customers connect emotionally to a brand by humanizing it (Morhart et al. 2009).

It has been stated that fundamentally all company employees are brand builders and one of the main tasks of management is to turn employees into brand champions. Many different fields of branding, marketing, and management studies share the same goal but have different ways or approach for accomplishing it. Additionally, organizations are forced to break internal silos between different departments and units, and coordination and co-operation between units are needed for establishing comprehensive internal branding (e.g. Punjaisri & Wilson 2007; Miles & Mangold 2004; Vallaster & de Chernatony 2006).

Drawing from the isolation of different academic fields and following the ideology of Punjaisri and Wilson (2013), also practitioners and managers in the business concept need to dissipate silos inside organizations and see the complex entirety which affects to the goals of internal branding. The previous awoke a need for conducting an internal branding process model which is not limited only to a certain field of study, approach or subfield. By combining, connecting

and linking similarities and other aspects, the model aims to find a way how different fields of research may support each other and by that, offer deeper and more comprehensive managerial implications for managers and decision makers.

Based on the previous, the primary research question was formed as follows:

What kind of internal branding process is needed for turning employees into brand champions?

To understand the concept, create an empirical analysis, and see the implications of the process, the secondary research question is:

How can a company analyze their current state of internal branding and utilize that analysis?

To answer the secondary research question and test the formed model in practice, an ethnographic case study method was chosen for conducting the empirical part of this study. The new model was employed in a Finnish cyber security company F-Secure and the fieldwork was done during the planning phase of brand revision project.

This study begins with a literature review which includes definitions of the key terms used in this study and an overview of the different approaches to internal branding. After that, this study combines the main literature and theories, and based on that presents the new comprehensive internal branding process model. Next, the methodological approach and methods are discussed more deeply, the case company is introduced, and the brand revision project described.

The fifth and sixth chapters will bring out the ethnographic part of the study by clearly changing the tone and discourse for more approachable style. To bring alive the observations and fieldwork, it is needed to use more a storyteller type of voice. The fifth chapter consists of the empirical analysis of how the model was employed on the case company. The discussion part argues how the model worked as an analyzing framework in practice in general. The last chapter before references is about concluding the whole study and presenting the possible limitations and future directions for further research.

2. Overview of the previous literature

The literature review focuses on defining the key terms and theories used in this study in order to give a full understanding of all necessary branding and internal branding related attributes and their contributions. First, this chapter unfolds the core terms of a brand and explains the logic of internal branding so that the reader can later conceive all the terms and phenomena in a bigger picture, relate them to other theories and fully understand the concepts.

Next, the study dives deeper in to the world of internal branding and explains wider concepts like organizational identification, all the feelings and emotions an employee has towards the brand, specifies what employee brand-building behavior means, and finally presents previous approaches to internal branding. The approaches covered in the last subchapter have been brought up and referred in many studies and researches and the overall phenomena of what the studies are about recur in the previous literature. So, the relevance of the chosen approaches for internal branding is unquestionable (e.g. Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Morhart et al. 2009; Miles & Mangold 2004; Punjaisri et al. 2009).

2.1. Defining the key terms

2.1.1. Core characteristics of a brand

Corporate brand

In the corporate branding literature, corporate brand is said to represent the organization's identity and its core characteristics (e.g. Morhart et al. 2009). Corporate brand is also described as "the face of the organization" (Balmer & Gray 2003). In contrast to line branding, corporate branding is related more widely to all the stakeholders interacting with an organization and its employees (e.g. de Chernatony 1999; Schultz & de Chernatony 2002). According to de Chernatony (1999), line branding normally engages only distributors, customers and just a few of the employees where as a corporate branding engages all the employees of an organization. Corporate branding concept emphasizes employees' attitudes and behaviors, and a corporate brand is also more highly influenced by the relationship between an organization's employees and its customers (Foster et al. 2010; McDonald et al. 2001). Brands are also defined as clusters

of functional and emotional values which emanate from people inside the organization and are communicated, in addition to advertisements, through interactions between employees and customers (de Chernatony 1999; Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005).

Brands should be strategically included into internal activities because nowadays brands are elements of every transaction a corporate engages in (Harris 2007). Harris (2007) emphasizes the importance of brands by stating that nowadays brands can revise market dynamics, enter new markets, and strongly affect industry business models. It is also significant how the organization interprets the concept of a brand. For instance, de Chernatony and Cottam (2006) discovered that more successful financial service brands interpret a brand as everything experienced by a customer. When there is a synergy between each element of customer experience, a brand can become more than the sum of its parts (de Chernatony & Cottam 2006).

A corporate brand communicates brand values which are also seen as brand promises. Brand promises differentiate an organization from competitors and increase stakeholders' loyalty and esteem towards the organization (Balmer & Gray 2003). That means that organizations having a corporate brand strategy are much more reliant on their employees who deliver brand promises in their daily work (Schultz & de Chernatony 2002). According to Balmer (2012), people associate corporate brands with key corporate expectations and associations, which corporate name and or logo evoke. A corporate brand should articulate its agreement with key stakeholders and demonstrate that it has kept its corporate brand promise (Balmer 2012).

Brand vision

A vision gives brand a sense of purpose and is more associated with future goals (Kotler et al. 2009). De Chernatony (2001) define that "a powerful brand vision indicates the long-term, stretching intent for the brand which must excite staff, encourage their commitment and enable them to interpret how they can contribute to success".

Brand vision can be embodied by reflecting questions like: what core values does the brand stand for, what is the purpose of the brand and what kind of desired future does the brand wish to bring about (de Chernatony 2001; Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). Brand vision also needs to be a one that employees are ready to believe and identify with (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). A clear and strong brand vision creates a tension between the actual and ideal organisational behaviour and thus forces employees to work on reducing the gap between them

(Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). Additionally, De Chernatony (2001) states a powerful brand vision enables employees to interpret and understand what their contribution to the success is.

Brand identity and values

According to Kotler et al. (2009), brand identity is defined as “the way a company aims to identify or position itself or its product or service”. Furthermore, corporate brand identity is said to communicate the differential qualities of an organization’s service or products to customers (Wheeler et al. 2006). Brand identity should be spread in everything the organization does and communicates, from the way employees behave, to the design of organization stationary, catalogues, annual reports, and organization decor, et cetera (Kotler et al. 2009). A strong corporate brand identity also has a positive effect on employees as it is said to increase employees’ perceptions of organizational culture and the consistency between brand identity and an employee’s self-image (Wheeler et al. 2006). Customer facing employees’ adoption of their organization’s brand values guides them also to deliver the brand promise (Tuominen et al. 2016).

Brand orientation

Brand orientation has been described to refer on what actions an organization does and what kind of focus it has on building and sustaining brand promise (e.g. Liu et al. 2017). The brand orientation makes organizations to focus on development of internal branding and its mechanisms. It is stated that when organizations are investing on brand orientation, it can lead to developing a concept of communication tools which further enables employees to understand their roles within their organization and communicate the values. (Liu et al. 2017)

Baumgarth (2010) researched brand orientation in a business-to-business setting and established a model integrating the behavioral perspective which refers to concrete behaviors and actions undertaken and cultural perspective which relates more to an organizational view of the process. The model includes layers of brand orientation as a value, norm of brand orientation and artefacts of brand orientation. Values refers to the focus on top managements, their attitudes and knowledge of brand concepts, and the role of a brand in strategy development. Norms refers to regulations and institutions which affect brand management operations like brand communications. Artefacts relate to tangible symbolic communications and behaviors to concrete actions. (Baumgarth 2010).

Ewing and Napoli (2005) discussed brand orientation through orchestration, interaction, and affect. The level of orchestration indicates how an organization has been focusing on communicating its brand portfolio and related marketing activities both to internal and external stakeholders (Ewing & Napoli 2005). Also, it relates to how well an organization has structured the portfolio and activities (Ewing & Napoli 2005). Analyzing the level of orchestration shows how well an organization has managed to implement integrated marketing communications activities and how consistently those are delivered to stakeholders (Ewing & Napoli 2005). Orchestration enables organizations to create an environment for developing internal branding mechanisms because with a high level of consistency in internal communications and training, an organization is more effective when delivering brand promise information to employees (Liu et al. 2017).

Ewing and Napoli (2005) described that the term interaction works as an indication of with what level an organization responds to market condition changes and changing needs of stakeholders. More detailed, it defines the level of interaction and established dialogue between an organizations key stakeholders, and how well it can leverage market feedback on creating and delivering stakeholder value (Ewing & Napoli 2005). Gathering feedback from employees, an organization is able to develop its internal communications and trainings (Liu et al. 2017).

The last aspect of brand orientation by Ewing & Napoli (2005) is affect. Affect assesses how well an organization understands why their key stakeholders either like or dislike them and what exactly are the things they are most liked or disliked for (Ewing & Napoli 2005). An organization with a high level of affect is able to better understand the preferences of its employees (Liu et al. 2017).

2.1.2. Internal branding

The importance of internal branding efforts has been noted particularly among service firms, and the concept has been gaining attention from both the researchers' and practitioners' sides. Nowadays, employees are fundamentally seen as brand builders and customers' experience is that way more reliant on interaction with an organization's employees who are delivering the brand promise (e.g. Tuominen et al. 2016; Schultz & de Chernatony 2002)

Baker et al. (2014) propose that internal branding should be seen occurring when meaningful and relevant brand information is disseminated to employees in order to aid in the provision of higher levels of customer service (Baker et al. 2014). Because a brand acts as a promise between an organization and its potential and existing customers (Foster et al. 2010), it is essential that employees understand that promise internally, the entire organization is committed to deliver it, and behaviours exhibited by frontline employees are consistent with what is expected by both the firm and its customers (Baker et al. 2014; Foster et al. 2010). As Punjaisri and Wilson (2013) defined, fundamentally internal branding is about ensuring that employees deliver the brand promise reflecting brand values, and that employees enact customers' expectations arising from the brand promise.

Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) showed in their study how internal branding is not only increasing employees' abilities and willingness to behave in line with the brand promise and deliver it, but it also has effects on employees' attitudes towards the brand. Proper use of internal branding instruments (also seen as tools or mechanisms) explains increased brand identification, brand commitment and brand loyalty, which further have a positive influence on delivering a brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007).

Internal branding mechanisms are used for focusing employees' attention on the brand, building awareness of the brand, and helping employees to understand the brand promise (Liu et al. 2017; Vallaster & de Chernatony 2006). Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) identified internal communications and training programmes to be the main mechanism groups of internal branding activities. Communications tools include for example group meetings, daily briefings, notice boards, and internal newsletters, whereas training programs are usually divided into orientation program and development courses (Punjaisri & Wilson 2013). Miles and Mangold (2004) listed following formal sources of messages in their conceptual framework of employee branding: human resources systems, public relations systems, and advertising. Internal branding tools and those sources of messages are to a great extent tied together; internal communications often include messages e.g. from public relations and human resources.

An internal branding process must start with the transfer of brand-related information from an organization to employees (King & Grace 2008). Brand communication is meant to guide employee behaviour with customers so that customer experience is in line with the firm's expectations of the brand (Baker et al. 2014). When information is communicated properly and

successfully, it should clarify both employees' understanding of the brand and employees' role in delivering the brand message.

Punjaisri and Wilson's (2013) recent study shows that internal branding process is not straightforward, but the process and its impacts and results are affected by many other factors. Punjaisri and Wilson's (2007) study showed the importance of the coordination of marketing department and HR department in order to deliver coherent and consistent brand messages which are further communicated to employees. When employees have received consistent brand messages, their understanding of the brand strengthens which in turn help them to deliver consistent brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007).

Several studies have shown the positive outcomes of internal branding activities and management. Internal branding influences employees' brand performance and brand promise delivery and strengthens employees' brand attitudes such as brand commitment, brand identification, and brand loyalty which relates to intention to stay with the brand (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007). According to Matanda and Ndubisi (2013), internal branding is positively related to employees' perceived person-organization fit and intention to stay in the organization. That is in line with Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) model which highlights internal branding outcomes to be employee-brand fit, brand knowledge, and belief in the brand.

2.1.3. Employee's brand attributes

Brand pride

Helm et al. (2016) described brand pride to be collective pride that members of an organization feel; the pleasure that members feel when they associate themselves and are associated with their organization (Helm et al. 2016). It is shown that if an organization has a favorable corporate reputation, its employees' self-esteem is likely to increase (Helm 2011). Pride has a significant impact on employees' satisfaction and commitment (Helm 2011).

Brand fit

Congruence between employees' personal values and identity, and the identity and values of the organization is named and determined in a few different ways. Yaniv and Farkas (2005) use a term person-organization fit (POF) in their study and define the concept as "the congruence

between the employee's own personal values and the values of the organization, according to the employee's perception". Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) refer to Yaniv and Farkas' (2005) definition and write about employee-brand fit that "refers to the perceived congruence between the brand values and the employee's own, personal values". Additionally, some researchers have used the term brand value congruence to represent the same phenomena and define it as the extent of the congruency between employees' personal values and those communicated by the brand (e.g. Baker et al. 2014; de Chernatony et al. 2004).

Sirianni et al. (2013) do not focus on employees' values but introduce a term employee-brand alignment and define it as referring to "the level of congruence between the employee's behavior and the brand personality". Sirianni's et al. (2013) study indicates that employee-brand alignment leads to increased overall brand evaluations especially with unfamiliar brands (Sirianni et al. 2013). Employee-brand alignment is related to the employee brand-building behavior discussed in the next subchapter.

Morhart et al. (2009) assume employees internalize the brand-based role identity, which leads toward brand-oriented self-concept when employees accept the brand values as their own. Thus, they feel value congruence between corporate brand's values and their own values, and the brand-based role identity positions prominently in the salience hierarchy among the distinct role identities within the employee's self-concept.

To increase employees' person-organizational fit the organization have to act in line with the values represented outside (Foster et al. 2010; Yaniv & Farkas 2005). If there is a gap between the brand values the organization states to stand for, the "on stage", and the actual corporate values that occur in the "back stage", employees will perceive that as a lie and it can damage their identification with the corporate brand (Yaniv & Farkas 2005). According to Foster et al. (2010), the corporate identity represents what the corporate brand stands for as it comprises the organization's aims, ethos and values.

Employees' person-organizational fit affects positively on the identification of employees with corporate values and objectives and it can also help to maintain consistent and stable self-concept (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Yaniv & Farkas 2005). Additionally, it will increase the extent to which employees perceive their corporate brand values and the values declared by management. (Yaniv & Farkas 2005). According to Yaniv and Farkas (2005), that will also

make customers perceive higher level of trust towards the brand which further results in a more powerful brand.

Brand commitment

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) described brand commitment as “the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals — in other words, to exert brand citizenship behaviour.”.

Previous corporate and especially internal branding literature has defined brand commitment to be synonymous with organizational commitment (Burmann & Zeplin 2005). The results of a recent study by Tuominen et al. (2016) showed that especially service companies need to strive for organizational commitment in order to achieve market performance, create new customer relationships and gain customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.1.4. Employee brand-building behavior

Morhart et al. (2009) define employee brand-building behavior as “employees’ contribution (both on and off the job) to an organization’s customer-oriented branding efforts.” The idea is that employees can be engaged in behavior that can build, reinforce, strengthen and even create an organization’s brand image (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Miles & Mangold 2004).

Miles and Mangold (2004) describe that employee brand-building behavior includes for instance courtesy, responsiveness, reliability, helpfulness, and empathy, among others. Morhart et al. (2009) classify employee brand-building behavior into three categories. The first is retention. Especially for a service firm it is essential and crucial to maintain stability in its customer-contact staff, because customers’ brand experience depends on frontline employees’ behavior (Morhart et al. 2009). These frontline employees can help customers to connect emotionally to the brand by humanizing the brand (Morhart et al. 2009).

The second category is in-role brand-building behavior. As brand representatives, frontline employees meet the standards that their organizational roles prescribe. Those could either be written in behavioral codices, display rules or manuals, or unwritten. It is important that customers are treated in a way that is consistent with the brand promise the organization communicates through its public messages. (Morhart et al. 2009).

The third category is extra-role brand-building behavior. Morhart et al. (2009) defined that “extra-role brand-building behaviour refers to employee actions that go beyond the prescribed roles for the good of the corporate brand and are discretionary”. For example, employees participate in brand development on the job and they produce a positive word of mouth of the job. This personal advocacy of the organization’s brand outside the job context is a credible way of advertising. (Morhart et al. 2009). Also, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) stated that employee participation in brand development both on the job and of the job is central to brand building.

Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) introduce a model that includes four employee brand-building behaviors: brand-congruent behavior, customer-oriented behavior, participation in brand development and positive word of mouth (WOM). Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) define brand-congruent behavior as “the degree to which an employee’s personal communication and appearance in a customer interaction is in line with the organization’s brand identity” and it refers to conveying and creating an image specific to a certain brand. Customer-oriented behavior refers to the effective service delivery in general (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Participation in brand development includes the same idea that the extra-role brand-building behavior does (Morhart et al., 2009). Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) define it as “a proactive employee behaviour that goes beyond the job description and indicates active, responsible involvement in nurturing and building the organization’s brand”.

2.2. Different approaches to internal branding

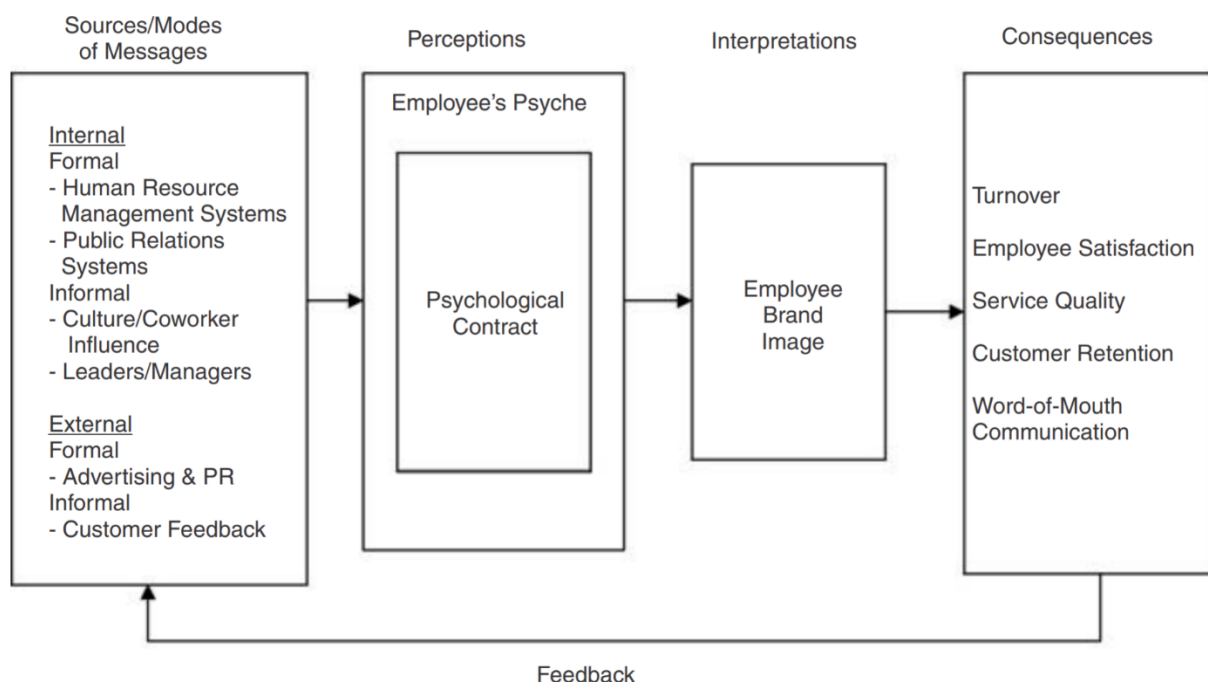
2.2.1. Employee branding model

Employee branding is defined as “the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents” (Miles & Mangold 2004). Employee branding is not only about attaining customer satisfaction, but utilising all the systems of the organization and motivating employees to improve and project the desired organizational image (Miles & Mangold 2004). Employees can project the organizational image through their appearance and manner of interacting with customers (Miles & Mangold 2004).

Miles and Mangold (2004) state the desired organizational image has to be clear in employees' minds before they can project the image to customers and other relevant stakeholders. Thus, there has to be clear understanding of the relationship between employer and employee. Effective management of employees' psychological contracts is essential in transferring the organizational image and values to employees. A psychological contract is based on perceptions of established expectations the employees have about the relationship between them and the organization. Miles and Mangold (2004) state that the values and expectations must be communicated to employees as they pertain to customer orientation and employees must feel that an employer's actions meet employees' expectations. (Miles & Mangold 2004).

In Miles and Mangold's (2004) employee branding process model, as indicated below in Figure 1, the psychological contract emanates from the messages that employees receive. Those messages can be derived from several sources both within and outside the organisation and can either be formal or informal. The messages in an organizational system are essential to successful employee branding efforts. If the messages delivered to employees and customers are not consistent, employees who are aware of both messages will perceive a certain level of duplicity on the part of the organisation.

**Figure 1: A Conceptualization of the Employee Branding Process
(Miles & Mangold, 2004)**



Miles and Mangold (2004) summarize that the messages sent through human resource policies and practices describe to employees what the organization values or deems to be important. Also, the influence of co-workers, as well as the organization's culture and leadership and management, plays an important role in employee branding. High level of message consistency helps to clarify the employees' understanding of how the organization expects them to behave. (Miles & Mangold 2004).

Above-mentioned messages form the basis of the psychological contract. The psychological contract between the organization and employees is based on a series of expectations established between the organization and its employees (Miles & Mangold 2004). As mentioned, the more realistic and consistent the messages are, the less likely the contract will be broken. According to Miles and Mangold (2004) the expectations are based on messages employees receive about the organization, beginning with the recruitment process and lasting throughout their tenure with the firm.

A psychological contract is essential when building an employee brand image. An organization has to understand the concept and use psychological contract to establish expectations for employee behaviour. It is the employee who determines whether she can trust the organization. It is important that employees understand what is expected and how they can meet those expectations. Organizational values and the desired organizational image can be transferred to employees through effective management of employees' psychological contracts. (Miles & Mangold 2004).

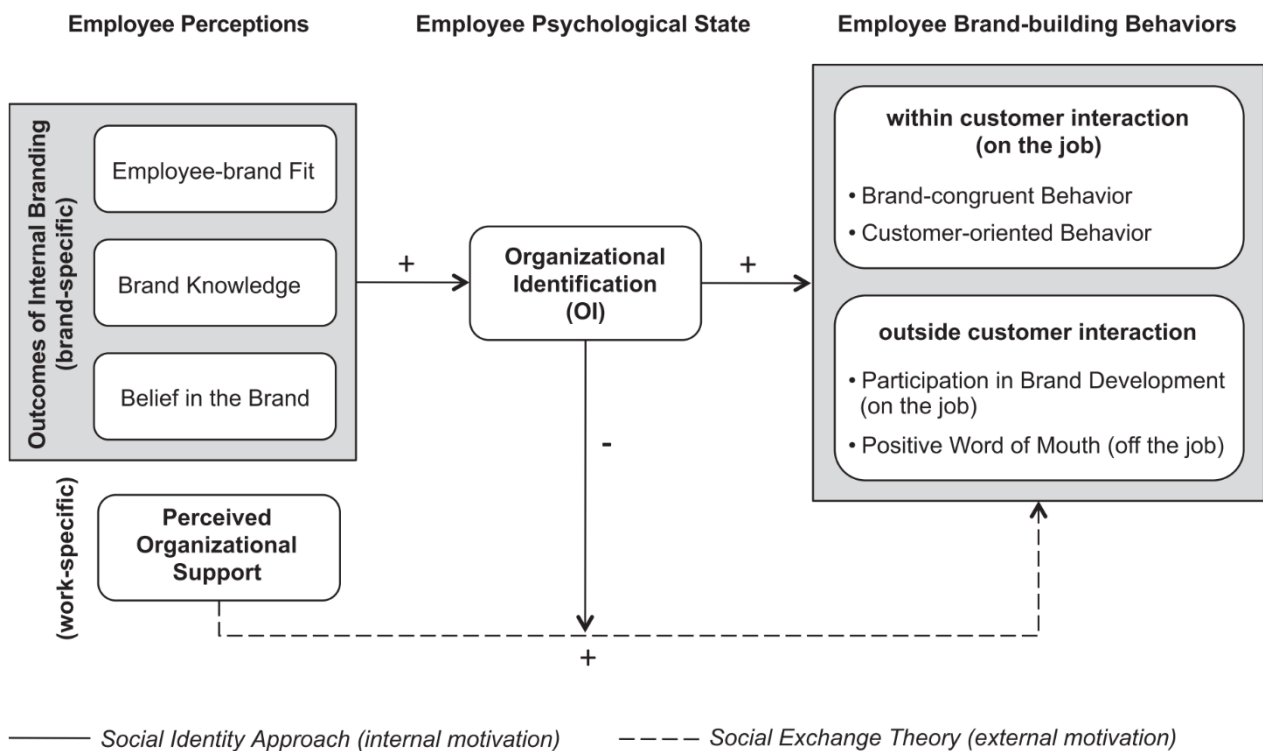
Miles and Mangold (2004) present two points that effectively transfer the desired customer orientation. First, the organization must communicate its values and expectations to employees as they pertain to customer orientation. Second, employees must perceive that the employer is delivering on its end of the psychological contract by meeting the employees' expectations. When this psychological contract is upheld, employees are likely to fulfil organizational expectations and project a positive brand image. (Miles & Mangold 2004).

The model shows several positive consequences that a strong brand image can achieve. An organization with a strong employee brand image are likely to benefit from higher levels of employee satisfaction and performance, service quality, customer retention, reduced employee

turnover and positive word-of-mouth communication by both employees and customers. (Miles & Mangold 2004).

2.2.2. Organizational identification as a tool

**Figure 2: Turning employees into brand champions
(Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014)**



As shown in figure 2, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos' (2014) research model focuses on how employee brand-building behavior is influenced by mechanisms of social identity and social exchange. As the model concentrates more on social identity approach and these two approaches do not influence each other, the impact of social exchange theory was excluded, and this study focuses only on the influence of the internal branding outcomes. In the research, based on the social identity approach, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) summarize that organizational identification should become a key motivational driver for organizations aiming for employee brand-building behavior.

As mentioned earlier, the more employees identify with their organization, the more their perceptions and behaviors are in line with the organizational identity (Löhndorf &

Diamantopoulos 2014). According to Van Knippenberg et al. (2007), people desire consistency and continuity in their self-concepts and are motivated to behave in a way that is consistent with how they see themselves. Additionally, due to the self-defining nature of organizational identification, employees' behavior should become consistent with the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Wieseke et al. 2007). That is why employee's organizational identification has a positive effect on employee brand-congruent behavior (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Organizational identification also creates customer-oriented behavior which helps to enhance the value of the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). In support of this view, Wieseke et al. (2009) show in their research that when frontline employees identify greatly with the organization, the likelihood of reaching a higher level of sales increases and employees perform more effectively.

Employees' identification with their organization also generates various discretionary behaviors like organizational citizenship behaviors and lower turnover rates (Riketta 2005). Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) refer to social identity theory as well as does Hughes and Ahearne's (2010) research which claims that organizational identification increases discretionary behaviors because it creates a desire to support, improve and project the organization (Hughes & Ahearne 2010). The previous can be explained by the employee's aim to reach a positive self and positive social identity (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Thus, employees' participation in brand development helps organizations to support and improve the corporate brand image. In support of this view, according to Yaniv and Farkas (2005), a higher person-organization fit leads to a higher identification of the employees with the organizational aims and values as well as increased readiness to do extra work for the organization.

Another behavior outside customer interactions produced by organizational identification is positive word of mouth, WOM. Employees' personal advocacy outside the job context is said to be credible form of advertising (Morhart et al. 2009), hence positive WOM done by employees can support and improve the corporate brand image. Furthermore, identification is said to increase a tendency to recommend a brand and a higher trust in the brand in the minds of both employees and customers (Hughes & Ahearne 2010; Yaniv & Farkas 2005).

When looking at the very first part of the figure 2, the factors that affect OI, the most interesting is how internal branding affects to employees' organizational identification. In the model of

Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014), there are three brand specific factors: employee-brand fit, brand knowledge and belief in the brand. Those three factors are outcomes of the internal branding. As mentioned earlier, people desire consistency and continuity in their self-concepts (Van Knippenberg et al. 2007). Due to that, a brand identity that is in line with an employee's own identity helps him or her to maintain a consistent self-image which further positively affects employee's identification with the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Furthermore, Baker et al. (2014) also state that high quality and accurate timely internal communication efforts should increase the perceived congruency between the employee's values and the brand's values via internalization.

Brand knowledge is the second predictor of the extent to which employees identify with the organization. Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) describe that the more employees know about the brand identity, the more they realize an organization's shared values, a shared sense of purpose and features that differentiate the organization from others. Also, Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005) outline that a shared understanding of the brand values encourages brand supporting behavior.

The third is employees' belief in the brand. When employees have a strong belief in an organization's brand they are also convinced of the importance of the organization. Thus, because people are more likely to identify with groups or organizations that make them see themselves in a more positive light, employees transfer such positive interpretations to their own self-concept by identifying with the organization that embodies the brand. (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014).

Also, researchers Yaniv and Farkas (2005) enhance the effect of the person-organization fit in brand building by stating that the person-organization fit of the employees has an effect on the extent to which they perceive the brand values as consistent with the values the management declares. Also, the brand perception level of employees has a positive effect on the perception level of the customers which further means higher trust in the brand and the organization (Yaniv & Farkas 2005).

Furthermore, the research of Wieseke et al. (2009) shows that leaders' organizational identification has an influence on followers' organizational identification. This transfer process occurred not only at the relationship between a manager and an employee but also at a higher

level, between directors and managers (Wieseke et al. 2009). Thus, in addition to internal branding efforts, leaders have an important role in enhancing the level of organizational identification. For supporting this view, also Punjaisri et al. (2013) state that leaders should be seen as one of the key elements that have an effect on employee brand-building behavior.

2.2.3. The role of the right type of leadership

De Chernatony (2001) presents a model for strategically building brands which addition to the traditional external approach includes an internally focused approach of understanding the cultural assets of organizations and utilizing the emotional and intellectual strengths of employees. Leaders should aim to gain employees' commitment so that everybody believes in the future the organization aims for and employees become motivated to search and find more creative and innovative ways to solve problems (de Chernatony 2001).

Management needs to both create a platform for brand supporting behavior by facilitating social interactions and provide a clear brand vision (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005; Punjaisri et al. 2013). Vallaster and Chernatony's (2005) idea is that a clear brand vision creates a tension between ongoing and actual work setting and ideal work setting, and forces people to work together to decrease the gap. To outline a unique brand vision management following questions can for instance be exploited: what core values does our brand stand for, what is the purpose of our brand and what kind of future does our brand desire to bring about (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005).

During the brand-building process leaders have an important role in translating a brand promise into action (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). That means leaders need to be attentive to organizational communication and mediate between individuals (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). To facilitate social interactions, the communication approach needs dialogue and both verbal and non-verbal mechanisms (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005) stated that leaders should show their commitment by participating in the internal brand building process, live the brand promise, reward cases where the brand promise is delivered and trust in and empower employees.

Morhart et al. (2009) define that transformational leadership "implies the alignment of followers' values and priorities with the organization's goals to accomplish higher-order

objectives". Brand-specific transformational leadership (TFL) is defined as "leader's approach to motivating his or her followers to act on behalf of the corporate brand by appealing to their values and personal convictions" (Morhart et al. 2009). Miles and Mangold (2004) state that leaders with an ability to successfully enable employees to internalize an organization's values are often viewed as transformational or charismatic leaders and they can influence employees, for instance, through vision and intellectual stimulation.

Morhart et al. (2009) concentrated on the following TFL behaviors: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Charisma, or idealized influence, refers to behaving in admirable ways which finally make followers to identify with her or him. Inspirational motivation is defined "leader's ability to create a sense of collective mission among followers by articulating an exciting vision" (Morhart et al. 2009). Leaders can challenge employees to rethink old ways of doing things through intellectual stimulation. Individualized consideration refers to training and mentoring that aim to assist each employee in achieving her or his fullest potential (Morhart et al. 2009).

Further, brand-specific version of TFL includes following characteristic behaviors: acting as a role model, living the brand values, expressing a compelling and differentiating brand vision, facilitating employees to rethink their jobs from a brand perspective, helping, empowering and coaching employees to interpret and internalize the brand promise and values, and how to grow into the roles as brand representatives (Morhart et al. 2009; Punjaisri et al. 2013; Miles & Mangold 2004).

Brand-specific TFL also includes behaviors like emphasizing employees' membership in the brand community, teaching them to enact brand-based role identity properly and allowing employees to choose without restraint how to interpret and enact their new role identity. Therefore, it creates an environment that allows for contentment of employees' basic needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy while enacting employees-imposed role identity as brand representatives. Hence, this enables the role identity to internalize into their self-concepts, which further leads to brand-building behaviors. (Morhart et al. 2009).

2.2.4. The importance of recruiting

Recruiting has a clear and essential role in building an alignment with a corporate brand identity and employees' identities (e.g. de Chernatony 1999; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Sirianni et al. 2013; Helm et al. 2016). It is clearly easier to recruit employees whose values and identities are already in line with the values of the organization than try to alter existing employees' values or ways to think.

Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) underline an organization must clearly communicate and signal its core values and try to hire people who share them. Organizations should implement recruitment and selection strategies that also take more into account the congruency of applicants' values with the desired brand values (de Chernatony 1999; Wheeler et al. 2006).

Wheeler et al. (2006) emphasize that during the recruitment process, the organization has an excellent opportunity to transmit and communicate culture-laden information to applicants. For example, during the selection interviews, organizations can make great effort to espouse realistic and organizational culturally specific information, and not only positive or vague culture-free information (Wheeler et al. 2006). Furthermore, Baker et al. (2014) state that when an organization efficiently communicates brand values to its potential employees, it can increase the probability that new employees share the brand values and they may be influenced by future brand-specific communication as well. Thus, communicating an organization culture to applicants also has a long-term impact.

3. Building the new model

By combining different theories and models, this study aims to conduct an internal branding process model which is not limited only to a certain field of study, approach or subfield. By combining, connecting and linking similarities and aspects, the model aims to find a way how different fields of research may support each other and by that, offer deeper and more comprehensive managerial implications for practitioners and decision makers.

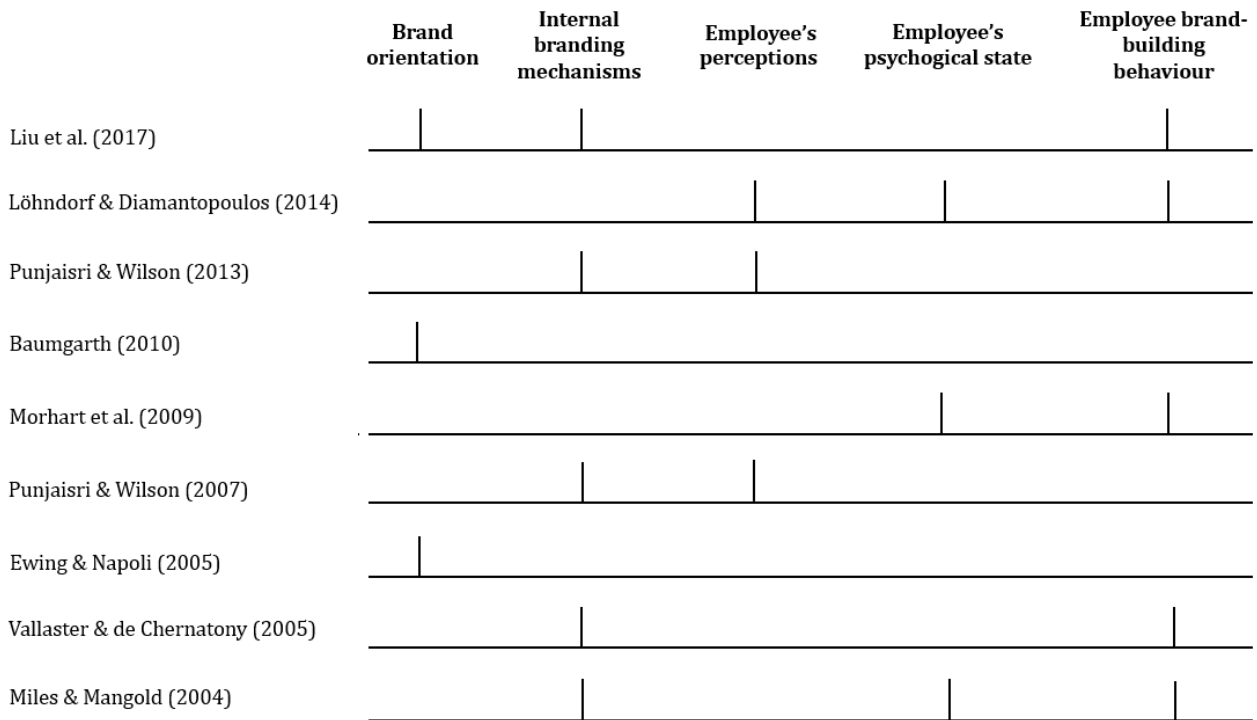
In the process of going through the related literature, no rival or conflicting models were found, and the previous theories and studies were more about complementing each other rather than competing against one another. This supported the foundation of a new, more comprehensive model since it was possible to construct it without conflicts between its different parts.

This chapter first combines the most relevant internal branding related studies in a more general level to open the connections, links, and similarities between these studies, and then presents the new comprehensive model.

3.1. Combining the main literature

After going through the previous literature on internal branding, this study focused on a few major studies to cover the whole process from the base to the outcomes and finally results of internal branding. To get all the themes and factors covered, the table 1 below acts as a justification and a structural direction for which studies were finally chosen to be the basis for the new model. The next subchapters will explain more deeply the linkages and connections.

Figure 3: Overview of the relevant theories and their connections



3.1.1. Many factors influencing employees' perceptions and state of mind

As mentioned before, leaders' organizational identification has an influence on followers' organizational identification (Wieseke et al. 2009). This transfer process occurs not only in the relationship between manager and employee but also in a higher level, between directors and managers (Wieseke et al. 2009). Thus, in addition to internal branding efforts, the leaders have an important role in enhancing the level of organizational identification. This is the intersection of brand-specific transformational leadership and Löhdorf and Diamantopoulos' (2014) organizational identification model. When corporate brand values are communicated by the leaders, the behavioral standards reflecting core brand values gel in the minds of employees. Thus, employees are likely to become motivated by, and committed to, corporate brand goals communicated by the leader (Punjaisri et al. 2013).

Likewise, Morhart et al. (2009) define that brand-specific leaders influence employees through an internalization process which increases for instance in-role and extra-role brand-building

behaviors. To support that, Miles and Mangold (2004) mentioned how major role leaders and managers have in the employee socialization process.

Brand specific TFL also increases employees trust in leaders and in a corporate brand. Grown trust and belief affect positively on organizational identification, like shown in the model of Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014). And the more employees identify with the brand, the more they perceive their fate intertwines with the corporate brand (Punjaisri et al. 2013). That is how these research results can support each other and enhance their effectiveness. Additionally, Yaniv and Farkas (2005) stated that if brand values reflect corporate values, staff will not feel they are being lied to, but they feel they transfer to customers a brand promise that is in line with corporate values. Thus, trust can be enhanced through brand management as well.

According to Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) brand knowledge is one of those significant factors affecting the level of organizational identification. The more employees know about the brand identity, the more they realize the organization's shared values, a shared sense of purpose and features that differentiate the organization from others.

Miles and Mangold's (2004) employee branding model shows how essential the informative messages in an organizational system are when turning employees into brand champions. A high level of message consistency helps to clarify the employees' understanding of how the organization expects them to behave (Miles & Mangold 2004). Thus, the employee branding model can be helpful in increasing employees' brand knowledge which then increases organizational identification. To support the previous, Tuominen et al. (2016) affirmed that through internal branding an organization is able to positively effect on brand value adoption which further influences organizational commitment i.e. organizational identification.

Furthermore, employee branding is said to decrease employee turnover and increase employee satisfaction. If assumed that the longer employees work in an organization, the more they are committed and the more they know about their organization and the brand, employee branding has also a significant role in enhancing brand knowledge because of decreased turnovers. Especially for a service firm it is essential and crucial to maintain stability in its customer-contact staff because customers' brand experience depends on frontline employees' behavior (Morhart et al. 2009).

Miles and Mangold (2004) base their model on psychological contract and define “this contract is based on the employees’ perceptions of a series of established expectations”. Based on the employee branding process, leaders can take advantage of psychological contracts in turning employees into brand champions. According to Miles and Mangold (2004), with effective management of employees’ psychological contracts an organization can transfer its organizational image and values to employees. Thus, in addition to the image and values, an organization may attempt to transfer expectations of brand-building behavior and commitment to the brand to employees.

3.1.2. Integration through the whole organization

Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) highlighted the importance of co-operation with HR and marketing in order to gain coherent and consistent brand messages. Additionally, the consistent brand messages need to be communicated across different channels during dissemination (Liu et al. 2017). The whole process of managing messages through different channels needs co-operation of management from various departments in order to succeed. It also cannot be dismissed that an organization’s leaders and managers have a huge role in transmitting messages to their employees (e.g. Miles & Mangold 2004).

Because psychological contracts are always determined in the minds of employees (Miles & Mangold 2004), employer branding and internal branding need to co-operate to ensure and secure that recruitment information and external and internal messaging are in line. A psychological contract might become violated if the messaging is not alike (Miles & Mangold 2004).

However, making sure that all previously discussed brand messages are aligned is not enough. Miles and Mangold (2004) listed formal and informal sources of messages in their conceptual framework of employee branding. They specified that human resources systems, public relations systems, and advertising are formal sources of messaging, and that informal messages are those which come from co-workers, leaders, managers, and customers (Miles & Mangold 2004). A big part of messages an employee receives are informal and those messages or sources of messages cannot be ignored when aiming to achieve consistent brand messaging.

3.1.3. Wider approach for internal branding

Even though the models and theories presented in this study have different approaches, all of them emphasize consistency and coherency in communication and incorporating different internal stakeholders (e.g. Miles & Mangold 2004; Liu et al. 2017; Punjaisri & Wilson 2007).

For example, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) covered and studied only the outcomes of internal branding activities effecting organizational identification but did not take a stand on who is performing the activities and what kind of activities are done. Still, Tuominen et al. (2016) stated that adopting brand values, which refers also to brand knowledge and belief in the brand, works as a mediating factor between internal branding and brand performance, and between internal branding and organizational commitment which strongly refers to organizational identification. That shows how taking a broader view for internal branding and its process can deeper understanding and relationships between different factors and phases.

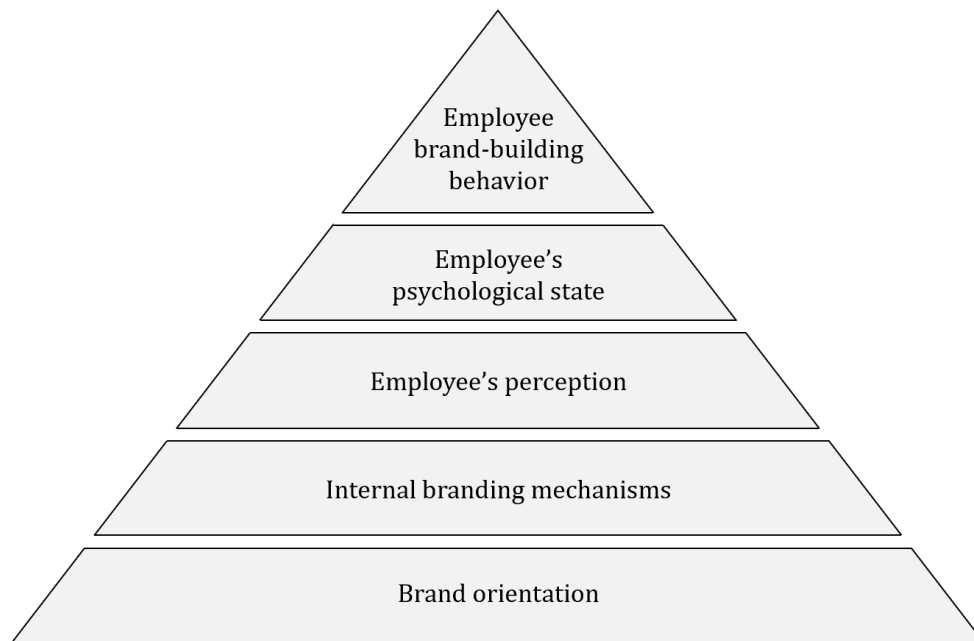
While Miles and Mangold (2004) listed sources and modes of both internal and external messages, and how those build employee perceptions and further psychological contracts, Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) researched how internal communications and training affects employees' brand performance and what role brand attitudes like brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty have as a mediator in the process. The results showed that those brand attitudes improve the relationship between internal communications and employees' brand performance (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007).

Whereas Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) (2014) showed the connection and process from the outcomes of internal branding to organizational identification as an employee's psychological state and finally to employee brand-building behavior, Liu et al. (2017) studied the correlation between brand orientation and development of internal branding. The same study showed how internal branding fosters in-role employee brand-building behaviors (Liu et al. 2017), but it ignored employee perceptions as a link and a booster of those behaviors. When linking Miles and Mangold's (2004) model of psychological contracts on the process, the process becomes deeper and more extensive.

3.2. The new comprehensive model

Based on the previous work on combining and finding the connections and linkages the below model was conducted. The model can be seen to be formed like a pyramid, like illustrated in the figure 4 below. Brand orientation is the ultimate base for an organization to start focusing and forming a mindset and structure for internal branding. Brand orientation includes attributes that support the building and leveraging of internal branding mechanisms, and those mechanisms effect on the perceptions of employees. Finally, an employee's psychological state work as a mediator on how well employees respond on internal branding. The result of the process is employee brand-building behavior.

Figure 4: A layered illustration of the internal branding process



The below illustration, showed in figure 5, of the internal branding process and its elements shows more detailed the substance of each phase. The main phases brand orientation, internal branding mechanisms, employee's perceptions, employee's psychological state, and employee brand-building behavior are now formed as numbered phases. The building blocks under each part are not in a prioritized order. The elements represent the different attributes that a certain phase is finally consisted of. The following subchapters will cover and explain those phases and elements deeply one by one.

Figure 5: An illustration of internal branding process and its elements

1. Brand orientation	2. Internal branding mechanisms	3. Employee's perceptions	4. Employee's psychological state	5. Employee brand-building behaviour
Architecture	Internal communications & training	Employee-brand fit	Organizational identification	Brand congruent behaviour
Actions	HR activities	Brand knowledge	Psychological contracts	Customer-oriented behavior
Position	Co-workers	Belief in the brand		Participation in brand development
Values	Leaders & managers	Brand commitment & loyalty		Positive WOM
Artefacts	Recruitment			

3.2.1. Brand orientation

Brand orientation has been described to refer on what actions an organization does and what kind of focus it has on building and sustaining brand promise (e.g. Liu et al. 2017). The brand orientation makes organizations focus on development of internal branding and its mechanisms. It is stated that strong brand orientation is a crucial factor, and it can lead to a development of a concept of communication tools which further enables employees to understand their roles within their organization and communicate the values (Liu et al. 2017; Baumgarth 2010). In this model, brand orientation is seen as a combination of several attributes which are presented below.

Architecture

In the previous literature, the level of integration of marketing and brand communications and how consistently brand portfolio and related marketing activities are delivered to both internal and external stakeholders, are seen as important parts of brand orientation (Ewing & Napoli 2005; Baumgarth 2010). In the model, I have combined Ewing and Napoli's (2005) concept of orchestration and Baumgarth's (2010) term of norms under a wider concept which refers to the level of integration in communications, portfolio, activities, regulations, and institutions

that influence on the brand related operations. Also, all the operators like HR, PR, investor relations, event organizers, recruitment department etc. need to be included in the analysis. So, this concept relates to the whole architecture of brand orientation. Analyzing the level of the whole architecture explains how well an organization has managed to build and implement integrated brand communication and structure with all the institutions that supports brand orientation.

Actions

Actions refers to the interaction and behaviors undertaken by an organization and is again a combination of two elements presented in the previous literature. Ewing and Napoli (2005) described that the term interaction works as an indication of with what level an organization responds to market condition changes and changing needs of stakeholders. More detailed, it defines the level of interaction and established dialogue between an organization's key stakeholders, and how well it can leverage market feedback on creating and delivering stakeholder value (Ewing & Napoli 2005). Baumgarth (2010) referred to a similar kind of point and described behavior to relate to the concrete actions and communication an organization undertakes to support the brand.

Position

Ewing and Napoli (2005) discussed a term affect which assesses how well an organization understands why their key stakeholders either like or dislike them and what exactly are the things they are most liked or disliked for (Ewing & Napoli 2005). In this model, that idea is further extended to mean a wider understanding on what is the position of an organization's brand and how that brand is perceived by external stakeholders.

Values

Brand-oriented values can be seen in many touchpoints of an organization and its activities. Baumgarth (2010) studied the level of brand orientation by analyzing whether the brand decisions are done in the top management and how much effort an organization has put and invested on long-term consistency and positioning of the brand. Also, how much weight is given to a brand in strategy development and work and what is the level of understanding on basic

brand concepts illustrate how valued a brand is for an organization (Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010).

Artefacts

Artefacts are described to be the tangible symbols and visible branding elements which according to Baumgarth (2010) are meant to reflect and reinforce the positioning of a brand. Symbolic artefacts, such as uniforms, name badges with logos, and stories, increase employees' brand awareness (Baumgarth 2010) and can further provide a base for employees' brand knowledge and belief in the brand.

3.2.2. Internal branding mechanisms

When evaluating the internal branding mechanisms such as internal communications and trainings, the consistency of messages, co-operation between different departments such as HR, PR and leadership team, and use of different channels and sources of messaging need to be covered. Additionally, when analyzing how well an organization has implemented and utilized different types of internal branding tools, there is a need for evaluating whether an organization has noticed and understands the impact of informal sources of messages like co-workers, leaders, manager, and customers.

Internal communications and training

Punjaisri and Wilson (2013) researched internal communications and marketing activities like daily briefings, group meetings, notice boards, newsletters, and logbooks. They found that internal communications' main key is to provide an idea about the brand. To offer enough knowledge of the brand is naturally the base for further interpretation of that information which finally turns into brand knowledge. According to Punjaisri and Wilson (2013) training provides knowledge and coaches how to enact the brand values that are communicated through internal communications. The results of Punjaisri and Wilson's (2013) study showed how internal communications and training make employees also appreciate the brand and its values more which further enables them to deliver the brand promise and understand its importance.

Since internal communication and training act as tools for evolving the brand knowledge, belief in the brand, and brand commitment and loyalty, it means that just focusing on the tools is not

enough. To understand and clearly state what are the outcomes of these activities help an organization to formulate the activities right. For instance, a belief in the brand in mind, an organization can plan the content of an internal communication activity so that the message is clear and provides concrete examples which further form to a belief of the brand in employees' minds. Additionally, like Punjaisri and Wilson (2013) study showed, employees feel emotional attachment towards brand and stated one reason for that is the reinforcement of brand values.

Co-workers

Even though internal branding tools are seen as formal and manageable by leaders and managers, internal branding messages are not limited only to a formal source. The sources of messages are substantial when analyzing the mechanisms of internal branding an organization uses. Indeed, the influence of colleagues is significant. Employees constantly observe and interact with other employees and in many organizations, those interactions happen more often than any formal communication activity. Additionally, the informal messaging with co-workers and the information transmitted through those interactions may reflect the reality more accurately than what is provided through formal internal communication channels (e.g. Miles & Mangold 2004). The first step is to understand and accept the impact of co-workers. After that, managers need to be sensitive and observe on what kind of informal messaging happens inside their company and how to direct conversations if needed.

HR activities

As Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) and several other researchers have stated, management should enable and support HR and marketing to ensure that consistent messages and practices take place in an organization. By doing so, well-orchestrated brand messages can reinforce understanding and knowledge of a brand and decrease the possibility for confusion caused by contradictions.

As the previous literature and this study as well state, a brand needs to traverse the whole organization. That means that formal functions, like HR department, have twofold jobs: as also employees of an organization they need to live the brand as well and implement the same values, and as a formal operators and representatives of an organization they need to act and communicate messages that are aligned with the brand.

Leaders and managers

As for example Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005) stated, leaders have a crucial role in translating the brand promise into action and facilitating social interactions. It all starts from the top by showing commitment and participating in the internal brand building process, i.e. being as an example of living the brand. Leaders have also a great responsibility to gain employees' trust on their judgement and expertise so that employees are more willing to internalize the values and opinions of their leaders and be more motivated (Miles & Mangold 2004). Leaders need to be committed to the brand in the very beginning, especially when there is a new branding initiative. If other employees feel that there is no change happening in the leadership level, they are unlikely to change either (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). Additionally, leaders have the power of rewarding the delivery of a brand promise and empower, encourage, and support employees to live the brand.

The previous leads to the role of managers. As Miles and Mangold (2004) said managers can either support and increasingly forward the messages communicated by leaders or break it off. Managers do have a strong impact by supporting, encouraging, and acknowledging certain types of behavior. Both, leaders and line-managers, benefit and draw from so-called brand-specific transformational leadership style (e.g. Morhart et al. 2009). By trying to create collective missions, challenging and facilitating subordinates to rethink their jobs from a brand perspective, and supporting subordinates to interpret and internalize the brand promise and values, leaders and line-managers have a critical role in making employees to become brand representatives (Morhart et al. 2009; Punjaisri et al. 2013; Miles & Mangold 2004).

Recruitment

Since recruitment is such an important influencer, I have separated it as its own section from human resource management to emphasize its impact. Organizations should understand and put effort on building recruitment strategies that contribute to the outcomes of internal branding. The process of communicating the brand values need to start already when planning communication and job advertisement for potential candidates. That relates heavily on building an employee value proposition which is line with the brand and supports internal branding values (e.g. de Chernatony 1999; Wheeler et al. 2006).

When right and aligned messages are communicated before and during the recruitment process, it in turns should attract candidates who share the values. The process needs to take into account the alignment also in the final selection phase. It is clearly easier to recruit employees whose values and identities are already in line with the values of the organization than trying to alter existing employees' values or ways to think.

3.2.3. Employee's perceptions

Under employee perceptions section, there are employee brand-fit, brand knowledge, belief in the brand, and brand commitment and loyalty. Those factors are not only stand-alone elements as such, but they also influence one another. When an organization gives weight to employee-brand fit and recruits a suitable person, it eases and helps an employee to commit to the brand. That means stronger commitment and loyalty, which in turns enables an employee to live the brand and also to represent it externally (e.g. Asha & Jyothi 2013; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014).

When planning and implementing internal branding mechanisms, the goals should be clear in mind. Above mentioned elements are the outcomes of internal branding activities (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Knowing what the exact goals are, helps an organization in planning and structuring those internal branding tools and activities. All those attributes are measurable with quantitative questionnaires which enables organizations to follow what kind of progress exist in their organization. For instance, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos' (2014) quantitative study would work as a base to build surveys and tools for building key performance indicators of internal branding outcomes.

Employee-brand fit

As mentioned, higher employee-brand fit leads to a higher identification of the employees with the organizational aims and values as well as increased readiness to do extra work for the organization (Yaniv & Farkas 2005). The level of employee-brand fit is high when employees perceived the brand values to be in line with their personal values and how they see themselves (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014).

Brand knowledge

To be able to act as brand champions, employees need to have enough brand knowledge and understanding of a brand but also truly believe and internalize it (Vallaster & de Chernatony 2005). To understand the values, promise, position, and sources of differentiation compared to competitors reflect the level of brand knowledge.

Belief in the brand

Belief in the brand can be observed in the discourse and the talks about the brand and the company. If employees perceive that the brand is one reason why the company succeed, it can be interpreted to relate about belief in the brand. As mentioned, when employees have a strong belief in the organization's brand they are also convinced of the importance of the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014).

Brand commitment and loyalty

Like mentioned, all the above mention attributes also can increase the level of brand commitment as such. It is still notably, that commitment and loyalty towards the brand and organization might be endogenous. If the organization is willing to increase the brand commitment, it should notice and reward commitment and loyalty towards the brand.

3.2.4. Employee's psychological state

The section employees' psychological state includes concepts of organizational identification and psychological contrasts. Understanding the importance of those concepts may help managers and leaders take them into account and work for utilizing and harnessing them.

Organizational identification

Organizational identification has shown to be a strong predictor for desirable behaviors like performance and decreased turnover intentions (Riketta 2005). Due to the self-defining nature of organizational identification, employees' who had a strong organizational identification, tended to have a behavior consistent with the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014; Wieseke et al. 2007) and finally an employee brand-congruent behavior.

Even though organizational identification cannot be directly built and managed, the concept, the factors behind it, and its effects are important to understand to be able to see the whole process and to emphasize the things that influence on organizational identification. The previous research also shows the connection between organizational identification and higher level of sales increases (Wieseke et al. 2009), so it should be fairly easy to convince management to give attention to it.

Psychological contracts

The key point is to understand the impact and importance of employees' psychological contracts. Since directly managing employees' assumptions and interpretations inside their minds is not possible, organizations need to recognize and manage the touchpoints where interpretations are made and formed and ultimately transferred into psychological contracts. If the assumptions of an employee are not met, the contradictions inside of an employee's mind may have negative consequences (Miles & Mangold 2004).

All the previous parts in the model act as a base for forming psychological contracts. For example, co-workers or employees of the organization in general can be seen as both creating the culture of an organization as well as being infected by the culture of an organization. Miles and Mangold (2004) brought up that if the culture and behavior of co-workers differs from what is promised or said e.g. in the recruitment process or stated as company values, an employee might start feeling that the company lacks integrity.

3.2.5. Employee brand-building behavior

Under employee brand-building behavior are brand congruent behavior, customer-oriented behavior, participation in brand development, and positive word-of-mouth. Those behaviors can be seen as the ultimate goals of internal branding process. Also, to cement and reinforce those behaviors an organization needs to be able to recognize and observe those, and finally encourage and reward employees for performing those brand-building behaviors (e.g. Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014).

Brand congruent behavior

Especially, in the service sector and other businesses where frontline employees have a big role in delivering the brand promise, employees create relationships with the customers and by humanizing the brand help them to connect emotionally to the brand (Morhart et al. 2009). Additionally, especially in business-to-business context, personal communication instruments and relationships become more dominant in brand management (Baumgarth 2010). So, it is clear how employees living the brand and delivering the brand promise can support their corporate brand.

Customer-oriented behavior

Creating those relationships, behaving, and treating customers aligned with what an organization's brand stands for, is important for the customer experience. Related to that, customer-oriented behavior refers to the quality, commitment and effectiveness of the service delivery in general (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos 2014). Both behaviors are needed to deliver excellent experiences to a customer and an organization is responsible for providing enough training, knowledge and tools for its employees to be able to meet the expectations.

Participation in brand development

In order to fully implement the brand strategy, employees, who are the experts and professionals to state how the brand can be lived in their daily job, need to participate in the discussion on how the brand values can be executed, i.e. take part on the development of branding. That participation can be managed for example by business unit level managers, who are the ones to start and host conversations on what does the brand and its attributes mean to their unit and teams.

Positive word-of-mouth, WOM

Showing personal advocacy through positive word-of-mouth is a great sign of an employee's commitment to a brand. In addition to being an impactful form of advertising (e.g. Morhart et al. 2009) for existing and potential customers, positive WOM can also generate attraction towards a company in the eyes of potential and prospective employees (Keeling et al. 2013).

3.3. Summarizing the model

The purpose of the above presented and explained model is to show the various and multiple touchpoints of internal branding. The model and its parts represent an ideal concept of what attributes have taken into account and managed when aiming for employees' brand-building behavior through internal branding. This internal branding process can be seen as linear or chronological but each step in the model functions also as its own and have effects to all of the parts.

Focusing on each part of the process decreases the risk that a very relevant factor has been ignored or not leverage as well as it could be. This model suggests that internal branding does not restricted into the activities performed by marketing, human resources, or communications departments but is wider and on-going process which finally results employee brand-building behavior. If an organization is able to manage and effect on all of the elements, it may be more capable and better prepared to achieve more substantial results.

The process starts from an organization's ambition and approach to branding, i.e. brand orientation. Brand orientation consists of factors as architecture, actions, position, values, and artefacts. Architecture refers to the level of how well an organization has managed to build and implement integrated brand communication and structure with all the institutions that supports brand orientation. Actions refer to concrete actions an organization takes and how it interacts with different internal and external stakeholders. Understanding the position of a brand compered to competitors' brands and how and why different stakeholders perceive a brand as they do is also important for brand orientation. How much an organization really values a brand is of course an important question. When analyzing values, it is needed to consider if an organization has included brand to their strategy and what is the level of overall understanding what a brand is. Artefacts, like uniforms, name badges with logos, and stories, are meant to reflect and reinforce the positioning of a brand and are often easily notable.

Brand orientation includes attributes that support the building and leveraging of internal branding mechanisms. Internal communications and training are perhaps the most obvious mechanism, but there are several other mechanisms as well. HR activities can support internal branding and work as a channel for spreading the message. The influence of co-workers is notable and often not acknowledged enough. Also, the role of leaders and managers is

significant, and an organization should make sure managers and leaders support their brand and that they have right tools and knowledge for supporting their subordinates, and that the structure (referring here also to brand orientation) and culture of the leadership enables the happening of internal branding. Recruitment also is a crucial step what comes to internal branding. Communications that happens before and during recruitment process need to be in line with the rest of the messaging of a brand.

All those mechanisms effect on the perceptions of employees. It is important that there is an alignment with the values of an employee and a brand so that an employee feels he or she fits in. Brand knowledge is extremely crucial so that an employee is further able to behave according to the brand. Also, perceptions like belief and commitment in the brand are important and should be supported.

Finally, employee's psychological state work as a mediator on how well employees respond on internal branding. It is important to try to identify all the touchpoints were psychological contracts could be violated and analyze the sources and reasons for those conflicting messages. Also, organizational identification has shown to be a high-influencing mediator for employee brand-building behavior. Employee brand-building behavior which refers to acting as a brand champion can be seen as the result of the process. The model and its parts represent an ideal concept of what attributes have taken into account and managed when aiming for employees' brand-building behavior through internal branding.

4. Methodology and methods

This chapter presents the general approach to the empirical research and what kind of methods are used and applied to the empirical part. It also presents the case company more deeply, explains how the brand revision project was executed, and describes what kind of data and data collection methods and documentation was used for the research.

4.1. Ethnographic case study ECS

The author being an employee of the case company, the research philosophy under this research falls more under constructivism than pragmatism. Visconti (2010) formed a model of ethnographic case study to be used especially in marketing research and organizational case analysis in an organizational setting. The researcher especially mentioned that the model can be applied to marketing business research when exploring internal marketing decision making process (Visconti 2010). Based on the previous, ethnographic case study method was selected for conducting the empirical part of this study.

The chosen method impels the researcher to be involved and positioned in the project and concept itself. According to Yin (2003) a descriptive case study “is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred” which illustrates the nature of this research. To be able to leverage the researcher’s genuine immersion in the case company, and the participation and observation of the activities that cannot necessarily be measured, an ethnographic case study, ECS, was a natural choice. As is obvious, ethnographic case study combines attributes from a case study and an ethnographic case study methods (e.g. Visconti 2010). Visconti (2010) explained ECS research as “the application of the ontological, epistemological and methodological features of ethnography to a theoretically selected set of business cases.”

It is also stated that ECS method allows the researcher to participate in the everyday life and activities and by doing so reduce the gap which separates a researcher from her informants (Visconti 2010). Organizational ethnography directs a researcher to close observation and involvement of the people who are the sources of the data, social setting, practices and words spoken and the meaning of behaviour (Jarzabkowski et al. 2014; Watson 2011). As the

boundary of being an observer and being observed blurs, ECS method can potentially lead to more reliable and relevant data and further more negotiated and shared interpretations (Visconti 2010).

4.2. Case company and fieldwork

4.2.1. Basic information

F-Secure Corporation is a Finnish cyber security company operating in computer software and information technology consulting industries. The company is founded in 1988 and it was listed in NASDAQ Helsinki in 1999. F-Secure has over 1600 employees and offices in 25 different countries, and its head office is located in Helsinki, Finland.

F-Secure provides security and privacy products both for consumers and businesses as well as cyber security services and consulting for businesses. Its consumer business is divided into operator sales, retailer channel sales, and direct ecommerce. In July 2018, F-Secure made a major step towards its growth strategy by acquiring a cyber security company MWR InfoSecurity. The acquisition made F-Secure the largest European single source of cyber security services and detection and response solutions (F-Secure 2018).

F-Secure's vision relies heavily on profitability and growth. In their company presentation, F-Secure states its vision to be a leading cyber security company and continuing investments to high growth areas in enterprise and business security.

The company was first established in 1988 under a name Data Fellows by two friends, Petri Allas and Risto Siilasmaa. Back then, the roots of the company were in training computer users and building database systems for industrial customers. F-Secure has a fascinating history and evolution from training users to antivirus products and further to provide one of the world's best cyber security products. From the early days, the company has kept its attitude towards its employees – the Fellowship. The company has a great ambition to work for its employees. For instance, the company launched a fellow share program which aims to commit and engage employees into the company more deeply as employees owning F-Secures shares become shareholders of their organization.

Especially with consumer products, F-Secure relies on the corporate brand image – all the consumer product names start with “F-Secure”. F-Secure is the unquestionable market leader in Finland, and its consumer business had quite steady position in the Nordics as well. However, outside the Nordics F-Secure as a brand do not have the same visibility and recognition.

4.2.2. Brand revision project and fieldwork

The brand revision project was started originally during the spring 2018 and the fieldwork itself started in March 2018. F-Secure’s Chief Marketing Officer led the project and gathered an internal brand revision project team for brainstorming, planning, and execution. The team was comprised of people from various positions and business units: Talent Acquisition Manager, Content Marketing Manager, HR Director, Vice President of Consumer Direct Business, Product Marketing Director, Senior Manager of Digital and Content Marketing, Director of Industry Analyst Relations and Events, Director of Marketing and Communications, Vice President of Enterprise and Channel Marketing, and Vice President of Business Development. During the summer 2018, a new VP of Brand was recruited, and he joined the project. Addition to the brand team, an external agency was chosen to provide tools, knowledge, experience, and of course resources regarding the re-branding.

The brand team met first by themselves and afterwards with the chosen external agency. The first brand team meeting with the whole brand team and the external agency was held on 28th of March. The brand team meetings aimed for brainstorming, idea and information sharing as well as taking different units’ points of views into account. In total, during the fieldwork period there were three at least half-a-day workshops organized. The setting of the workshop meetings was a real workshop type of; the agenda was not too detailed but was formed more by the bigger themes that allowed more open and free discussion and gathered people together.

The fieldwork period ended in the beginning of November. By that, mapping the state of the brand and all the attributes, capturing what is essential and what the core substance is, and decision making was done. The whole roll-out phase was planned to be commenced and fully implemented starting from January 2019 with the lead of the VP of Brand The CMO stated that there was a high ambition to really get the implementation done properly and that the work would be ongoing at least a year.

One big factor influencing the project and its schedule was the acquisition of the cyber security company MWR InfoSecurity in June 2018. To merge with close to a 400-employee company and to integrate the brand of the company under F-Secure brand is a huge task. As the CMO highlighted, it is a crucial thing to get the branding project applied also to the merging of the MWR brand at the same time that the roll-out was planned to be done with the classic organization of old F-Secure. He mentioned that even though the schedule of the roll-out was about to be postponed, it was evident that it was needed to get the new employees and especially the management to support and to be involved with the new brand.

The amount and extension of how much the team spoke about employees and them as brand ambassadors showed, that in the end the brand project was about to highlight and clear out that the brand is the people. In a way, that brand revision project can be also described heavily to be an internal branding project. Compared to previous branding project executed in F-Secure, nothing like that had never been done before. It was evident, that in the brand project team there was an ambition to be taught on what did and what did not resonate before and to learn from the mistakes of the previous branding projects. The team referred to the previous brand revision projects often even with a bit sarcastic way.

The result of the brand project work was that drawing from the core of what the company and its people think they are, trust was chosen to be the very core of the brand. Through the whole company, board, leadership team, R&D, sales, and marketing etc. there was not a single person who could not agree with the chosen theme. It was evident that the focused brand would be building on something genuine and real. The idea of trust was described to be consisted of and built on empathy, excellence, and ethics. In the monthly meeting, the CMO described excellence as “having the capabilities to deliver our brand promise”, empathy as “genuinely showing empathy for each other, our customers, partners, and the world around us”, and ethics as “showing we have integrity and cannot be swayed by others’ agendas”. That mindset was the base and root for the whole brand and its further to be implemented attributes.

4.3. Data collection, documentation, and analysis

As constructivism accept there are multiple realities which depend on the people and contexts Golafshani (2003) described that “to acquire valid and reliable multiple and diverse realities, multiple methods of searching or gathering data are in order”. So, as also typical to a case study

setting, multiple data collection methods and data sources were used. Two brand team meetings, Skype and internal meetings regarding the brand project, and internal presentations for the whole company was recorded, presentations for leadership team were analyzed, and internal communications related to the corporate brand was collected along with secondary data sources like public webpages and internal company pages. Fieldwork observation was done during the whole project and people inside the organization were interviewed.

Visconti (2010) divided data used in an ethnographic case study setting into first order and second order data. The first order is generated by observation and interviews whilst second order data is generated by the interpretations the researcher has produced based on her first order data. That means a researcher uses her personal elaboration of first order data that then translates into interpretations which can be seen as second order data (Visconti 2010).

Document analysis was one of the major analyzing methods used in this research. In business ethnography it is typical to highlight the documental status which, according to Visconti (2010), arises from “the fieldworker's willingness of documenting respondents' lived experience through extended immersion in the organizational setting”. Document analysis provides background information and supplementary research data (Bowen 2009). Since the aim of the case study was to follow and analyze how the brand team and people involved in the brand revision project took into consideration the different parts of the internal branding process model, document analysis was a natural way to evaluate it. Bowen (2009) specified that when various drafts or versions of a particular document is accessible and interpreted it allows the researcher to compare them and identify if the themes, intentions and plans have changed or remained. Also, as team meeting recordings being one of the major data sources, analyzing other documents worked as a way to verify findings and corroborate evidences (Bowen 2009) which support the deductive nature of the approach of the research.

Additionally, operational data was collected during the fieldwork phase. Van Maanen (1979) described operational data to document “the running stream of spontaneous conversations and activities engaged in and observed by the ethnographer while in the field”. As an employee of the case company informants did not perceived me as a researcher and I was able to be part and observe conversations without informants suspecting or refraining to say something.

In addition to all the above mentioned collected data, I organized one-hour length semi-structured interviews with the CMO who was responsible of the brand project and the Vice President of Enterprise and Channel marketing who was a part of the brand project team. The purpose of those interviews was to gain a deeper understanding on certain themes and activities to support the observations and interpretations based on fieldwork.

Below, in table 1, is a summary of all the data collection points excluding fieldwork observation which was carried the whole time and other sources such internal communications, public webpages and internal webpages. The table lists the events starting from the beginning of the project and continuing until the very last meeting and discussion with the new VP of Brand and VP of Direct Consumer Business.

Table 1: List of primary data collection points

Type of observation	Content
Skype meeting & recording	Brand team skype call 23.3.2018
Meeting & recording	Brand team workshop 28.3.2018
Meeting & recording	Monthly meeting presentation 13.4.2018
Presentation slides	Brand project presentation for leadership team 18.5.2018
Meeting & recording	Brand team workshop 26.6.2018
Meeting & recording	Meeting for designers, presenting the project 9.10.2018
Presentation slides	Brand project presentation for leadership team 13.9.2018
Interview	Interview of the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing 11.10.2018
Presentation slides	Monthly meeting presentation for the whole company 15.10.2018
Interview	Interview of the CMO 30.10.2018
Meeting	Meeting with the new VP of Brand and VP of Direct Consumer Business 14.11.2018

Since the data sources were so multiform, subjective interpretations were needed to find common nominators among the materials and observations. When doing fieldwork and observing and listening people's discussions, naturally, some selection and interpretations were made in the analyzing phase. The categorization of which talks reflect things of a certain phase or building block of a model was needed since people tend to use different words and terms for things and phenomena.

Analyzation process went often so that either an interview or a meeting raised up some theme or an issue which either were clear without any deeper interpretation or then needed some reading of what the message behind the words was. The themes and issues were then written down and the rest of the material was gone through to find if those interpretations or things recurred in other touchpoints as well. The interviews also worked as a channel for making sure the emerged things were real.

5. Employing the new model on F-Secure

As the empirical part of this study was conducted using an ethnographic case study, the analysis and discussion parts will take the reader into the text using a more narrative type of tone and storytelling style. This fifth chapter will provide an empirical analysis using the same structure which was presented in the new internal branding process model.

“Every single employee needs to be a brand ambassador, to know what the brand is and make choices based on that.”

The CMO of F-Secure

5.1. Brand orientation

Current situation

For the past years, there has been a public discussion on how Finns do not know how to brand. Especially, Finnish technology-based corporations have not had an aim nor aspiration for brand building. F-Secure can be berated to be a good example of that. To support my interpretation the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing started our conversation by questioning if F-Secure even has a brand outside of Finland. Since a brand is also about reputation and image and those are attributes that evolves anyway, with or without branding, it is extremely important to endeavor for managing it. I felt that F-Secure has not put effort on that before, or perhaps has not had a decency to put effort on it.

My interpretation of lack of brand orientation got support when the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing also noted that F-Secure had not had Chief Marketing Officer in its history until now. That illustrates how branding, or marketing in general, had been seen to be something that has not strategic value company wide. She also added how it had been frustrating that previously, the brand discussion had limited only on colors and physical design elements – which is only a small part of a brand.

When digging to more detailed attributes the lack of brand orientation was evidence in many cases. For example, the official webpages lack information of the brand and there cannot be found any information about what F-Secure is and what does it stand for, what are the vision,

mission, or the values of the company. When emailing to the comms and public relations team about the lack of external information of the company, the answer was that the needed information was not on the prioritizing list. I found myself asking if that is not important, what is?

To support the previous, the brand-related parts of the wide, 34 pages long official company presentation slide deck includes only the name of the company, foundation year, “growth” as a vision and a mention that the company has participated in more European cybercrime scene investigations than any of its competitors. When discussing about the brand project with employees not involved in it, the first reaction quite often was as one informant stated:

“Not again some new brand colors and slogans --- then we need to change all the materials and repaint the walls and have new slogans in the office and all the giveaways will be outdated...”

So, it seemed that the brand was only linked to visible materials and artefacts. The previous theory of course shows how also visible artefacts are one part of branding and brand orientation, but it is not the only one. A bit inconsistent was that even though the weight was on visual side and there were visual instructions on how to use for example colors, there was no instructions how to visually implement the brand in every day work such as on marketing materials, social media content, and product packaging.

The problem of lacking a focus on the brand itself was on the record for the brand team, the leadership team, and the board of F-Secure. When listening the brand team, it was clear how there was already was a simmering need to finally change the course in the company. Simultaneously when the brand team project was kicked off, a strategy iteration was on progress. What made the brand project team delighted was the information that the board had given feedback that the strategy needs to be tighten into the brand as well since it was missing it totally; the story or narrative which should have been included to the strategy already at the creation process. On the other hand, that highlights the alarming matter that the top management and leaders in charge of the strategy were able to write a whole new strategy without taking the brand, the core and the soul of the company, into account. That also reflects the notion of Baumgarth (2010) that values as a part of brand orientation can be evaluated by whether brand decisions are made in a top management and tied to strategy.

Changes in the course

During the brand revision project, it came more and more clear that the company already had all the assets for a strong brand but those just were not fully, or even hardly, leveraged before. With the lead of the CMO, the whole project was kicked on with a mentality that the company has the substance, the values and base are in there, but those just need to be brought into day light and seen as attributes of our brand and then choose where to focus on.

In October, the brand project and the results of that moment were presented to the whole company in F-Secure's monthly meeting. the CMO of F-Secure started the presentation by explaining why F-Secure needs a strong brand and, for a person who conceives to know something about brands, the tone and the background work for the arguments bespoke that the presentation was not only to inform about the brand project, but change the old predominant view of brand being only about colors and slogans to a more deep and broad understanding. Analyzing through the internal branding model, the presentation was a clear call for everyone in the organization to adapt more brand-oriented approach.

In the presentation it was clearly stated that the base for a brand starts from values. Inputs from the brand project workshops showed that trust was the main building block of all. As the CMO mentioned, a company do not achieve trust only by stating it is trustworthy – trust needs to be earned and that happens through actions. Further, a company needs values like integrity, empathy, and excellence to guide those actions.

In the brand orientation architecture point of view, the CMO talked about that many assets the company already has shares the idea of trust – it seemed that trust and all those three components (integrity, empathy, and excellence) were already written in the DNA of the company. Current leading principles were able to be grouped under those three components as well as the parts of employer value proposition and appreciated behaviors. Additionally, The CMO mentioned that all the aspects of the company including also portfolio and communications strategy need to be organized for consistency which illustrates that the whole architecture of brand orientation was considered. The same ambition and aim for stronger brand orientation could be interpreted during the interview of the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing when she mentioned the fact that products are always replaceable, and that things like integrity and understanding customer are more difficult assets and more durable, and

those can have a cross-section through portfolio, processes, R&D, recruitment, marketing and sales.

All those thoughts, mentions, and activities showed how there was stronger brand-oriented mindset evolving. And like the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing stated:

“The first time in the history of F-Secure we have a CMO in the management board.

And that gives us hope.”

5.2. Internal branding mechanisms

Internal communications and training

If I reflect to my own experiences during being an employee of F-Secure, I do not recall receiving much information about what is the brand of F-Secure and what does it speak for. From the company side there was hardly any information or knowledge provided. Inside the business units there were brand books which only focus on the visible assets of a brand to guide internal and external designers and content creators. The trainings company provides do not include brand knowledge, values, or history as such.

The previous academic literature has clearly showed how through internal communications a company can build knowledge, emotional attachment, and belief in the brand. Even though the company do have internal meetings like monthly meetings with the whole company, business unit townhall monthly meetings, and line manager meetings among others, F-Secure has not previously take advantage of that possibility and left the work to be done over by water coolers, inside different business units and teams, and other not controllable touchpoints. When reflecting that to the theory which highlights also the power of informal sources, like co-workers discussed later in this chapter, it really shows the lack of focus on internal branding mechanisms.

Like the VP of Channel Marketing and Enterprise mentioned, a brand evolves regardless you actively manage it or not. Same idea can be applied to internal branding as well. I have been in discussions where a colleague has brought out that he would like to have content that expresses

a bit more playful and not so conventional. If you reflect to those kinds of things happening through the company in several business units and sub-teams, it is obvious the brand cannot achieve full coherency.

Also as mentioned before, during the interviews it came out that even though there had been quite clear visual instructions on how to use colors et cetera, the company had not provided a comprehensive information bank or instructions, and that led to a situation where different units needed to create concrete instructions on their own in order to work coherent as a team. Since those instructions did not come from the top, people were forced to create their own structures often without an official permit to do that.

Anyhow, the change of the ambition for adjusting internal communication in the brand project was noticeable. There was a plan to have an accessible SharePoint folder for all the members of the organization to enable people to see the process, find information and be involved with the project. Also, the company was just launched new learning platform tool for both internal and external use. That learning management tool was also planned to provide information and knowledge about the brand. It was also decided that in every country office there would be a workshop for everyone regarding the implementation in the beginning of 2019. The agenda would include workshopping around the questions like how this more focused brand can be visibly in one's daily work. So, the importance of using multiple internal communication methods, like highlighted in the model and the study of Punjaisri and Wilson (2013), was taken into account well.

HR activities

The company had had appreciated behavior directions which aimed to specify the culture of doing together and fellowship. But as the new VP of Brand stated during our meeting:

“The problem was that everything was so fragmented, we had huge amount of different documents made in different units and departments, so of course that cause a lack of coherency. People are often excited to create things and do the work that they are in charge of.”

As the brand core was chosen to be trust and the three elements, also the appreciated behavior model was able to be tied with the brand and not to be perceived as something scattered story

of HR. The essence and idea of the principles were unchanged, but all the content was just re-grouped under the terms of excellence, empathy, and ethics. That support the implications of Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) explained in the model that an organization should enable and make sure HR also has consistent messages and practices what comes to the brand.

A major adjustment to incorporate the brand to the practices of the company, was the planned revision of the performance review and objective setting tool, named as Co-operation Review, COR. COR discussion are held always in the beginning of the year between a manager and a subordinate. The main idea is to use the same trust and its subpart theme in the structure of the feedback tool. That enables and ensure that the brand and the three elements are covered in the performance and objective planning process as well. That is a great evidence of how the new approach evokes tools and practices that reinforce the understanding and knowledge of the brand also from the HR side.

“So, in practice this means that every time those COR discussions are done, the brand will be brought up.”

The above quote of the CMO and the whole revision of the COR tool emphasizes the support that the brand will be getting from also HR side. This is exactly what has been found and highlighted to be important in almost all the internal branding research.

Co-workers

“...people to live the brand.”

“If we really want to find those ambassadors...”

“...that is the reason we need brand ambassadors.”

“We also need local ambassadors from each country...”

The term brand ambassador was mentioned often during the meetings. It was like a tacit consensus that the organization do have already this brand ambassador type people, who are able to inspire and involve co-workers around them. It was not questioned that they exist, the point was about how to find them, like the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing stated:

“I would maybe challenge the traditional way of looking at the organizational chart and think who are going to communicate to whom. In order to really create an ambassador type of function that actually works, we need to recognize who are the individuals who are up for the task, who will have that similar type of thinking and be able to truly help with that internalization process.”

Even though the project was at that point about planning and not so much about executing or implementing it, the need for finding brand ambassadors was left on the level of talks. Even though the need for brand ambassador program was not forgotten and was planned to start on January 2019, there would have been a demand to start something earlier and involve those people earlier.

Also, a notable thing was how fast internal word-of-mouth can have an impact. When joining the project in March, I was delighted to hear all the things that were cooking at that time, the discussions, and sense the atmosphere and strive for creating a strong brand. In my business unit’s sub-team, I joined conversations of what is going on regarding the brand project, told about what attributes will be on focus, and for example said that trust and all the things that surrounds it will be the base for the work. Little by little, month after month the trust theme started to bustle in our talks and thoughts. Finally, in the workshop in September someone brought it up in a workshop and it became an action point for the whole team. That highlights the impact that fellow co-workers can have and how things proceed silently and informally without supervision of managers. That observation is in line with for example Miles and Mangold’s (2004) result that the information transmitted through interactions with co-workers may reflect the reality more accurately than what is provided through formal internal communication.

Leaders and managers

During the brand team meetings members of the team often brought out the need that the leadership team needs to stand behind the new branding project. There was a wide consensus that in order to build a culture that positions the brand first, the leadership team need to be involved and support the branding project in all levels.

In addition to the support of the leadership team, the discussions brought up a need for legitimization and deep involvement of the project from the CEO and leadership team side. The CMO stated that in order to fully get everyone involved in the new view of the brand and branding, the project cannot be marked as some marketing people's exercise. That approach was in line with Vallaster and de Chernatony's (2005) statement that leaders should show their commitment by participating in the internal brand building process, and fully live the brand promise. The CMO saw the importance of the CEO as legitimator and an opinion leader and explained the whole flow as follows:

"If this starts to feel that this is just Jyrki's project and some of these marketing people are excited about it but that's all, it's not going to work. We need Samu [the CEO] to be excited about it and talk about it because otherwise the rest of the LT is not going to talk about it to their line managers and so on."

Also, the team agreed that it is not only about the leadership team, but the line managers must help in communicating the project to all the employees as well. That is a great notion since it is in line with what has been found through previous research (e.g. Morhart et al. 2009; Punjaisri et al. 2013; Miles & Mangold 2004).

Even though there was now a discussion to train the line managers as well, that has not happened before at least to the persons I interviewed. It seemed that if there had been changes to the brand guidance the line managers had been left alone with the message they had been supposed to deliver to their subordinates. Previously, without any structured support and tools line managers had been responsible for finding the right messages and communicating those to their teams. Like the previous research has shown, it is not only about increasing the knowledge in the brand for employees, but for managers also. Naturally, if a line manager fails in that task, his or her subordinates probably will not be willing or able to take part on the implementation. The CMO mentioned that there would be a leadership training organized with Hanken Executive Education and that he would be the one presenting the brand part.

There still were no talks about the leadership style or procedures as such. As the previous theories have shown (e.g. Morhart et al. 2009) the right and brand-specific leadership style is impactful for internal branding. The structure and practicalities underlying in leadership and management styles have an effect on how the leaders and managers behave. If the system does

not allow leaders to facilitate subordinates to rethink their jobs from a brand perspective, that is unlikely to happen.

Recruitment

Since the brand project team included also talent acquisition manager also the state of employer value proposition and its position in the up-coming revised brand were brought up during the workshops. There was a clear ambition to include all those touchpoints to the brand. When the brand project was presented to the whole company in the monthly meeting in October, it was well covered how the new trust theme and its components were easily applied to the current employee value proposition. All the previous attributes and statements like “respect people, freedom and trust, integrity and openness” were able to be grouped under those three pillars empathy, excellence, and ethics. Also, the CMO had plans to have a meeting with the talent team in order to fully aligned the activities and messages.

The previous again relates to the fact, that also the VP of Brand brought up, that before the brand project was kicked on, there had been numerous amounts of different documents all around the company. The inconsistency of messaging and communications has been stated to affect negatively on employees and internal branding (e.g. Miles & Mangold 2004) and fortunately that had been taken into account in the company. Especially recruitment has been seen to have a critical role what comes to forming psychological contracts, that are discussed later. The inconsistent messages formed during recruitment process further impairs psychological contracts (Miles & Mangold 2004).

5.3. Employee’s perceptions

Employee-brand fit

Even though there were a lot of talk about the congruence between an employee’s behavior and the brand during the brand project, discussions lack the notion of employee-brand fit. In addition to placing the employer value proposition principles under the trust theme and its three components, the brand project would need to consider how to emphasis the values also in the recruitment and selection process. Of course, first step is to communicate the values and EVP which as such should attract certain types of candidates, but also the recruitment choices

should be done based on the values – the process of having brand values in core of the recruitment process need keep along the whole lifecycle of an employee. That is important as van Knippenberg et al. (2007) stated that people desire consistency and continuity in their self-concepts and if that occurs, they are more willing to identify with their organization.

Brand knowledge

The current state of the level of knowledge the company provides to its employees is not something the company could be happy about. The public webpages totally lack information about the brand, and when searching intranet, the results were likely the same. The company do have an info bank for the Fellowship ideology and culture which highlights the values according you should behave and reinforces that “what we do together is more important than what I do”. Nevertheless, that information and those values have not been harnessed for the brand purposes. The discussion with the VP of Brand and VP of Direct Consumer Business brought out that one of the reasons for lacking brand knowledge in several touchpoints was the fact that there had not been an own brand organization or department.

“There has not been one brand organization, but the people have done own things in their units. --- There has not been enough ownership for all those things. --- If there would have been a brand team and our external webpages would still have lack all the content, that would be just terrible.”

During the first meeting with all the brand team members and the external agency, the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing stated the importance of using line managers not only to communicate but also to help all the employees to internalize and learn what the brand and brand project is all about and explain the purposes which goes far beyond the usual talk about brand colors and slogans.

The team agreed brand knowledge and understanding to be an important part of internalizing the brand. The team also agreed that even more important is that every individual understand what the brand means for them individually. The VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing highlighted the importance of internalizing as follows:

“And this would be the dream. This would be the ideal world that everyone would think that what does it mean to me --- what does it mean to me if I’m a product developer, or if I’m a recruiter, or if I’m a receptionist at F-Secure.”

If you reflect this to the theory, which really gives weight to the knowledge of the brand, this can be seen as one of the main things the company must focus in the future. As mentioned earlier, Vallaster and Chernatony (2005) explained that employees need to have enough brand knowledge and understanding of a brand to be able to act as brand champions. Thus, as the brand team wanted to turn employees into brand champions, providing information and facilitating the increase of brand knowledge is very important for the company.

Belief in the brand

When planning the ambassador program and who are the right people to get other employees and co-workers to be involved with the brand, the team expressed that the culture of the organization is not about the organization charts and responsibilities but the passion and belief. It was clear that the team wanted to brake silos and bureaucracies and give more space for the individuals who are really living the brand already and able to make people around them to feel the same. That was a great example on how the team was giving weight to belief in the brand which the previous research has proven to be important (e.g. Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014).

Also, for the brand team it was essential that the substance of the brand is something that exist and the CMO emphasized often the integrity and that the trust theme is something that every employee have to be able to relate with. And I think trust is something that is in the heart of the company. For example, the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing told about a discussion with partners in an event where some partners even stated F-Secure could own the value of trust. That is something that brings belief for the whole company and brand.

“Before my presentation we had an executive round table with 10 main partners. Without any prompting the partners stated that it is the trust what is meaningful. You guys could really own it, why don’t you talk about it?”

So, the base is ready for building the belief in the brand.

Brand commitment and loyalty

In all those meetings and discussions, it was evident that the brand project team really want to involve and engage people to the project. The predominant idea was that by doing so, the company is able to strengthen the commitment and loyalty towards the brand. When people are listened, involved, and they have a true possibility to influence and get their voice heard, it should engage them more to the brand. For example, the CMO stated that he wants the employees to feel they were part of the process.

One notable thing for F-Secure to consider is the fact that the employee Net Promoter Score, eNPS, varies a lot between different units. Even though that perhaps is not directly related to brand commitment and loyalty, it might reflect that the commitment and loyalty to the brand varies. That phenomena should perhaps be investigated more deeply. If some of the factors, which causes better eNPS scores in some units, could be reproduced to other units as well, that could increase the level of brand commitment as well.

When I brought up the eNPS in the meeting with the VP of Brand and VP of Direct Consumer Business and asked if that is something that also relates to internal branding, the VP of Direct Consumer Business agreed that:

“The eNPS is not only about would you promote the company or not, but it also correlates to how ready people are to jump in and do extra things for the team or the company. --- The better the eNPS is the more willing people are to do things.”

Another notable thing was launching a Fellow Share program for all the permanent employees of F-Secure in the spring 2018. Another round was established for December 2018 to also provide new employees, especially from previous MWR Infosecurity, a possibility to take part on the program. The company provided shares purchase program for the employees so that after two years of holding the shares and being employed by F-Secure the whole time, the company would contribute to the shares. That was a clear sign of trying to strengthen the bond between the company and the employees. That was also evident in the email of the CEO:

*“With the plan we hope to strengthen the bond between Fellows and owners
and to share company success with everyone.”*

5.4. Employee’s psychological state

Organizational identification

One of the main characters of F-Secure has been the concept of fellowship. The ideology is that all the employees are called as fellows and from my perspective it represents the of non-hierarchic way of seeing all members of the company as important. Being a fellow is nothing that you need to achieve by doing something or being in the company for x many years, you are a fellow once you sign in. The term fellowship can be seen coming from the previous company name, Data Fellows.

When I asked my informants what they think the fellowship actually is, people were not able to answer. Is it culture? Is it a brand that has not been showed to external stakeholders? The ideology was greatly linked to Risto Siilasmaa, the founder of the company and current chairman of the board. Also, it was described to appear as “leave no man behind” thematic and its base was interpreted to strongly rely on trustworthiness.

In my point of view, the fellowship ideology can be interpreted to also illustrate the strive for higher level of organizational identification. The discourse that emphasizes the belongingness in something really is a powerful tool for supporting the factors that finally result in organizational identification. As mentioned, people desire consistency and continuity in their self-concepts and are motivated to behave in a way that is consistent with how they see themselves which further results that employees identify with their organization and shape their behavior to more consistent with it (e.g. Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014). Though, like also the CMO expressed, the ideology of fellowship and its standing in the company originally was not consciously planned and managed.

One notable thing is the variation between different units. For example, the employee NPS results differed significantly between different units. That provokes a debate if the level of organization identification is not something that is company wide but is more depending on the unit or even team levels, and if that issue would be something that would require more focusing.

Psychological contracts

As the brand core relies on trust and integrity it is explicit that in order to meet the psychological contracts with the message of trust the company and its members need to walk the talk and deliver their promise.

“A brand project is never finished. It’s not enough that you create a poster about what the brand is, but people need to truly live it.”

The CMO of F-Secure

The importance of living the brand, i.e. truly behaving and being aligned with the brand, was evident for the CMO. That relates also to understanding psychological contrasts and their impact. For the CMO it was important to accept and admit that there will be times when someone is not acting in line with the brand or even acts against it, and that is the reason it is so important to constantly have an on-going talk about the brand year after year. When there is an open atmosphere to discuss about the brand people have a chance to respond and concern issues related to the brand, and finally understand them without unbalancing their psychological contracts.

“The brand has to be based on authenticity. People are not stupid. If the brand promise is not something that is in the heart of the company, and something that one starts to strengthen, it will fall to pieces.”

The VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing

For the whole brand team, it was clear that the brand project is succeeded only if the employees are willing to implement it. Even though the brand team did not discuss directly about psychological contracts, the message and idea behind the discussions could be construed to illustrate the same concept.

However, the previous studies (e.g. Miles and Mangold 2004) have emphasized how organizations should aim to manage those psychological contracts, and that had not been fully utilized even though the first step, as being genuine, was noticed.

5.5. Employee brand-building behavior

Brand congruent behavior

From the very beginning of the project one of the main goals regarding internal branding was to get employees to live the brand. The discussion focused almost only around brand congruent behavior and how to get and help employees to understand and specify what does that mean to them. There was a strong ambition to provide trainings and tools to enable everybody to understand what the brand means for each person and how they can live it in their daily work.

Customer-oriented behavior

During the brand project there was not direct talks about aiming for customer-oriented behavior. However, when interpreting the discussions and contents along the way, there were clear signs that also customer-orientation was seen important. As mentioned, one of the building blocks for trust was stated to be empathy and commitment. Empathy and commitment towards customers of course empathize customer-oriented behavior. Though, to better understand that internal branding might also result in higher level of customer-oriented behavior would help the organization even better and more actively to leverage it.

Participation in brand development

Even though participation in brand development can be seen as outcome of the process, it has a real impact on the whole process as such. For example, the VP of Enterprise and Channel Marketing mentioned to be delighted when in the brand briefing for designers the attendees really gave feedback and proposals and brought up things that hardly anyone else than a professional designer can take into account. That refers to the fact that hardly ever e.g. a CMO or a brand manager has the knowledge and understanding of how the chosen brand, in this situation the trust theme, can be applied to a daily job of an R&D expert, designer, or a lifecycle marketing specialist among others.

Positive word-of-mouth

A concrete action aiming for leveraging positive word-of-mouth is the partnering with Smarp and using their SmarpShare social media platform tool. It both encourages to share social media

content as well as rewards employees when doing that. That is a clear example of how the outcomes of internal branding can be strengthen and supported as such.

One notable thing also is that the company provides its consumer security products for all the employees for personal use. Regardless, the company has not really exploited the power of its 1600 employees and do not actively promote that benefit. I have been in many discussions where people showed their uncertainty how to get those products into use and even that they did not know those should be offered to them. Even many of the people working in the consumer business side did not know how the products work or why people should use them. Having clear messaging around the benefit and easy access on those products would certainly increase the usage of those products and result in more WOM.

6. Discussion of the model as an analyzing framework

Using the comprehensive model as a framework type of tool for analyzing the state of internal branding inside F-Secure has clearly disclosed how well the company has covered different parts and factors of internal branding. As justified above, an ambition for wanting all the employees to act as brand ambassadors is not enough but a company need to have a deeper understanding on how that aim can be achieved and with what kind of tools and activities.

To analyze one part of the process at a time has brought out interesting issues and practices. As the model consist of rather broad themes, such as brand orientation, which cannot be objectively measured, it gives space for broader analysis. For example, when analyzing the state of brand orientation, I look at the whole landscape of F-Secure starting from the content analysis of webpages and continued all the way to interpreting what it tells that F-Secure has not have a CMO in the management board before. When analyzing brand orientation, the model provided so called spectacles through which a company can see and observe their current practices through the whole company and how those practices or activities influence internal branding. A company is able to scan all its practices and analyze which parts are supporting brand orientation as architecture, actions, position, values, and artefacts. That gives a broader view of the current situation and helps to blueprint actions to increase the level of brand orientation.

For F-Secure, the were issues found in brand orientation. The fact that heavily technology and engineering focused company had not had a company-wide understanding on what a brand is today had its influence on the whole company. To understand the amount of work that must be done with several internal stakeholders and touchpoints would be the very first step for the company. The brand project showed how there already exist an understanding of the integration that need to be done to enable the brand to traverse the whole company.

Also, even though the company might not be consciously managing certain type of factors, the model is built so that those things can still be interpreted and covered in the analysis. For example, what comes to the internal branding mechanisms, some of the practices like internal communications, trainings, and recruitment processes and communications, can be easily observed, but the impact of co-workers is not that visible. The purpose of the model is not to seek for direct answers but collate the state of internal branding so that based on the

examination it is possible to draw implications and concrete actions. For example, the fact that the case company had not taken into account co-workers' influence as an internal branding mechanism just points a flaw. Sometimes even only understanding and accepting the fact is enough and it depends on a context and a situation what kind of actions a company should take to solve it.

Also, as Morhart's et al. (2009) study well showed, F-Secure should pay attention on the leadership style through the whole organization. As mentioned, only considering leaders and managers as a channel for communicating the brand is not enough. The understanding of how big impact the leadership culture and style have could be beneficial also. It is clear that an organization needs to act as a facilitator so that brand-specific leadership style is possible to achieve.

The same applies to the more abstract concepts of the model like employee perceptions and psychological state. Understanding those concepts and their fundamental formations might direct practitioners also to better leverage them and see different touchpoints affecting them. Of course, human mind is one of the most complex wonders, so the influencers and factors affecting it cannot be fully explained with only a few concepts, but the model gives a starting point for understanding employees' perceptions in internal branding context.

For F-Secure one fundamental thing was to increase the level of brand knowledge. And not only knowledge of the F-Secure brand, but brand as a concept and branding more general. Like mentioned before, there was a false impression that a brand is only about colors, logos and slogans. Even though the CMO was already doing a great job by sharing a broader interpretation of a brand for the whole company, it is worth noticing that deep-rooted conceptions are sometimes hard or slow to change. Also, like it was already planned, consisted messages should be spread from all the sources and promoted through HR, PR, line managers, and management.

To be able to truly measure the level of employee perceptions, an organization would need to conduct a quantitative survey. Factors like belief in the brand, the level of brand knowledge and commitment on the brand have been measured in the previous academic literature. To be able to have some comparable data and to draw some key performance indicators for further development would be beneficial for F-Secure. That kind of surveys could be done before and

after the full implementation phase, and perhaps in the future when testing for example new internal branding mechanisms and their impacts.

Additionally, the analysis of F-Secure brought out that the company had not been leveraging all the substance what comes to increasing the level of organizational identification. For example, the ideology of Fellowship in the company was strong, but it had not been directed or harnessed to fully support the identification in a matter of internal branding. Also, important would be to try to identify all the touchpoints where psychological contracts could be violated, what could be the sources for those conflicting messages, and how those could be managed. As already was noticed, psychological contracts start to form already before the recruitment process, so the whole lifecycle need to be analyzed. As the VP of brand said, it is natural that in the recruitment process the brand easily personifies to the recruiter.

When going through the state of employee brand-building behavior organization can evaluate have they offered tools or other ways eased, supported or enabled those behaviors. For example, for F-Secure's brand team it was clear from the very beginning of the project that they want employees to become brand champions. Even though the goal was clear, the talk was only about the outcome itself but not what they actually mean when they want employees to be brand champions; what kind of behaviors they want, and what steps they need to take in order to make that happen. The discussion covered only that the brand team need to get employees to commit in the brand and to want to act as brand builders, but not so much on what are the factors that effect on it. Analyzing the process and each of its steps provides a deeper inquiry on what an organization can do to get employees act as brand champions. For example, leveraging better WOM tool SmarpShare and really providing possibilities to use and promote the products of the company would support employees in brand-building behavior.

The model of course includes a lot of overlapping content. For example, F-Secure COR performance review tool was clearly under HR activities but also it could be linked to Managers and leaders as their tool to have a discussion with their subordinates and support them for brand congruent behavior. Since the purpose of this model is not to strictly categorize activities or practices under a certain part of the model but to disclose the reality and current state, it is more than welcome if a company is able to link practices under different parts and components of the model, and see how all those activities intertwine, merge and are connected.

It was fascinating to see how the brand project was able to capture all the attributes under the trust theme and its three key pillars, ethics, empathy and excellence, and how the model provided a concrete framework for analyzing which aspects the brand project did take into account and what were left with less attention. The trust theme covered leadership principles and training, recruitment and employer value proposition and was involved in some HR practices. Among the brand team there was a wider understanding of how important employees are when building and representing the brand, and that employees need to internalize and believe in the brand and have enough knowledge and tools to be able to live it. Even though the analysis pointed out many shortcomings especially when going through what the situation has been before the brand project, the direction was definitely the right one.

The review to the previous literature and forming of the comprehensive model contributed and provided an answer to the research question asking what kind of process is needed for turning employees into brand champions. This study also presented a case example of how to use the model on analyzing the current state of internal branding and evaluate which attributes are in a good level and what things need more focus and development. This study has contributed to the academic research by going through and combining several research approaches and gathering the most relevant theories and studies under a one model. For the managerial and more practical point of view, this study has provided a serviceable model for analyzing the current state of internal branding, and like the CMO of F-Secure mention, the analysis would provide very valuable information for the organization.

7. Concluding and evaluating the impacts

This chapter first provides a short conclusion of what this study has covered. Then, the quality of the research is evaluated through analyzing the concepts like reliability and validity. The last subchapter includes a discussion of the possible limitations of this study and propositions for further research.

7.1. Conclusion

This study has presented a deep overview of internal branding related literature, introduced a wider approach and a more comprehensive internal branding process model, and finally empirically employed the model and analyzed its contributions on case company F-Secure using ethnographic case study method.

Internal branding is fundamentally stated to be about ensuring that employees deliver the brand promise reflecting brand values, and that employees enact customers' expectations arising from the brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson 2013). Internal branding has numerous touch points within an organization and it cannot be seen as a separate or isolated part of marketing. That was one of the key motivators for choosing the approach and deciding to go through previous literature from many different fields of science. Many different fields of branding, marketing, and management studies share the same goal but have diverse ways or approaches for accomplishing it.

Since there has been an arising need for concerning branding in a more practical level (Baumgarth 2010), this study presents a framework type of managerial implications in a form of an internal branding process model. By presenting and justifying a more complete process of internal branding this study provides a mindset for management and has proven the model to be applied in practice. As its best, the model can help an organization to recognize what kind of practices they already have, what could be developed, and what are the areas that need more attention and efforts, and even disclose if there are some practices that may damage the internal branding process.

7.2. Evaluating the study

Reliability and validity are originally used for evaluating the quality of quantitative research. There has been a debate on how to adapt those into qualitative research (e.g. Golafshani, 2003) and what those terms mean in a qualitative context. As this study has clear qualitative nature, it is worth covering how reliability and validity are fulfilled and what does it mean.

Golafshani (2003) explained the testing of validity in qualitative research stating that “the quality of a research is related to generalizability of the results and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or trustworthiness of the research”. The model presented in this study was not built based on a certain data or case company, but it was only tested by using a case study method. That means that the model, which was one outcome of this study, can as a framework be applied to other companies and industries as well. The empirical part further measured if the model is operable for analysing and gaining relevant insights for managerial implications. As this was showed to be possible, one could argue that the validity of this study was on a good level. Also, the case company found the results and analysis to be usable and relevant for them, which supports the previous claim.

As the purpose of qualitative studies are often to provide understanding (Eisner, 1991), reliability can be also interpreted to evaluate the quality of the research which for Lincoln and Guba (1985) used a term “dependability”. As the interpretations and analysis were justified with collected or observed data, one could assume that the case findings would be similar even when repeating the study. As the case company was not involved in the study in a form of a commission or otherwise financed it – albeit the author being employed by the company – there is no reason to question the independency of the study.

However, reliability and validity need to be evaluated in an ethnographic context which by itself is highly depending on the researcher. That naturally leads to a situation where other researcher might fail to obtain comparable findings without corresponding positions (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

7.3. Limitations and future research

As this study presented an internal branding process model combined, built and justified based on previous literature, and even though the assumed interconnections and linkages are validated, the model is not a result of an independent qualitative or quantitative research and it only assumes that there exists a process. However, the model is about providing a framework for practitioners and management and is proven to be useable for that purpose. Additionally, the process cannot be seen as fully MECE since organizations and humans are always complex and all the factors influencing directly or indirectly cannot be measured or identified.

This study has covered the process of internal branding only until the employee brand-building behavior phase. Even though some of the previous studies have found and testified a connection between employee brand-building behavior and brand performance as a metric, this specific study has not covered that linkage. Thus, an interesting path would be to research how employee brand building behavior, seen in the model as a final result, would influence on brand performance also on a financial or otherwise measurable level as a continuation for the model. For example, Baumgarth (2010) studied how brand orientation affect brand performance but the study excluded all the other steps from brand orientation to brand building behavior, so there is a research gap which fulfillment would be beneficial both for academic research and business world.

Additionally, for the future research, there would be room for deeper disquisition and quantitative research on how the different parts of the model and their impacts can be measured. In the previous literature there are examples on how those separate concepts or some parts of the process can be measured. For example, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) conducted a wide quantitative study and a survey of organizational identification and Baumgarth (2010) studied the level of brand orientation. So, there definitely would be call for finding a way to measure the whole process of internal branding, the factors and components affecting it and the impacts. Researching on how big influencers employees can be for a brand and generating significant managerial implications around internal branding would provide better and deeper understanding and knowledge on how to harness employees to be the champions of their brand.

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