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Family matters!

*How storytelling can be used in the management
communication in family-owned companies*

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We further want to notify the reader that the shortcomings of the final product should only be reflected upon the authors.

With best regards

Caroline Dahl

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Abstract

- Title:** Family matters! – How storytelling can be used in the management communication in family-owned companies
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- Authors:** Caroline Dahl and Sofia Sandahl
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- Key words:** storytelling, family business, SIA Glass, management communication, corporate brand identity.
- Purpose:** The purpose of this thesis is to examine how a strong corporate brand identity can be created through organisational storytelling as a management communication tool. We have chosen to investigate family-owned companies as an empirical case due to the distinctive identity of this form of organisation, hence, the presence of a family in the business context. More specifically, we have investigated the Swedish ice cream producer SIA Glass AB, owned by the Stenström family and situated in Slöinge, Halland. SIA Glass is a subsidiary company in the corporate group Bertegruppen AB, the oldest family business in Sweden, founded in 1569.
- Methodology:** A qualitative and abductive case study design where phenomenological interviews and a document study were carried out. The study further took an interpretivistic and social constructionist approach. Since our aim was to explore organisational storytelling, we used a narrative analysis where we divided our empirical data into different narrative themes.
- Theoretical Framework:** The development of this framework started within the research field of corporate brand identity. Theories about internal marketing and organisational culture were subsequently added in order to strengthen the statements about forming a strong internal brand. Finally, storytelling theories were added as a way of demonstrating for the reader how storytelling can be used as a management communication tool in order to fill the knowledge gap identified.
- Empirical Foundation:** The family-owned ice cream company SIA Glass was used. An empirical background is presented in order to comprehend the unique context of SIA Glass and its history. Furthermore, the raw data was collected through phenomenological interviews with six organisational members as well as through three books about SIA Glass and the family business history.
- Conclusions:** Results showed us that there is a great potential for family-owned companies to use organisational storytelling as a management communication tool in order to create a strong corporate brand identity. Family-owned companies should give significantly more emphasis to organisational stories that are derived from the family business origin, history and unique traditions. Our result is demonstrated in the model that is called *A Storytelling and Internal branding Model in a Family Business Context*.

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1. Introduction

In this first introductory chapter, the background and intentions behind the study will be presented. A problem discussion will be held where demonstrating a gap in the academic research. This, in turn, will lead forward to the purpose and the research questions of this thesis. Moreover, delimitations, contributions and disposition of the thesis will be presented.

1.1 The storytelling and the family business

The narratives of the world are numberless. Able to be carried out by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting [...], stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover... narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind, and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative (Barthes, 1988 in Johansson, 2005:15).

Creating and telling stories are the most common human activities worldwide and have been so for ages (Mathews and Wacker, 2008). Stories have always been a vital feature in the lives of human beings since they form social communities, define who we are and what we stand for. Stories have, throughout time, brought people together and motivated tribes, cultures and countries (Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu, 2005). By using stories, humans can form and communicate their perceptions about themselves, about others and about the world in general. Furthermore, it is through stories, portrayals and explanations – by the language as a social activity – that humans form their values and norms systems, identities and relationships but also their organisations (Johansson, 2005). Stories are a product of intimate knowledge shared between people as well as a delicate practice that can, without difficulty, collapse and fail to live up to its promise and split up into simple text. If succeeding in the art of storytelling, stories have the capacity to explain, amuse, give inspiration, persuade and educate (Gabriel, 2000).

The art of storytelling is more and more emphasised by organisations and just like a clan may have their own particular stories, so can a group of people sharing an office (Gabriel, 2000). Strong leaders of today's organisations can differentiate themselves by being good storytellers

and organisational storytelling, when used accurately, can be an efficient communication tool for these leaders. Through this art of communicating; visions and goals can effortlessly travel within the organisation which may make it easier for the employees to identify themselves with them. What is vital for any company is that the top management makes their employees feel as a part of the company and make them feel proud of the company they work for. Organisational storytelling is the first step in forming a strong corporate brand and, in the same way as companies can tell stories to customers through advertising, they can by internal marketing means tell stories to their employees. By telling stories internally, the management can form a strong corporate identity (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

In other words, storytelling can be used as an internal marketing tool and companies should find a story that strengthens the relationship with the internal stakeholders¹ (Dennisdotter and Axenbrant, 2008). There is not a business in the world today – private or public, large or small, high or low tech – that cannot enhance their performance, internally as well as externally, through the practice of organisational storytelling. Evidently, this also goes for family-owned companies. Regarding what kind of stories to tell to the employees, there is certainly a great variety but one of the most vital ones is the story of the ‘beginning’ which is the original story where answering one of the most fundamental questions: *Where did I come from?* (Mathews and Wacker, 2008). What is more, family-owned companies² frequently have distinctive and inimitable stories, and possibly in particular corporate origin stories, to tell due to their distinctive family business history where a family is often involved (Narva, 2010).

The concrete ways family-controlled enterprises communicate their heritage from one generation to another and use this heritage to competitive advantage are poorly understood and often ignored by the general and business media, who could and should do more to tell the stories of family business success. Families who tell and share stories are more likely to carry on their family’s heritage and traditions successfully (Narva, 2010:4).

In other words, families who own and manage companies should not forget to tell stories. Storytelling and oral histories are tools by which the knowledge and wisdom is communicated

¹ The internal stakeholders consist of the employees.

² A business firm may be considered a family business to the extent that its ownership and management are concentrated within a family unit, and to the extent its members strive to achieve and/or maintain intra-organizational family-based relatedness (Litz, 1995 in Arregle *et al.*, 2007:74).

between family members from one generation to another. Moreover, when members of the family remember to tell their stories, and disclose in the enjoyment of doing so, the process of conveying the core values deeply rooted in the family history to the next generation of future owners, directors and managers of the family-owned company begins. However, storytelling should not only be used between family members but also between family members and the company's stakeholders, possibly in particular the employees (Narva, 2010).

There is of course a great variety of family businesses; from the small corner convenience stores with few employees to the international corporations with over fifty thousand employees. Despite this great diversity, family-owned companies have one core feature in common; they are linked to a family and that link makes them a unique type of business. Some of these family-owned companies do not primarily identify themselves as family businesses and, hence, do not use their specific identity in their communication. Others are proud over their corporate identity and actively use this identity in their communication, both internally and externally, as a means of differentiating themselves in the crowded marketplace (Gersick, Davis, McCollom Hamptons and Lansberg, 1997; Craig, Dibrell and Davis, 2007). From a brand management or marketing communications standpoint, the opportunity of adding references to family in the corporate communications can be highly valuable for the business in terms of brand awareness and building, market positioning as well as employee recruitment and management of organisational culture and identity (Blombäck, 2009).

1.2 Problem discussion

1.2.1 Family business identity

In previous research, the concept of 'family' has not been considered as an essential variable and, consequently, several gaps in theoretical and empirical studies, are apparent in the understanding of family businesses (Lee, Butler and Saxberg, 2008; Craig *et al.*, 2009). For instance, and according to Blombäck (2009), little light has been shed on the intersections between family, family business and corporate communications; including the nature and impact of references to family business in several types of planned communications with the external and internal stakeholders. Nevertheless, in recent years family businesses have been increasingly recognised within academia (Zellweger, Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2010) where the foremost purpose has been to explore the specific attributes of this organisational

form in comparison with others (Chrisman, Chua and Litz, 2003; Arregle *et al.*, 2007; Pearson, Carr and Shaw, 2008). On the subject of corporate identity, researchers have found that there is a strong sense of difference in family-owned companies which is deeply rooted in the reality of the business. The fact that two organisational forms are intertwined – the family and the firm – makes this type of organisation different from others. Hence, researching this organisational form also has also implied researching a family and the influence that this family exerts on the business (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2008).

The construct of ‘familiness’, introduced by Habbershon and Williams (1999), describes the positive impact of family interaction and involvement in the company, which is suggested by the authors to be a source of competitive advantage, creating emotional value to the business (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). What is more, research indicates that this organisational form receives a special strength from the shared history, values and identity as well as a common language of families (Gersick *et al.*, 1997). Additionally, in a study conducted by Brundin *et al.* (2008), it is suggested that the feelings towards the family-owned company are usually considered as the ‘glue’ in the organisation and that the family involvement appears to generate emotional energy and long-term sentiments which, in turn, affects the corporate identity.

What is more, Blombäck (2009) explores family-owned companies from a brand management perspective and states that a family business holds a brand of its own and that this secondary brand can provide uniqueness to the corporate brand. Particularly, she uses theory on image transfer and suggests that this theory explains the logic of employing references to family participation in the corporate communications. Similarly, Dibrell and Davis (2008) investigate the significance of family business from a marketing and brand management perspective and suggest that maintaining a family-based brand identity by adding references to family participation in corporate communications can provide highly positive effects in terms of financial performance. Using the resource-based view of the firm, the authors suggest that family brand identity can be considered as a rare, valuable, imperfectly imitable, non-substitutable resource (Dibrell and Davis, 2008).

1.2.2 Communicating the corporate identity

From the previous research regarding family businesses, it is fairly evident that much of the research focuses on distinguishing the distinctive corporate identity³ of this organisational form. Similarly to Blombäck (2009) and Dibrell and Davis (2008), several other scholars demonstrate a clear link between corporate identity and corporate communication⁴. One example is Balmer (1998, in Melewar and Jenkins, 2002) who investigates the history of the increasing area of corporate identity and outlines an increasing agreement on different characteristic features of corporate identity such as communication, both to the external and internal audience. Moreover, Balmer and Soenen (1998, in Melewar and Jenkins, 2002) introduced a corporate identity mix which is composed of the mind, soul, and voice. The mind contains organisational history, corporate philosophy, management's vision, brand architecture, nature of corporate ownership, strategy and performance. In turn, the soul consists of the subjective components including the distinctive values, mix of sub-cultures, employee relationships and internal images. Lastly, the voice consists of the total corporate communication.

Similarly, Balmer and Gray (2000) demonstrate the significance of a holistic view of corporate communication which is referred to as integrated marketing communications (IMC). IMC is the integration of all corporate communications, hence, the management, organisational and marketing communications. What is more, in previous research regarding corporate communications, the management communication is considered to be the most vital form since it is the main tool by which top level management spread the organisational goals and objectives to the internal stakeholders (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978 in Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). Management communication programmes can be implemented by the means of internal branding activities. In the field of internal branding research, the employees are viewed as the target audience of an internal branding campaign (Khanyapuss and Wilson, 2009). In this internal campaign the management should communicating brand values to their employees in order to form congruence concerning these values among all organisational

³ According to Harris and de Chernatony (2001), corporate identity can be defined as the philosophy, values and objectives of an organisation which create a sense of individuality that differentiates a corporate brand. What is more, Hatch (1997) stresses that there is a difference between organisational and corporate identity. Organisational identity refers generally to what the employees perceive, think and feel about the organisation. On the other hand, corporate identity is conceptualised as a function of leadership where there is a focus on the visual. Yet, both concepts are built on an idea of what the organisation is.

⁴ Dubrin (1994 in Harris and Chernatony, 2001) defines communication as the sending, receiving and comprehension of messages. The aim of communication is to collect, process and spread information. Furthermore, it is the fundamental process by which managers and professionals achieve their work.

members (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). Congruence can help to form a corporate brand identity, and facilitate the company to meet customers' brand expectations and successfully deliver the brand promises that are set by various external communication activities (Khanyapuss and Wilson, 2009). In a study of the relation between internal branding and employees' brand commitment, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) found that companies need a strong culture in order to form a strong corporate brand. Other researchers within the field of internal branding have focused on relationships between internal branding and employees' brand loyalty (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006, King and Grace, 2008). Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006), declare that managers need to motivate all organisational members, and not only those with direct external contacts, in order to form a strong corporate brand and, in turn, increase their loyalty to the brand. King and Grace (2008) found in their study that in order to motivate the employees the management communication needs a 'human factor'⁵. With this emotional factor imbued in the organisation, employees feel more motivated and, in turn, deliver their organisation's brand promise more successfully.

1.2.3 Filling a gap

As discussed, the previous family business research has primarily focused on identifying the differences between family-owned companies and other organisational forms regarding, for instance, corporate identity. As argued, the corporate identity differs since there is a family involved, with a shared family history and family values that influence the business. Nevertheless, traditional research on management has basically disregarded the dynamic caused by this type of emotional relations (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, the research within the field of family businesses has traditionally focused on the individual or group levels and there has not been much interest in the organisational level. Matters such as interorganisational relationships and marketing strategies used, especially in the internal context, stay fairly unexplored. For instance, there is a need to grasp the mechanisms that family businesses use to communicate and strengthen their desired vision, corporate identity and organisational culture across generations and the strategies used to preserve long-term relationships with the company's stakeholders, in particular the internal ones. In particular, there is a need to shed more light on, and try to better understand, the perspective of nonfamily employees in the family business context (Sharma, 2004).

⁵ In the study, being acknowledged for the work was one example of a human factor that was essential for employees in order to successfully deliver the brand promise.

Hence, previous research clearly demonstrates that family-owned companies differ from other organisational forms but how family businesses can use these vital differences as a foundation of competitive advantage stays fairly unexplored. More explicitly, researchers have not investigated how the family business history and core values can be used in the communication, particularly internally and from the peers to the subordinates, in order to form a strong corporate identity. Creating a strong corporate identity is more important than ever due to fierce competition in the marketplace and decreased potential for attaining sustained competitive advantages. This, in turn, has made it increasingly vital to focus on differentiating their corporate brands on the basis of unique emotional⁶, rather than functional, characteristics (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

Moreover, since family-owned companies are supposed to have specific emotional values and long-term sentiments (Brundin *et al.*, 2008), we believe this is an appropriate and interesting empirical field of research. What we perceive is a gap in the research field of internal branding and corporate brand identity; how managers can strengthen their internal brand and create a strong corporate brand identity by inserting emotional values in the organisation. By grounding the thesis on a family-owned company, we believe that we can exemplify how managements can use unique company characteristics as a means to achieve this.

Organisational storytelling as a management communication tool will in this study be the method used in order to fill the knowledge gap that we have identified. As stressed by Fog *et al.* (2005), organisational stories are vital since they are closely connected to the company's corporate brand and steer the direction for the whole brand. Hence, stories are considered as central blocks in the building process and can successfully be used as a branding concept as well as a communication device (Fog *et al.*, 2005). Storytelling has, in a corporate and external setting, been a rather popular research area in recent years amongst scholars who, for instance, have focused on how narratives can be used in marketing communication in order to persuade consumers and form relationships and emotional bonds with them (Collison and Mackenzie 1999; Stern, Thompson and Arnould, 1998).

However, according to several scholars, the market today demands external and internal strategies to be interlocked (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) and, hence, employees are important actors in the corporate brand building. According to Fog *et al.* (2005), creating a strong

⁶ A brand's emotional characteristics are symbolised by the metaphor of personality which, amongst other sources, originates from the core values of the corporate brand (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

corporate brand always starts from within in order to have a long-standing effect externally. What is more, an important cause for looking inside the organisation is the shift in the brand literature from brand image to brand identity (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). Since identity is more concerned with how management and employees create a unique brand together, the management must initially identify the brand's values and then make sure that employees' values and behaviour are consistent with them. Employees constitute the interface between a brand's internal and external environments and can have a powerful impact on consumers' perceptions of both the brand and the organisation (ibid).

Consequently, storytelling should be considered as an enhancement of conventional management tools and should be employed in the internal branding process. Through organisational stories, employees may have a greater opportunity to comprehend the corporate brand identity and the company's core values since they will turn rather empty words into a meaningful and tangible human context and steer them to follow the core values on a daily basis (Fog *et al.*, 2005). This brings us to our internal standpoint, and to the issue of how external communication has to be supported by the communication within the organisation, meaning the management communication. As argued, the practice of organisational storytelling is supposed to be a superior management communication tool (Gabriel, 1991; Fog *et al.*, 2005). Most importantly is the fact that the research of storytelling as a management communication tool is inadequate, in particular in family-owned companies.

1.2.4 Organisational storytelling as a management communication tool

Previously, the connection between storytelling and academic research has been rather ambiguous and in several ways, science has been considered as the contrary of storytelling, seeking to, as Gabriel (2000:3) expresses it; *replace the lore of 'old wives tales' with provable generalizations*. During the twentieth century, though, numerous scientific disciplines have begun to take an interest in stories, and by the end of the century, stories have in fact made a grand comeback and is currently far from being marginalised. Progressively, academic research in each and every area of the human sciences has turned its awareness to stories, even in organisational and management studies. Organisational stories are now being studied in different ways, for instance, as components of organisational culture and symbolism, as expressions of political power and resistance, as dramatic performances, as narrative structures, and so forth (Gabriel, 2000). Narratives have also been studied as a form of speech, and more explicitly, how organisational members communicate with each other. Scholars

have, in particular, been engaged in how stories are used when these members express values and reasons and how they use stories as a base for their actions and decision making (Boyce, 1996).

The narrative approach has become highly significant in management strategies and how management rhetoric should be conceptualised as a story (Shankar, Elliot and Goulding, 2001). Scholars stress that stories are a suitable tool in order for managements to share values among their employees (Clark, 1972; Mitroff and Kilmann, 1975; Gabriel, 2008). In this research, Gabriel (2008) has focused on organisational storytelling as a control tool. He examines how managers can use narratives as a control tool and its powerfulness when trying to shape employee perceptions and understanding. What is more, Soonsawad (2010) reveals how organisational leaders can use stories that concern an organisation's history in order to spread experiences, morals, perspectives and beliefs among the employees. Storytelling can also be used by the management in order to make employees accepting organisational visions and missions. The scholar points at the link between storytelling as a managerial tool and how managements can transform the organisational culture in order to increase the likelihood of success. Additionally, several researchers within organisational storytelling have focused on leaders changing and shaping the organisational culture (Clark, 1972; Schein, 2004.).

Clark's (1972) concept organisational saga involves how management storytelling developed on an historical ground, can act as a shared understanding of inimitable establishment in a group. Mitroff and Kilmann (1975) coined the concept of epic myths; they explored epic myths and its potential of providing significance to organisational members and how it could be valuable for managers when introducing new employees. The study is based on an investigation of how managements can use stories to form employees' perceptions of their own organisation and on how the management can use shared stories in order to understand employees.

The research in organisational storytelling has focused on the employees' perspective. Academics have, for instance, studied how stories and storytelling convey organisational culture from an internal perspective (Boyce, 1996). Gabriel (1991) examines how employees tell stories – real and unreal – and how these stories can reveal information about the organisation. Furthermore, numerous scholars have, from an employee perspective, studied the concept of sense making (Polinghorne, 1988; Gabriel, 1991; Weick, 1995). Researchers have made connections between symbolic meanings of a core story and how employees use it

as a way of sense making (Gabriel, 1991; Boyce, 1995). Stories in an organisational setting have also been put in correlation with employees forming shared meanings, bonding mechanisms and social communities as well as internal identity (Boje, 1991; Boyce, 1995).

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how a strong corporate brand identity can be created through organisational storytelling as a management communication tool. We have chosen to investigate family-owned companies as an empirical case due to the distinctive identity of this form of organisation, hence, the presence of a family in the business context.

More specifically, we have investigated the Swedish ice cream producer SIA Glass AB, owned by the Stenström family and situated in Slöinge, Halland. SIA Glass is a subsidiary company in the corporate group Bertegruppen AB, the oldest family business in Sweden, founded in 1569.

1.4 Research Questions

How is organisational storytelling used as a management communication tool in the family-owned company SIA Glass? And how do the stories influence the internal stakeholders and, in turn, the corporate brand identity of SIA Glass?

1.5 Delimitations

In order to enable the right focus of this research and enhance valuable findings, certain delimitations are necessary. Firstly, a limitation concerning type of company has been made. The study is based on one medium sized⁷, Swedish family owned-company with a long history. Moreover, the company is not listed on the stock exchange but entirely owned by the family, where several family members are, or have been, involved in the daily operations.

Secondly, we have explored organisational stories where the main characters are individuals in the company and in which events usually take place during work hours and in the premises

⁷ Medium sized company meaning less than 250 employees (encyclopedia.com).

of the company. This means that we have kept out the external stories, meaning the ones about events that have taken place outside the organisation and the working life of our participants. What is more, the study is predicated on a perspective where stories about the past are in focus, hence stories about the family-owned company's origin, history and specific traditions. Thirdly, this study is focusing on the internal perspective and the definition of storytelling has an organisational tackle. Hence, it is the organisational members and their perspectives that are in focus.

1.6 Contributions

We believe that our theoretical contribution will be within the research field of internal branding and corporate brand identity. As argued, we believe that there is a gap on how family businesses can use storytelling as a management communication tool in order to create a strong corporate brand identity. This is the gap we aim to fill. We believe that we can contribute with valuable knowledge to today's organisations, primarily the family-owned companies but also to other organisational forms, on how they can create a strong corporate brand identity by the means of organisational storytelling in the management communication. Many companies probably have a long and unique corporate history but are perhaps not aware of the advantages of promoting this in the internal communication in forms of storytelling. In today's world, when the competition is fierce and it is fairly easy to copy the products of others, it is increasingly essential to differentiate oneself from the competitors. The contribution of this study to practitioners is how this can be done; how one can differentiate oneself from rivals by creating strong emotional bonds between employees and the company and, in turn, a strong corporate brand identity.

1.7 Disposition

This thesis consists of six chapters. In this first introductory chapter, the background to our chosen research topic is presented as well as the problem discussion, the aim of the study and the research questions that we intend to investigate. Subsequently, some delimitations and contributions are presented. In the second chapter, our theoretical framework is outlined, where the theories used as the foundation of our analysis are presented. In the third chapter,

our data gathering, methodology and course of action for this study is presented and discussed. Moreover, certain ethical considerations have been outlined.

In the fourth chapter, an empirical background of our chosen case company SIA Glass is presented, meaning a presentation of the company and the corporate group in which SIA Glass is a subsidiary company, the history and the Stenström family. In the fifth chapter, the empirical findings are presented in form of a narrative analysis. A discussion, based on our theoretical framework, is further held. Lastly, in the sixth chapter, a conclusion and suggestions for future research is presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. The development of this framework started within the research field of corporate brand identity. Theories about internal marketing and organisational culture were subsequently added in order to strengthen the statements about forming a strong internal brand. Finally, storytelling theories were added as a way of demonstrating how storytelling can be used as a tool in order to fill our research gap.

2.1 Corporate brand identity

Where do we come from? Where are we? Where are we going to?

This is the evocative title of what is, possibly, the most famous painting of Paul Gauguin. It is also the questions that need to be answered in order to form a strong corporate identity (Balmer, 2008:880). Corporate branding involves a variety of stakeholders interacting with numerous employees across different departments in an organisation. In order for the corporate branding to be effective, coherent messages about the brand identity as well as consistent delivery across all stakeholder groups to form a favourable brand reputation are required. Hence, internal congruency and consistency are vital to the successful external communication of corporate brand identity (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). As further argued by Hatch and Schultz (1997), the whole organisation, with all its members, is part of the corporate brand and becomes visible to consumers. Consequently, the whole organisation is responsible for the corporate brand, from the owner or the CEO to the store personnel and the factory workers. Correspondingly, Berthon *et al.* (2005) argue that employees are becoming vital in the brand building process and that the employees' behaviour can either strengthen a brand's advertised values or, in contradictory with these values, damage the trustworthiness of advertised messages. Consequently, it is of great significance to consider how employees' values and behaviours may be aligned with a brand's desired values.

2.1.1 Internal branding

Internal branding supports organisations in promoting the brand to the inside of an organisation, hence, to the employees. Employees are seen as an internal audience of an

internal branding campaign. The aim for a management's internal branding should further be to create congruence between internal and external brand messages (Khanyapuss, Heiner and Wilson, 2009). Employees are considered as playing a central role in brand management since they facilitate the interface between the company and the customers (King and Grace, 2005). Internal branding includes activities to ensure that external promises made by the organisation are kept. Employees' behaviours are essential when it comes to keeping a promise, and the management needs to engage in internal branding activities to ensure that employees deliver what was promised. This is because the preferred brand values, practices and behaviours are clarified, which gives organisational members a clear direction of how to act or where to head (King and Grace, 2008). Companies that have developed strong and successful brands have encouraged an organisational culture where all units of the company are devoted to the branding process. Due to this, it is vital for companies to clearly communicate the brand's purpose to the employees in order to make them understand their role in relation to the brand (King and Grace, 2005).

According to Bergstrom *et al.* (2002 in Berthon *et al.* 2005), internal branding refers to three essential activities: communicating the brand successfully to the employees; encouraging them to see the brand's significance and worth; and effectively linking each and every job in the organisation to delivery of the 'brand essence'. Khanyapuss *et al.* (2009) stress that a successful internal branding provokes a shared understanding across organisational members, and enhances commitment and understanding among employees. What is more, King and Grace (2008) suggest that without the kind of brand knowledge that the employees get hold of from internal branding, will make them unable to transform the brand vision into brand reality.

2.1.2 A holistic approach to brand management

According to Harris and Chernatony (2001), corporate branding calls for a holistic approach to brand management, in which all the organisational members act in agreement with the desired brand identity. By embracing both internal and external elements in the brand building process, the model offers a balanced approach to brand building. The authors' model was created for managing brands by reducing the gap between the corporate brand identity and its reputation.

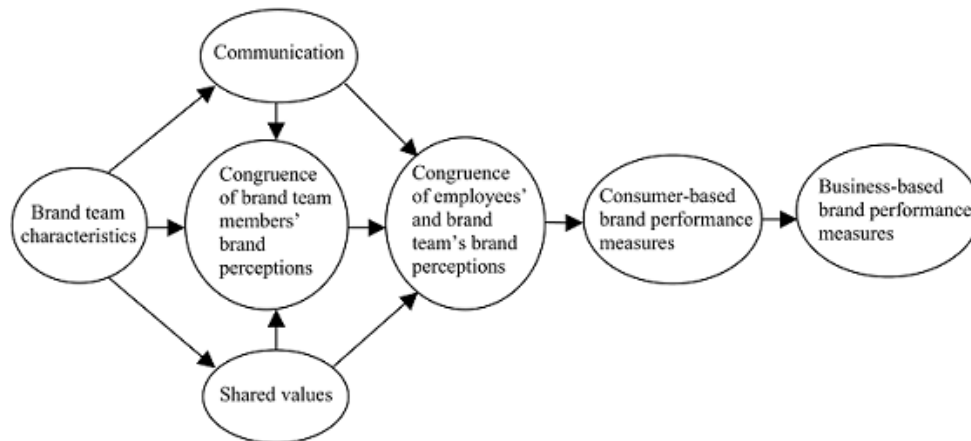


Figure 2:1; *The relationships between internal brand resources and brand performance* (Harris and Chernatony, 2001).

This model demonstrates three chief factors that influence the perceptual congruity; the similarity of brand team members, meaning the top management, shared values and communication. This requires all the members of the brand team, hence the corporate management, to first and foremost surface their own perceptions and reveal their brand's intended identity. Firstly, team members with similar traits are expected to have similar perceptions, experiences and values, and are supposed to communicate effortlessly. Subsequently, these brand team members should work with the employees in order to make sure that the employees' perceptions support the intended brand identity. This is done by communication which plays a vital role in the creation of congruent perceptions and for providing and attaining information, obtaining an understanding and gaining employees' commitment (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). Balmer (1995, in Harris and de Chernatony, 2001) proposes that a damaging image may be a result from the mismanagement of communication. Hence, employees must know what behaviour is expected from them in order to contribute to the brand's identity. Communication plays a significant role in making the brand perceptions evident in the organisation and that successful communication will allow incongruent perceptions to be recognised and resolved. When all organisational members comprehend the corporate brand identity, they will, to a greater extent, be capable to act in a more consistent way which increases the likelihood of their actions supporting the desired identity. Hence, brand teams must make sure that all forms of brand communication present a coherent brand identity (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

Furthermore, the core of the brand identity is the brand vision which contains the core purpose of the brand, meaning the reason of being, as well as its core values, which offers a system of guiding principles. The focus for every corporate management should be to communicate the company's brand values to their employees in an explicit way in order to encourage them in their everyday work and to help them comprehend how their roles relate to it. Since the core values of the brand guide the employees' behaviour, the corporate management should further express the brand's core values to this internal audience. In addition, the organisational culture, which is an important part of the brand identity, consists of the employees' assumptions and values which, in turn, guide how they should behave (Harris and Chernatony, 2001).

Corporate management should, consequently, pay special attention to the organisational culture within their company and the culture's configuration with the brand's core values. If the alignment is weak between these two vital elements, the outcome may be conflicting behaviour and destructively affect stakeholder's perceptions of the corporate brand. An organisation's culture can signify a source of competitive advantages. Nevertheless, the culture must be appropriate, attentive and adaptive to the specific requests of all the organisation's stakeholders (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). De Chernatony (2001) further points at the fact, that there are corporate brands that have performed poorly because the culture promoted by the management has not been coherent with the culture adopted by the employees.

2.1.1 Employees' identification with the corporation

It is crucial for a company's success, that the employees have the ability to identify themselves with the company's corporate identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Hence, the underlying question that the employees need to ask themselves is: *Who am I in relation to the corporation?* (Balmer, 2008). The organisation's identity is connected to the level of 'oneness' that employees feel they have with an organisation and in addition the amount of shared interest between the employee and the organisation. This is a form of social identification in which people define themselves in terms of their membership of a certain organisation (Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel, 2007). Bergstrom *et al.* (2002) further state that organisational identification could be enhanced by the means of internal branding since this is a way of strengthening the employees' oneness with the company.

Smidts, Pruyn and van Riel (2001), further explain the concept as employees' membership of a group, and the value and emotional connotation connected to that membership. The concept expresses the level of belonging that a person feels to a certain group and to what degree he or she feels like a member of that group. Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that it is more likely that employees are supportive of an organisation if they feel a strong connection with the company's identity. The management can enhance employees' identification with the company by supplying each employee with information about what that particular person contributes with. Furthermore, it is also essential to let employees know what he or she does for the organisation's success and also what the management expects from each employee, in order to increase organisational members' sense of belonging and their organisational involvement (Smidts *et al.*, 2001) and, in addition, improve obliging behaviour (Lievens *et al.*, 2007).

Several academics argue that external prestige and organisational identity have a strong influence on identification. Organisational members feel more proud of being part of an organisation when the firm has a good reputation among outsiders. This, in turn, affects the employees' as well as the entire organisation's performance (Lievens *et al.*, 2007). This has, furthermore, to do with employees' self-esteem and how it increases the more prominent one's organisation is (Smidts *et al.*, 2001).

2.2 Internal marketing

Without good and well-functioning internal relationships, external customer relationships will not develop successfully. Managing employees – on all levels – is a true test of managing an organisation (Grönroos, 2007:383).

The theories of corporate brand identity deal with the internal part of an organisation, hence, we were lead into the field of internal marketing. Here, the corporation is seen as an internal marketplace (Piercy and Morgan, 1991) and it is thereby essential that the management captures the whole organisation in order to form a unanimous and strong corporate brand identity. What is more, internal branding is, as stated by Khanyapuss *et al.*, (2009) created through internal marketing. The authors further state that different internal marketing deeds, such as internal management communication, is required in order to form a strong internal brand.

Moreover, in the past, companies were able to detach their external relations from their internal performance given that there were few contacts between insiders and outsiders (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) and until fairly recently, customers were regarded to be simply those outside the organisation. Nowadays, however, the requirement for principles and practices related to marketing communication and external brand management to be used internally has largely increased (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005). As argued by Hatch and Schultz (1997), there is a great challenge facing modern companies since there is a breakdown of the boundary between the external and internal aspects of the organisation. As stressed by Gummesson (2008), the world has become a network of relationships and, consequently, there is a reason for speaking about many-to-many marketing, rather than one-to-one marketing, to demonstrate the complexity of the network of relationships. Within this network are, amongst others, the nano relationships, which encompass the intraorganisational relationships, meaning the relationships within the organisation and are, hence, found beneath the market relationships.



Figure 2:2; *The service marketing triangle* (Grönroos, 2007:62).⁸

As portrayed in this model, a company has three types of marketing functions; external, internal and interactive marketing (Grönroos, 2007). Successful internal marketing is an antecedent to successful external marketing and, hence, marketing should always start within the organisation (Grönroos, 1994; Fog *et al.*, 2005; Gummesson, 2008). As further argued by Grönroos (1994), internal marketing has a great strategic significance to the success of the company and should be well incorporated in the total marketing function. The aim of internal marketing is to create relationships between the corporate management and the organisation's

⁸ This is a slightly modified version of the Grönroos (2007) model.

employees and between different functions within the company. Techniques from external marketing may be applied inside the organisation, primarily from the fields of communication and promotion and can be grounded on personal and interactive relationships, as well as on mass marketing. Nevertheless, the internal marketing needs, to a great extent, to be interactive since the traditional means of internal mass marketing, such as the distribution of internal magazines and formal memos, is not adequate. More personal and interactive forms of internal marketing with a significantly more emotional value, such as social get-togethers, are considerably more essential in order to create relationships with the co-workers and to make them spread a favourable reputation about the organisation (Gummesson, 2008).

2.2.1 Part-time marketers

An organisation consists of two types of marketers; full-time marketers and part-time marketers. All employees in an organisation are part-time marketers and have a significant influence on customer relationships, customer perceived quality, customer satisfaction and profitability (Gummesson, 1990; Grönroos, 2007). The difference between the two types of marketers is that, in contrast to full-time marketers, the part-time marketers do not belong to the marketing or sales departments. The company's marketing activities are accomplished by all the employees since the marketing and sales departments do not have the ability to handle all the marketing activities themselves. Hence, a company requires both full-time marketers and part-time marketers (Gummesson, 1990).

In order for the employees to act as part-time marketers, the corporate management must create a positive organisational atmosphere with committed and motivated employees (Grönroos, 1994; Berry, 2002). Thus, there must be a relationship marketing strategy and a team spirit in every company in order for the total marketing function to be successful. As stressed by Grönroos (2007), internal marketing means creating internal relationships by trusting the company and its management, as well as the other employees, and he refers to this trust as a *psychological contract*. The primary purpose of internal marketing is further to encourage an internal environment and make the employees feel committed and motivated so that they can do a good job as part-time marketers. According to Berry and Parasuraman (1992), one vital element of internal marketing is the managers' encouragement of teamwork. Particularly low-level jobs, that may be quite demanding and, every so often frustrating and demoralizing, it is essential for the employees to feel as a part of a team in order to maintain their motivation (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992). Another purpose may also be to indirectly

control the employees by creating an atmosphere within the organisation that makes subordinates believe they are, at all times, as responsible for representing the corporate brand as the peers (Grönroos, 2007).

2.2.2 Management communication

One vital internal marketing activity is internal communication which has previously been touched upon in the model of Harris and de Chernatony (2001). As stressed by Unzicker, Clow and Babakus (2000), this is a crucial element of employee commitment to an organisation. As previously argued, managers have to start with the internal organisation and make employees accept their objectives, visions and goals. One form of internal communication is the management communication which comprises writings, presentations and interpersonal communication between the peers and subordinates within an organisation. It may be considered as the foundation for guiding and steering the organisations internal operations (Unzicker *et al.*, 2000). The communication climate is further a central part of employees' involvement and sense of belonging to an organisation. A positive communication climate has a positive effect on the level of employees' identification with the company and, in turn, on their supportiveness of the company. By developing an open atmosphere and enhancing feelings of partaking and supportiveness amongst the employees, managers can create a positive communication climate (Smitds *et al.*, 2001).

According to Unzicker *et al.*, (2000), there is a positive link connecting employee perceptions of organisational communication and employee perceptions of the company. The management can thereby strengthen employee perceptions about the organisation by using sufficient organisational communication. The authors further state that internal communication has an impact on both an organisation's employees and its customers. Company newsletters, training and management communication are examples of internal communication which, in turn, is communicated externally through, for instance, advertising and promotion. As argued by Unzicker *et al.* (2000), the communication itself is not the vital part of internal communication, rather the perceptions of the message. There are four different ways for how a message can be perceived, (1) the communication message is perceived as the sender mean it, (2) the message as the sender in fact send it, (3) the message as the recipient sees it and (4) the message as the recipient remembers it and acts accordingly. Communication has taken place when the message is perceived in the manner as the sender

intended it to be perceived. Hence, it is not the message that is sent by the sender but the perception of the receiver that leads to behaviour (Unzicker *et al.*, 2000).

2.2 Organisational culture

As argued by Harris and Chernatony (2001), the core of the corporate brand identity is the brand vision and the organisational culture. Organisational culture is a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds all organisational stakeholders which is formed by leadership behaviour and is constantly performed and shaped by interactions between organisational members (De Chernatony, 2001; Schein, 2004). What is more, Schein (2004) states that an organisational culture offers organisational members structure and meaning. The dynamic processes of culture formation and management are the essence of leadership and, in fact, leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin.

2.2.1 Cultural dynamics

Hatch (1993) is concerned with how different cultural elements in organisations are linked and as a means to answer this question, the author developed Schein's model *The three levels of culture*. Hatch's (1993) model is called *Cultural dynamics* and focuses on the relationship between different cultural dynamics. The concept of culture consists of four cultural dynamics; artifacts, values, assumptions and symbols. These cultural dynamics interact through four different processes; manifestation, realisation, symbolization and interpretation (Hatch, 1993).

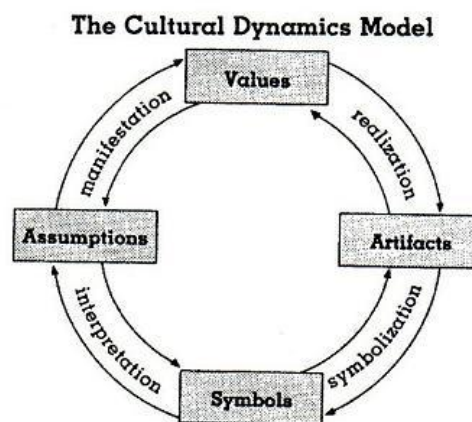


Figure 2:2; Model of cultural dynamics (Hatch, 1993)

The artifacts represent the visible and the tangible elements in the organisation whereas the organisational values are presented by social principles, philosophies and standards that have fundamental importance in the organisation. The underlying assumptions are, according to the model, the core of the organisational culture. The assumptions can be described as taken-for-granted beliefs and invisible elements in the everyday interaction between organisational members. Finally, symbols could be stories, metaphors, visual images, slogans and so forth. Furthermore, what employees believe is true form their values. The value formation takes place through the manifestation processes where assumptions give expectations that affect perceptions, thoughts and feelings about the organisation. Values are manifestations based on organisational and cultural assumptions. Manifestation translates the intangible assumptions into recognisable values and occurs via two different processes, either from processes that influence assumptions or processes that influence values (Hatch, 1993).

The realisation processes responses to the process of transforming values and expectations to tangibles. There are two possible outcomes; members of an organisation can either accept or absorb the artifacts into the culture or they can ignore them. The process of symbolisation allows the members of the business to utilize artifacts and fill them with meaning. According to the model, artifacts must be interpreted into symbols in order to be considered as important cultural objects. The symbols are not reality, but they are the collective view of reality from organisational members' point of view. The fourth process, interpretation, gives the symbolisation a possibility to add an even broader cultural frame in order to construct meaning. In addition to this, the interpretation process enables organisational members to interpret new symbols and, in this way, broaden the organisation's cultural repertoire, hence the arrow between symbols and assumptions (ibid).

2.3 Storytelling as a management communication tool

The concept of organisational storytelling implies stories that are told within organisations; how organisational members tell and retell stories (Boje, 1991). Dennisdotter and Axenbrant (2008) argue that there is a great potential for storytelling to be used as an internal marketing device and that companies should find a story that strengthens the relationship with the internal stakeholders, hence the employees. The authors stress that it is the people within the company; the employees and the managers that make up the ultimate link to the customers. If the company can provide a proper story which the employees show faith in and live up to, a

strong organisational culture will be formed and, in turn, a strong internal brand. Since storytelling creates fellowship and trust within the organisation, there is a great value for companies to use stories. For instance, narrative art that creates heroes can motivate the employees in their everyday working life. Storytelling also offers a framework for the information; it will be easier to grasp and become meaningful and remembered. When the employees, which are the company's real marketers, believe in the company and its ideas, the chances increase that the ideas will spread to customers and other external stakeholders (Dennisdotter and Axenbrant, 2008).

Gabriel (2000) argues that many organisations are bureaucratic, impersonal and not very enjoyable places to work in. They put strict control over the individuals' liberty and do not tolerate much room for those aspects of the human soul that are not directly related to the goals of the organisation. Organisations try to control individuals' behaviour in a distinctive way by, for instance, thoroughly calculate their performance and strictly control their time. This, in turn, turns each employee to a little cog in the great machine. Organisational members can feel emptiness and powerlessness due to unceasing anxiety; the feeling that one's destiny may be decided by people that they have never met, in far-away boardrooms. The author further stresses that organisations of today are often filled with information that is emotionally and symbolically poor, such as impersonal paperwork and data on computer monitors. Organisational stories can bring back a symbolically motivating narrative to the everyday working life of the employees. Consequently, stories can be used in the management communication in order to try to humanise the organisation (Gabriel, 2000). Just like family photographs or vases of flowers on the executive desks, stories can mark the bureaucratic organisations as human territory (Collison and Mackenzie, 1999; Gabriel, 2000).

Additionally, Peters and Waterman (1982 in Gabriel, 2000) stress that stories have a superior power as an instructive tool in the practical and moral education of managers. Nevertheless, Gabriel (2000) considers stories to be a highly challenging form of artefact. The author argues that significant happenings and experiences in the history of an organisation do not automatically produce stories, nor are stories capable of staying alive if they are not frequently enhanced. Even though stories may seem to be a very cost-effective and unprompted sensemaking tool, they do not automatically turn into action as soon as something extraordinary occurs. Correspondingly, Denning (2004) points out that a story alone cannot ascertain values, rather the management have to live the values on a daily basis. Furthermore, stories can have a counteracting and destroying effect on each other's meanings,

resulting in an unspoken lack of understanding. Hence, the stories told by the corporate management must be coherent (Gabriel, 2000).

Furthermore, by using storytelling, feelings are reached and the listener becomes personally involved (Seely Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak, 2005). However, Fog *et al.*, (2005) argue that the readers or listeners must be capable of identifying with the characters in the story in order to get personally involved with the stories. This occurs in particular when they can recognize a little bit of themselves in the characters in the story. Hence, the target audience should be kept in mind when telling a story; the audience should be able to identify with both the hero and the conflict in the story. If the organisational members can recognise themselves in the company's core story, they will also proudly share that story with others. The story makes these individuals part of something far greater and more valuable than just the work tasks alone (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

2.3.1 Storytelling as a control tool

As discussed, Gabriel (2000) considers storytelling as a means of making an organisation more human. However, and as stressed by the author, it can also be used as a management control tool.

In a text, dominant ideologies suppress conflicts of interest, denying the existence of points of view that could be disruptive of existing power relationships, and creating myths of harmony, unity and caring that conceal the opposite (Gabriel, 2000:116).

Boyce (1996) suggests that, by using storytelling in the internal communication, managers can get the interests of the members of the organisation to be united with their own interests. Accordingly, and as stressed by Gabriel (2000), the management's use of storytelling has the potential to wipe out any conflict between the subordinates and the peers (Gabriel, 2000). In this context, Bowle (1989 in Boyce, 1996) gives emphasis to the ways in which stories and myths are used to promote and to strengthen dominant ideologies and to maintain existing power structures. Wilkins and Martin (1979, in Gabriel, 2000) suggest three chief purposes for organisational stories, that the corporate management can make use of; sensemaking and spread of knowledge between organisational members, creation of commitment and social control. Furthermore, stories steer strategies and actions and can further function as maps, facilitating for individuals to make sense of unknown situations by relating these situations to well-known ones and turning the unrespectable, expectable and controllable. Stories about the foundation of the company often set core values and allow all employees to know the

company's roots, which is a good way to prepare them for the future and it gives a feeling of internal identity (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

Boyce (1996) claims that the use of stories in the management communication is never value neutral. Correspondingly, as argued by Gabriel (2000) and Gabriel (2008), managers can use narratives as a control tool and the role of language is a powerful device when forming perceptions and understanding. All-encompassing uses of language can be used in order to control employees, as efficiently as discreet surveillance techniques. Stories are very efficient methods of control since they aim for the hearts and minds of the employees, including their feelings and their ways of thinking. Hence, in a way, the stories take possession of individuals from within, they indoctrinate without the employee being conscious of being indoctrinated (Gabriel, 2000).

Stories have an objective of communicating moral lessons and creating fear and guilt in humanizing conscience. Stories of horrifying punishments that wait for those who tell lies, steal, or lust or those who sin in deed or in thought may be effective in reducing disobedient tendencies. By using organisational stories in this manner, the individual stays put in an everlasting infantile and dependent state, tied to the organisation, which merges the compassion of the primal mother with the presence and omnipotence of the primal father. Consequently, it is not unexpected that the organisation contains all the qualities with which these primal persons were equipped with during the child's early stages of dependency (Gabriel, 2000).

2.3.2 Stories as cultural symbols

Storytelling in an organisation is a useful management tool for collective centring and collective sense and can be used to develop and to maintain organisational culture (Boyce, 1995; Boyce, 1996; Gabriel, 2000). In a comparable way to how stories help to make sense of life, organisational stories help to make sense of the organisation; they help the organisational members to gain knowledge and comprehend organisational events and perspectives (Baruch, 2009). Schein (1985 in Gabriel, 2000) groups stories together as 'artifacts and creations', the phenomenon that lie at the surface of culture, being without difficulty noticeable but require sensemaking and/or interpretation. Peters and Waterman (1982 in Gabriel, 2000), in turn, argue that stories are a sign of a strong organisational culture that go profoundly into the organisational members' lives and shape their meaning systems. Consequently, Gabriel (1991), Boyce (1995) and Weick (1995) argue that employees use symbolic meanings of a core story as a way of sense making and that organisational members use stories in order to

connect personal biography and organisational processes. In addition, Gabriel (2000) states that storytelling help organisations to pass values, moral and cultural heritage between generations. Within the organisation, the stories both facilitate in socialising new employees into the particular organisational culture and in strengthening the organisational culture as a whole (Baruch, 2009).

Moreover, organisational stories are sprung from the idea of Boyce (1996), that socially constructed reality is shared by all the members of the organisation. Stories within organisational cultures allow members of an organisation to make sense of their experiences and to share them with others (Gabriel, 2000). Storytelling further makes co-workers talk to each other, it helps them to understand the company, they learn what is going on and this can in turn help the business work more efficiently. Furthermore, stories about the own organisation creates bonding mechanisms, form social communities and give the employees a sense of belonging (Gabriel, 2000; Fog *et al.* 2005; Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005).

There is a delicate and unclear quality of symbolism in organisations; stories are polysemic with different meanings to different persons, but they also involve varied and even conflicting meanings for one single person. While capable of creating consistency and commitment, stories can also create resistance. Hence, stories are not always received in a favourable way by the organisational members. In order to make the storytelling successful, managers must communicate the storytelling in a way that is appropriate to the circumstances of the organisation (Gabriel, 2000). The author further argues that, rather than ignoring the organisational culture and the stories shared within it, effective corporate management takes hold of forming, guiding and rejuvenating this kind of phenomenon (Gabriel, 2000).

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used when examining organisational storytelling in our chosen family-owned company SIA Glass. Hence, the research approach, the data gathering process consisting of phenomenological interviews and a document study, are presented. Lastly, some ethical considerations are highlighted.

3.1 Research Approach

On a means to answer the question about how organisational stories are used in a family-owned company and how they affect the employees, a qualitative study has been carried out, which represents a view of the social reality as a continuously shifting and developing property of people's creation (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Furthermore, our aim has been to grasp an understanding from an internal perspective and to obtain an understanding of how organisational stories, based on a family's history and values, are used within an organisation and in what sense they affect the target audience. Our research approach is based on the argument that our thesis is divided into three parts. Firstly (1) we seek to gain an understanding of how the family identity influences the business, secondly (2) we seek to understand what kind of stories, based on the family history and values, are evident and how they are used as a communication tool and thirdly (3) how the stories influence the employees and, in turn, the corporate identity. In order to gain this understanding, different methodological considerations have been taken, which will further be presented.

3.1.1 Epistemological considerations

The epistemological perspective we have taken in this study is interpretivism which suggests that we need to understand the subjective meanings of social reality. As researchers, we have to view existing differences between people and the objects in investigation, and attain an understanding of the social world that is based on interpretations of the participants in that particular social world. More explicitly, in order to understand the effects of organisational stories, it is essential to understand the meanings of the concept for those concerned in the social event, such as the organisational members in a specific company. Our objective is not to find one truth, but rather to understand different truths. Every understanding of the socially constructed world is a product of meanings where each meaning will explain to us how the

world is (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Due to these arguments, we believe that an interpretivistic approach is appropriate. This helps us to obtain an insight of the meanings, objects, and underlying grounds in the organisational interactions. Furthermore, the interpretivistic approach is particularly suitable when studying family businesses and trying to understand the particular nature of this organisational form. An interpretivistic approach enables us to investigate how the family influences the business, consequently, how the family members, the family history and identity affect and form a unique organisation, and how this, in turn, influences the organisational setting including all organisational members (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2008).

3.1.2 Ontological considerations

In accordance with our interpretivistic standpoint, a social constructionist approach has been taken. In social constructionism the key point is that the world is socially constructed and that the human beings give the reality its meaning. Since our focus in this study is on how the organisational members think and feel about the topic of the organisational stories in the family business, and also how the stories are communicated between peers and subordinates, we believe that social constructionism is an appropriate approach (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Johansson (2005) discusses a social constructionist approach to stories and implies that the world is not an objective or general truth but can only be seen as one of many versions of the truths. Due to this, when conducting our research, we believed that it was of great importance to become a part of what was being investigated in order to understand the organisational members' experiences and perceptions of their own socially constructed context (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, we have taken a narrative approach, which, according to Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008), is a subgroup to the constructionist research design. According to Johansson (2005), the narrative method is employed when the researcher aims to gather and investigate oral and written stories. Examining organisational stories will enable us to obtain valuable insights of the organisational life and capture the central stories that shaped the organisations investigated (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). This approach has been taken since our objective is to comprehend the organisational stories, how they are used and which the effects are in a specific organisational context. Hence, investigating and analysing the stories communicated within the family business was important in order to get a thorough comprehension about the socially situated context of SIA Glass. What is more, the feminist sociologist Catherine

Kohler Riessman further stresses that the important factor in narrative research is its interpretive character, meaning that it is about methodically interpret others interpretations about themselves and their social reality (Johansson, 2005). In addition, the narrative method is closely related to organisational language, which communicates cultural perspectives. The participants' personal meanings will be viewed as self-interpretations of the cultural viewpoint adapted to the unique context of SIA Glass. We seek to emphasize the socially shared meanings which organisational members in the specific context interpret and adapt to their specific working place (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994).

3.1.3 Abductive approach

Coherent with our qualitative research design, an abductive approach has been taken, which is closer to the inductive⁹ than the deductive¹⁰ approach. As argued by Dubois and Gadde (2002), this approach creates productive cross-fertilisation where new combinations are developed through a blend of established theoretical models and new concepts originated from the confrontation with the reality. Since our intention is to discover new things and develop existing theory, rather than just confirm present theory, the abductive research approach was suitable. This implies that we have worked with theories and empirical findings in close correlation and moved back and forth between the two in order to find the most appropriate ways to analyse our data with the most relevant theories. More explicitly, we started with a theoretical framework in mind but along the way, and as new themes appeared from the empirical data, we found that some new theoretical concepts and models would be suitable. Hence, our original framework has sequentially been modified, partially as a consequence of unexpected empirical findings, but also of theoretical insights and understandings obtained throughout the process (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Another argument is that the investigation of a family business frequently relates to the discovering of numerous meanings within the same social world, hence we need to be open-minded and welcome several perspectives and theories (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2008). Hence, due to the arguments by Nordqvist *et al.* (2008) and since we, with our interpretivistic standpoint, do not see a clear line between our theoretical and empirical framework, we have chosen this approach.

⁹ Deductive approach implies the development of propositions from present theory which are tested in the real world (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

¹⁰ Inductive approach relies on 'grounded theory' where new theory is methodically produced from empirical data (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

3.1.4 Using the family business as an empirical field of research

We have chosen to use family businesses as an empirical field of research since we believe it to be an interesting field of research and, in addition, a fairly neglected territory. Of course, all family-owned companies are different and perhaps one could argue that it is impossible to make an entire comparison between them. Amongst the family businesses, there are some companies that are owned by some few individuals and their relatives, and will never experience any growth worth mentioning or to be passed down from generation to generation. Nevertheless, it is also true that many of them are amongst the largest and most successful companies in the world. However, and as argued, they all have one thing in common; they are linked to a family, and this link makes them a special empirical field of research (Gersick *et al.*, 1997). Research based on family businesses does not only imply the investigation of the business, it also implies the investigation of the family owning the company and that family's specific history, traditions and values reflecting the business. Due to these circumstances, we are faced with a great challenge when investigating family-owned companies. Another challenging prospect to the studies of family businesses is the relationships between family members and nonfamily members and between the corporate management and the employees (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, what makes family-owned companies an interesting field of research is that they are often characterised as having deeply rooted values, strong and enduring organisational cultures as well as a grand desire for continuity. In family businesses, values perform as the spine of the organisation, as certain intangible resources are passed on across generations. These deeply rooted family values are presented in the way family and nonfamily members, working in the organisation, live and work, and are the drivers for their guidelines and codes of behaviours within and outside the family business. It is further these family values that give each family-owned company its distinctiveness and often act as a source of competitive advantage (Trevinyo-Rodríguez, 2008).

3.1.3 Case study design

Within the empirical field of family businesses, we believe that a case study design with the use of one single in-depth case is appropriate considering our qualitative research approach. The case study design offers us exclusive means of developing theory by employing rich and in-depth insights of our specific empirical phenomena and context (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). As previously mentioned, our chosen case is SIA Glass which is a subsidiary company to

Bertegruppen – the oldest family-owned company in Sweden. This case company was chosen due to its distinctive corporate identity and history¹¹. This is something we found truly interesting and we believe that their long family (business) history would be of excellent use in the organisational storytelling context.

On the subject of case studies, there are quite a few researchers stressing that the use of multiple cases will offer a stronger base for theory building and permit replication, such as Eisenhardt (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). According to Eisenhardt (1989), it will probably be difficult for the researcher to generate theory with much complexity with less than four cases. Others, such as Dyer and Wilkins (1991) and Dubois and Gadde (2002), suggest that the use of one in-depth case provides a deeper description and understanding of a specific social setting and that theory sprung from profound insights will be more truthful. Consequently, learning from one specific case should be regarded as an advantage rather than a disadvantage (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). The authors further argue that the thorough study of one single case will permit the researcher to notice new theoretical relationships and question old ones. The purpose is further to try to tell good stories and the consequence is that the traditional case study will be a considerably more coherent, convincing and memorable story (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). Due to the arguments by Dyer and Wilkins (1991) and Dubois and Gadde (2002), and the fact that our study has a social constructionist and narrative approach, we have used one single case in order to attain a comprehensive understanding of the context in our chosen case company SIA Glass.

Moreover, and as argued by Dubois and Gadde (2002) and Easterby-Smith *et al.*, (2008), a case study, with a social constructionist approach, must rely on analytical inference and theoretical abstraction rather than statistical inference. An analytical generalisation rests upon rich contextual descriptions and contains the researcher's argumentation for the transferability of the interview findings to other contexts and situations, as well as the reader's generalisations from the study. What is more, the authors argue that a researcher can draw an analytical generalisation from qualitative interviewing regardless of sampling and mode of analysis (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Since the aim of our study is not to statistically generalise our results or show causality, but rather to provide in-depth insights into a specific context and to increase the universal understanding of this specific context, we believe that a case study approach is appropriate, from which we can make an analytical generalisation.

¹¹ A thorough description of SIA Glass will be given in chapter 4.

3.2 Data Gathering

In order to comprehend the role of organisational stories in the family business SIA Glass, from both a management and employee perspective, we have combined two types of qualitative methods; phenomenological interviews and a document study¹². The organisational stories collected were mainly the written stories from the documents studied. However, stories were also brought up during the interviews, spontaneously or because we asked for them.

3.2.1 Phenomenological interviews

If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them? (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:xvii).

The phenomenological approach has been widespread in qualitative research and this approach is interested in comprehending a certain social phenomenon from the subjects' own standpoints, to discover the meanings of their experiences and to expose their lived reality prior to scientific descriptions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Hence, this type of interviews would give us the opportunity to gather participant-driven data and to comprehend how organisational members make sense of their working place (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Due to these arguments, we believe that qualitative interviews are a suitable data gathering method which is in accordance with the aim of our research.

Moreover, qualitative interview knowledge can be considered as narratives since stories are a powerful tool of making sense of the social world and our own lives. The qualitative interview is the foremost context where people can bring out narratives which provide information of the human world of meanings and by using this method, we can get people to tell stories about their experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). During an interview, the interviewee may create stories or retell stories that circulate within the organisation which may reveal the narrative devices in practical use (Czarniawska, 2004). Consequently, and in correlation with the interpretivistic and narrative approach, phenomenological interviews have been carried out. This helped us generate an in-depth understanding of the organisational

¹² The document study consisted of three books about SIA Glass and a thorough presentation will be given under the subtitle 3.2.2.

stories of SIA Glass, how they were used in the management communication and how they influenced the employees and, in turn, the corporate identity.

Our case study of SIA Glass consisted of interviews with six organisational members. First of all, there was the corporate management and the family members. They were represented by Per Stenström (the president of the board of SIA Glass and Group CEO for Bertegruppen), Helena Stenström (daughter to Per Stenström and product developer at SIA Glass) and Rolf Frid (CEO at SIA Glass). Secondly, we conducted interviews with three employees. Instead of mentioning their names, we have chosen to call them employee A, employee B and employee C¹³. Employee A works in the factory and has been at SIA Glass for almost his entire life, born and raised in Slöinge. He further has own family members working within the organisation. Employee B works at the office within sales and first came to SIA Glass approximately two years ago. She is not from Slöinge but from the same municipality. Employee C works in the factory and started his full-time position this year. He has prior to that worked at SIA Glass during several summer holidays. He is born in Slöinge and still lives there.

These interviews gave a rich and in-depth empirical data that allowed us to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the context at SIA Glass. Semi-structured interviews with a fairly discussion-like scenario were conducted where we were able to focus on pre-decided topics, corresponding to our theoretical framework. Hence, in order to obtain fruitful empirical material, we chose to have an interview guide with prepared questions. However, we gave the respondents a great opportunity to talk about what they found important. Hence, the respondents could speak rather freely and develop their answers as they wished (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As pointed out, our aim was to obtain an understanding of the respondents' point of view and the semi-structured interviews enabled the respondents to explain their personal meanings and to describe individual and social influences that shape their background (Stern *et al.*, 1998). Questions about what feelings the stories bring about and how the participant interpret meanings of the organisational stories were discussed (Gabriel, 2000).

The interviews took place at the SIA Glass office in Slöinge and were each between 60 and 90 minutes long. We deliberately chose to conduct face-to-face interviews since we wanted the

¹³ This was requested by the participants.

respondents to be in the contextual setting studied in order to obtain a better understanding and feeling for the organisational culture and identity as well as the specific stories told and retold at SIA Glass (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In order to capture all details and to pay attention to the participants' voices, the sighs, the like and the pauses, we used a tape recorder during the interviews. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), we can capture not only what people say, but also in what way they say it, by tape-recording the interview. The recorded material was subsequently transcribed¹⁴ and translated into English.

Regarding the sample of interviewees, we want to underline that we did not choose the employees who participated in the interviews ourselves, rather this decision was taken by the CEO. Hence, we are aware of the fact that the selection of employees may have been chosen in order to portray the company in an especially positive light. The impression that we obtained from our interview subjects may not be consistent with the majority of the company's workforce (Bryman and Bell, 2007). There is also the possibility that, as an employee of the company, the participants did not want to say anything negative about the organisation which could affect their working relationships or environment. However, we believe that the employees interviewed are good representatives for the population and that our interviews provided us with a great in-depth empirical data and we strongly believe that we obtained the opportunity to capture a true and valid picture of the reality.

3.2.2 Document study

As a complementary source of data within our qualitative study, a document study was also carried out, in accordance with the narrative approach presented previously. This means that we studied three books about SIA Glass¹⁵ that were given to us by the CEO prior to the interviews. The books are called *425 år kring en gammal qvarn* (SIA Glass 1994)¹⁶, *Glass på svenska* (SIA Glass, 2009)¹⁷ and *Du är en ängel* (SIA Glass, 2007)¹⁸. In particular, SIA Glass (1994) and SIA Glass (2009) gave us essential insights about the origin and long and unique family business history of SIA Glass and, hence, also about the Stenström family's history,

¹⁴ Transcriptions are constructions from an oral conversation to a written text (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)

¹⁵ Three books about the family history and the core values of SIA Glass.

¹⁶ *425 years around an old grinder*

¹⁷ *Ice cream in Swedish*

¹⁸ *You are an angel*

since the histories are greatly intertwined. The books further provided us with amusing anecdotes and photographs from the past¹⁹, mainly on family members.

Regarding document studies, Bryman and Bell (2007) make a distinction between personal documents, in written or in visual form, and official documents originating from an organisation. The authors further argue that personal documents may be used to trace the history of a company through diaries and letters of the company founder. Moreover, visual objects such as photographs often represent a vital part of a company's identity and image and that there is a great potential for researcher to integrate photographs and other visuals in their research (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In our case, we believe that the documents are both personal and official. They have been produced by the SIA Glass management, in collaboration with advertising agencies, for the internal as well as the external audience. At the same time, the documents are written in a very personal way, almost like diaries where the Stenström family and their family history is greatly revealed. The books further contain a great deal of personal photographs of, for instance, different family members which makes it even more personal. Hence, the documents studied are both personal and official and, consequently, we believe that they virtually can be considered as official diaries.

As stressed by Bryman and Bell (2007), organisational documents can, in a case study research, be used to build up a description of the organisation and its history. Hence, gaining access to these organisational documents allowed us to obtain very valuable knowledge and background information about SIA Glass and, of course, the organisational stories told and retold within the organisation. What is more, documents originated from private sources, such as companies, are likely to be significant and authentic, meaning that they tend to be clear and graspable to us as researchers. Nevertheless, we should of course always take a critical approach towards what we read. People who write organisational documents, such as managers, are likely to have a specific standpoint that they would like to get across. In other words, members of the different groupings, articulated through the documents, may have certain perspectives that reflect their positions in the organisation. Hence, documents cannot be considered as offering objective accounts of a state of affairs (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In our case, however, it is not particularly significant whether the documents are objective or not. What we find important is how these documents, and the organisational stories revealed

¹⁹ Some of the photographs revealed in the three books will be found in Appendix 1.

in them, are used in the management communication of SIA Glass and how they are influencing the employees and, in turn, the company's corporate identity.

Regarding the matter of objectivity, we were in fact mostly concerned with our own. By taking part of these documents and thoroughly studying them prior to the interviews, there may have been a risk of becoming to some extent indoctrinated and losing our own objectivity. In order to avoid this dilemma, a comprehensive data treatment has been carried out. By presenting a fairly large amount of empirical data before coming up with conclusions, the reader is given a possibility to make his or her own evaluations (Easterby Smith *et al.*, 2008).

3.2.3 The books about SIA Glass

As mentioned, three books have been analysed in our document study. Firstly, SIA Glass (1994) was composed by the agency 1&2 Nilsson & Nordin. The book was distributed to all employees of Bertegruppen during its 425 years anniversary in 1994 and gives the reader an in-depth description of the family business' history, in particular Berte Qvarn's history, and how everything started in the year of 1569. It is also a story about the Stenström family who has run the business for all these years. A variety of different characters from the family are exposed and a family tree²⁰ is presented. The book is further filled with drawings and photographs, mostly of family members in historical times. One can also read about the local food culture of Halland, of the environment of Slöinge and of the history of ice cream (SIA Glass, 1994).

Secondly, SIA Glass (2009) was composed by the PR and communication agency Welcom who has conducted interviews with members of the Stenström family as well as the CEO of SIA Glass. The book was distributed to all employees in Bertegruppen during the group's 440 years anniversary in 2009. It was further distributed to customers of SIA Glass, such as restaurants, ice creameries and retail chains. The purpose of this book is to give the reader a feeling for who SIA Glass is and what the family business stands for. The book portrays the history of the Stenström family and gives a thorough description of the founding of SIA Glass. The book further gives the reader an understanding of the company's core values and information about the products. The book is also filled with photographs, both from the past

²⁰ Photographs 4,5 and 6 in appendix 1 originate from this family tree.

and current times; of the Stenström family, other key persons as well as photographs of the environment of Slöinge (SIA Glass, 2009).

Thirdly, SIA Glass (2007) was written during 2007, in cooperation with the advertising agency Lundberg&Co, and it was primarily distributed to the employees of SIA Glass. Secondary, it was handed out to suppliers and valuable customers. The book first and foremost explains, and tells stories around, the core values of SIA Glass; *Honest, Simple, Natural and Swedish* (SIA Glass, 2007).

3.3 Narrative analysis

The purpose of our narrative analysis is to bring out the participants' reconstructed stories where we will connect the different events and contexts to one whole plot. Narrative analysis is a tool for understanding the interviewees' perspective as exposed in the telling of the story rather than focusing on the facts of the story (Bryman and Bell, 2007), which is in accordance with our research aim. Narrative themes are chained in logical series which, in turn, creates a narrative path. Narrative is a suitable way for the negotiation of meaning and, when applying narrative analysis, one should create a syntagmatic analysis of simple narratives since this provides a key to understanding of the structure and meaning of the multifaceted narratives (Czarniawska, 2004). Bryman and Bell (2007) further argue that a narrative analysis is an appropriate analytical method in studies when investigating organisational members' sensemaking and organisational culture.

Moreover, language is a fundamental element to the formation of an organisation since it is vital in managerial work and since employees use language to make sense of their workplace. Verbal interactions and the organisation become one and the same, rather than language as a reflection of what is going on in a business (Bryman and Bell, 2007). When analysing the empirical data, we have looked into how the management and the employees use language in the organisation and also what kind of jargon is used in the written as well as oral stories. Additionally, we have examined how the organisational members talk about the family business and the Stenström family, and what kind of words and tone of voice are evident. What is more, on the subject of the family, it was considered as one collective identity rather than many individual identities. However, individual key characters from the family history have been highlighted in order to exemplify the family identity and to investigate how this

identity has reflected the SIA Glass identity. We view the family history and the SIA Glass history as intertwined and the family history is the foundation for the family culture. The lessons that family members learn from family stories influence and affect rules for organisational behaviour between family members as well as between family and nonfamily members, it could be rules such as how to preserve the company over time and how to form organisational values (Kellas, 2005).

Furthermore, from the empirical data we identified certain narrative styles²¹ that were commonly used in the stories of SIA Glass. By doing this, we wish to understand what kind of stories are used in the management communication and how the stories influence the organisation and its members (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Our five chosen narrative themes helped us organising the organisational members' experiences into understandable packages and served to form social identities within the organisation. These narrative themes are the foundation of our analysis of SIA Glass which is composed as a fairytale where we have chosen to portray the management's version of the story and then the employees' version. Finally, the narrative analysis contains our own version of the fairytale where we discuss the management and employee perspective by means of our theoretical framework. Even though their versions may largely match in several themes, we believe that it is important to distinguish the fairytale from the management's – the storytellers – perspective and the employees' – the listeners – perspective. We call our five different narrative themes; *The righteous kings*, *Taking from the rich and giving to the poor*, *Angels and rituals*, *The kingdom* and *The message*. As stressed, founded on our narrative analysis, we believe that these themes compose the fairytale about SIA Glass.

3.3.1 The constructs of a good story

In order for us to analyse the stories from the document studies as well as the stories told during the interviews, it is essential to know what a story actually is. Hence, different theories about stories and narratives have been used when making sense of our empirical data. Stories can be described as symbolically and emotionally loaded narratives which do not present facts about things that have happened; rather they fill facts with meaning (Gabriel, 2000). In turn, narratives are written or spoken texts (Czarniawska, 2004) with sequential descriptions of events, chronologically connected, whereby sequentiality points to some form of causality and

²¹ The different narrative forms used by Czarniawska (2004) and Gabriel (2000), which will be introduced under the subtitle 3.3.1.

action – in terms of objectives, deeds and consequences – is usually given a central place. The schemes used for linking together actions and events through time and space are called plots, and in order for the narratives to be considered a story, there must be a plot. A plot namely brings the specific events into one meaningful totality (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993).

Czarniawska (2004) further argues that modern stories are often emplotted by means of four classical rhetorical tropes, meaning different figures of speech. The different tropes – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony – are used to form different forms of dramatisation in order to make it easier for the audience to make sense of the stories. Metaphors mean describing something unknown by connecting it to something better known. Metonymies are symbols that substitute for the real object, such as the crown for the kingdom or a logo for the company. Synecdoche creates the part-whole relationship, for instance, hands symbolise the workers or brains symbolises intellectuals. Lastly, irony is the trop of paradox, contradiction and scepticism (Czarniawska, 2004).

Constructed upon the different rhetorical tropes, there are four types of narratives forms; romance, tragedy, comedy and satire. In the romantic story²², where metaphor is the fundamental rhetorical figure, the typical plot is that of the hero's mission where he, after a long search including various adventures, recaptures what has been lost, such as victory, glory, love and the meaning of life (Czarniawska, 2004). Correspondingly, Gabriel (2000) calls this the epic story, in which he states that the focal point is struggles, accomplishment and victory and its main emotional features are approval, admiration and pride. The hero is the symbol of order whereas his enemies represent the forces of evil.

Similarly to the romantic story explained by Czarniawska (2004), Fog *et al.* (2005) argued that the classical story begins with the key character, often a hero pursuing an objective, such as Robin Hood fighting for liberty and justice in England or the classical heroes within the Greek mythology, such as Hercules. Hercules was the strongest and undoubtedly the most courageous of all the Greeks that could solve the most impossible of tasks. Each hero has a strong set of personal characteristics and skills. Some look for freedom, adventure and rebellion whereas others look for love, caring and acknowledgement. Thus, the classical hero figure appeals to very fundamental wants and needs profoundly rooted in human nature.

²² Due to the specific stories within our chosen case company, revealed in the SIA Glass books, there is an emphasis on the romantic narrative form in this study. While investigating these stories, we namely found out that they were, to a great extent, written with a romantic and epic style, describing the key characters as heros.

Moreover, since there is frequently an adversary, such as a dragon or an evil witch, trying to work against the hero, the hero's pathway to obtaining his objective is seldom smooth. Due to the adversary, a conflict is established. As argued by the authors, the conflict is the driving force of a superior story, which spoils the sense of harmony. Furthermore, the conflict creates the dynamics of the story and forces us to take action in order to re-establish harmony. This is what captivates the readers; they deal with our emotional need to bring order to chaos. In the classical fairytale, the conflict is frequently eternally resolved and the hero lives happily ever after (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, there is the tragic story which is constructed upon the metonymy and views humanity as a subject for different laws of fate. A classic example is the myth of Sisyphus, where the tragic hero ceaselessly pushes a rock up the hill which eternally rolls down again. Hence, the rock is considered as the fate of Sisyphus (Czarniawska, 2004). The tragic stories focus on unfair misfortune and the classic mixture of fear and pity for the victim; bitterness, horror, guilt and anxiety (Gabriel, 2000). In the comedy, the rhetorical figure corresponding to comedy is synecdoche, and humans are represented as organically forming parts of a higher unity which, regardless of setback and comical complications, works to resolve everything into harmony; the typical happy ending. Finally, satire demonstrates the absurdity of everything that takes place and irony is the favoured rhetorical figure of this narrative form (Czarniawska, 2004).

3.3.2 Different kinds of stories

Stories, as describes by Gabriel (2000), Czarniawska (2004) and Fog *et al.* (2005), can take on different natures and the different generic poetic modes have dissimilar standpoints. Nevertheless, regardless of what generic mode a story is based on, there is a variety of typical organisational stories. Firstly, there is the core story, which articulates the primary subject matter that links all the company's brand communication together and that all stories told, internally as well as externally, should originate from this one core story. The core story should be transformed into a set of concrete and tangible stories, hence, everyday stories spread throughout the organisation (Fog *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the everyday stories can, amongst others, be about people or the organisation itself. For instance, there are frequently stories about the leader of the company which serve as a role model as to how employees should think and behave. These stories are often told for years, sometimes for such a long

time that it becomes unclear if they are myths or real. However, the symbolic meaning remains (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005; Fog *et al.*, 2005).

Another category is stories about the past as well as about the future. Stories about the past tell the distinct history of the organisation and this kind of stories has the ability to tie the organisational members together and preserve cultural norms within the organisation (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005). Stories about the past are frequently about the founding of the corporation and how it, once upon a time, all began. Stories about the first hesitant footsteps often deal with the company's core values and way of thinking, and knowing the roots gives the organisational members a feeling of identity. What is more, these stories are frequently about a driven and passionate founder with the ambition to make a difference in the world (Fog *et al.*, 2005). Stories about the future, on the other hand, state visions and missions of the company. Moreover, stories about the organisation can also have the nature as signs which work as hermeneutics and can help explain what kind of organisation it is. Architecture is a good example of a sign that can tell a story; the arrangement of buildings and office areas tell stories, stories reveal information about the organisation and can thereby give notion about who the company is (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005).

3.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability deals with the question of whether the outcome of our study is consistent and repeatable at other times and by other researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In phenomenological interviews, this concerns mainly whether the interviewees will modify their answers during the interview session and whether they will give different answers to different interviewers. In order to improve the quality of the interview and, hence, increase the reliability of our study, we were cautious not to pose leading questions since this may influence the answers unintentionally, as recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Another difficulty, that occurs specifically when collecting stories, is that stories do not demand verifiable proof, but is rather interpreted by us as researchers which create room for negotiation. The problem with the interpretation of stories is to determine whether there is a fixed meaning or many possible meanings (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993). Hence, the interpretations made by us would perhaps not be made by other researchers which can spoil

the reliability of our study. Nevertheless, one should not forget that we have an interpretivistic approach in this study, meaning that we have created our own story which consists of the narrative analysis. According to Czarniawska (2004), this is a part of the narrative research approach. Hence, our story would probably differ from the story written by other researchers. Nevertheless, in order to make the study more reliable, we made sure that the constructs of our own story was as well-grounded as possible (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Furthermore, regarding the interview transcriptions, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) recommend that two different persons independently transcribe the recorded interviews, which will provide quantified reliability verification. Due to a rather tight time limit, we did not do this which of course may have negatively affected our results. Furthermore, the interviews and the books in our document study were in Swedish and we are aware that we may have missed essential shades in the language when translating the recorded material to English. However, we both listened to the recorded material independently of each other and, subsequently, one of us made a thorough transcription of the interviews, and listened to the recording several times in order to find mishearing or misinterpretations. We also read the material thoroughly in order not to misinterpret the stories in our document study. These cautions have probably improved the reliability of our study.

Another important concept in our qualitative research design, next to reliability, is validity. Validity has pertained to whether a method explores what it claims to explore and, in the everyday language, validity refers to the truth, the correctness and the strength of a certain statement. A valid argument is strong, credible, well-grounded, justifiable and sound (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Regarding the transcriptions of the interviews, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode. Nevertheless, as discussed, in order to capture an accurate and true picture of the reality, viewed from the subjects' standpoint, we made a thorough transcription of the interviews. We believe that this helped us make valid arguments in our narrative analysis.

On the subject of storytelling, Gabriel (2000) argues that the most apparent risk of story-based research is the selective use of organisational stories to strengthen the researcher's fixed ideas or assumptions. The author stresses that, in this case, stories become components in the researcher's own agendas. Hence, the question of validity came to our mind when conducting our story-based study and during the process we asked ourselves the central question: Are we really measuring what we think we are measuring? In particular in this kind of research, when

conducting phenomenological interviews and investigating organisational stories, it is difficult for us as researchers to stay objective (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Consequently, in order to increase the validity of our inquiry, we want to stress the significance of the interpretive component since the aim for the study is to explain the unique meanings and perspectives constructed by organisational members in the context of SIA Glass and storytelling as a management communication tool. Accordingly, in this study we present a thick description of our empirical data in order to increase the validity of the study and to give the reader an opportunity to see for themselves and not only take our word for what is stated (Cho and Trent, 2006; Jehn and Jonsen, 2009).

3.5 Ethical considerations

In every research method there are ethical and moral concerns involved, perhaps particularly in this kind of phenomenological interviews where the participants share so much of their own experiences and beliefs and tell rather personal stories. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2000:62), ethical issues in interview research occur predominantly due to the complexities of *researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena*. In our study it was primarily the question of confidentiality that became an ethical dilemma. Within academic research, confidentiality means that the private data that identifies the participants will not be revealed. Hence, if a study will publish information that may be identifiable to others, the participants should get the possibility to agree to the publication of this information (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). From an ethical standpoint regarding confidentiality, during the process we became concerned with the fact that one of the employees interviewed in this study tragically passed away two weeks after the interview. We did not know how to deal with this since we have never been faced with a similar situation before and we did not know whether to use the empirical data from this participant's interview at all. Nevertheless, after some consideration, we decided to use it due to the fact that this employee's standpoint was undoubtedly very important. Moreover, since we recorded the interviews and transcribed them meticulously, we believe that we have presented the correct picture of this employee's standpoint. We further took measures in order not to make him recognisable. Additionally, transcription contains ethical issues which we have taken into consideration. We kept the recorded material and transcriptions in a secure storage and further erased the recordings when we did not longer need them (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

4. This is SIA Glass

This chapter will present the family-owned company SIA Glass, its origin and history. Since the ice cream producer is a subsidiary company to the corporate group Bertegruppen, and in order to understand SIA Glass and its history, a presentation of the whole corporate group as well as the Stenström family is required.

4.1 The oldest family business in Sweden

My family's philosophy of a sound production of food can be traced all the way back to medieval times. In 1569 my relatives established Berte Qvarn AB. These roots in the cultural landscape and agriculture in Halland has since then been inherited through subsequent generations, with a sense of quality and responsibility of production in harmony with the environment. That is the way we can formulate our vision; with our feet in the soil and the history, the responsibility for the environment and raw materials, ice cream that tastes like heaven!

(Per Stenström, siaglass.se)

Every company has a history and in some cases it is older than others (SIA Glass, 2007). Back in the days, there was a piece of land called Berte, just next to Suseån in Halland. The name Berte is derived from the Scanian word *bärta*, meaning dry and massive land. It is from the land of Berte where the corporate group Bertegruppen has been given its name. The name of Berte Qvarn was for the first time mentioned in writing on the 11th of August 1569 and, originally, it was the Church of Slöinge, Halland that owned this flour grinding business and the land around it, which was quite common back in the days (SIA Glass, 1994). In 1569, the Stenström family took over the management of Berte Qvarn in Slöinge and Bertegruppen was established (siaglass.se).

Approximately 440 years after the founding of Bertegruppen, the group currently consists of Berte Qvarn, SIA Glass, Hallands Frökontor and Berte Gård, and all of these companies are located in Slöinge, except from Hallands Frökontor, which is located in the neighbouring village Getinge. In Bertegruppen, there are today 173 employees, whereas 120 work at SIA Glass, 23 at Berte Qvarn, 27 at Hallands Frökontor and three at Berte Gård (siaglass). The

Stenström family also run a non-profit museum business – Berte museum – which was initiated in 2002 and, amongst other things, contains agricultural objects from the past. Additionally, in 1994, the spouses Olof and Brita Stenström initiated the trust fund Bertebos Stiftelse, which every second year gives away a prize to scientists from all over the world that have made an achievement within farming, food and ecology. The trust fund further gives away several scholarships to different scientist projects yearly (SIA Glass, 2009).

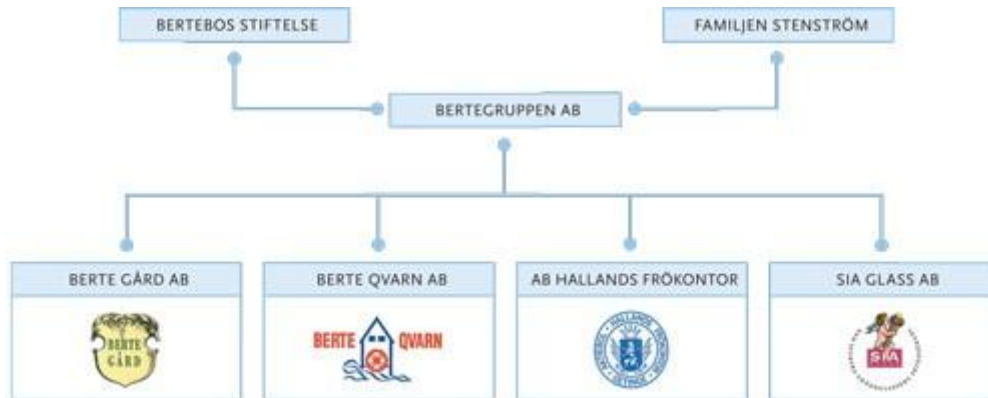


Figure 4:1; An overview of Bertegruppen (siaglass.se).

Being 440 years old, Bertegruppen is the oldest family-owned business in Sweden and *Veckans Affärer*²³ designated Berte Qvarn/SIA Glass to the finest family-owned company in Sweden in 1993 due to the uniqueness of being on its fifth century and 13th generation (SIA Glass, 2009). In 1961, Berte Qvarn started the production of ice cream and one year later, the CEO of the flour grinder, Olof Stenström, founded SIA Glass AB²⁴ as a subsidiary company to Trollhätteglass²⁵ (SIA Glass, 2009). 1968 the cooperation with Trollhätteglass ended and SIA Glass chose to continue on its own. Today it is a free-standing subsidiary company to Berte Qvarn (SIA Glass, 1994).

4.1.1 The newborn

SIA Glass is the ‘young’ additional contribution within the Berte family and, in fact, the Stenström family did not know anything about ice cream production from the start. However, they believed that the business seemed to fit well with the ideas that everything should be genuine and solid (SIA Glass, 1994). Today, the ice cream producer is the only family-owned

²³ The largest business magazine in Sweden.

²⁴ SIA stands for Slöinge Industri Aktiebolag.

²⁵ Trollhätteglass would later on become GB Glace AB, owned by Unilever.

ice cream company in Sweden with products sold in the whole country. The business concept of SIA Glass AB is to develop, produce and sell ice cream, sorbet as well as other frozen desserts to wholesalers, collective economies, consumers and other companies within the industry (siaglass.se). The primary target group is food interested adults with great spending power that make a deliberate choice for themselves, their friends and family. SIA Glass also aims for the customers who sympathise with the company's values; *Honest, Simple, Natural* and *Swedish*. The Swedishness in the brand is of great importance as well as the sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, internal research has also demonstrated that, when describing the corporate brand identity of SIA Glass, the co-workers used words such as honest, nice and friendly, environmentally friendly, family-owned company (SIA Glass, 2007).

Today, SIA Glass has a product catalogue of roughly 120 products and their ice cream brand is number two in the Swedish ice cream market, after GB Glace AB (SIA Glass, 2007). The company has captured approximately one percent of the Swedish ice cream market every year since 1999 and holds today over 15 percent of the market. Regarding sorbet, SIA Glass has a market share of roughly 85 percent, which makes the company a market leader in this particular type of ice cream. The logotype of SIA Glass has changed character throughout the years. The SIA Glass angel was shaped in 1981 by Göran Bergholm, who also created the characteristic round and white ice cream packages that SIA Glass uses today. In 1998, the concept of *The guardian angel of Swedish ice cream* was coined and today's logotype was formed (SIA Glass, 2009). As declared in SIA Glass (2007), the angel is the visible part of the corporate brand.



Figure 4:2; *The SIA Glass guardian angel* (siaglass.se).

4.1.2 Heritage and environment

SIA Glass has 'only' existed since 1961, but in the genes and in the collection of experiences, there is a 440 years long history of locally produced, high quality food products. The

philosophy of the Stenström family has been to establish a superior food culture and, at all times, use genuine raw materials in the process but also to be a decent employer and an asset for the neighbourhood. Creating many job opportunities in Slöinge has, according to the Stenström family, always been an essential mission (SIA Glass, 2009).

SIA Glass is the result of both heritage and environment. The heritage is the generations of flour millers, farmers, entrepreneurs and societal builders that have run the family business. The environment is Slöinge in Halland²⁶ and the sense of where they come from is still very essential (SIA Glass, 2009). Furthermore, the success is sprung from a consistent and long-term work and fighting spirit and the qualities of being a smaller family-owned company should not be jeopardised. According to SIA Glass, the competitors can imitate specific products but not the brand with its incorporated values. Hence, it is not the business concept that makes SIA Glass unique, rather it is the organisational culture, the history, the attitude towards others, the respect for the environment and other people and the will to always deliver an experience (SIA Glass, 2007). According to SIA Glass, a long family tradition has no self-worth if there is no trust that is taken care of and developed in a wise manner. To invest in humans' trust is what really sound food production is all about (SIA Glass 2009).

4.1.3 The Stenström family

As mentioned, it all began in 1569, when the family business was established and since then, 13 generations of the Stenström family have run the business. Currently, SIA Glass is owned by six members of the family and some of the members are operatively involved in the corporate group²⁷. On the subject of SIA Glass, the two family members who are active in the company today are Per Stenström and Helena Stenström. Per Stenström, son of Olof Stenström, started working fulltime at the ice cream factory in 1976 (SIA Glass, 1994) and became CEO of SIA Glass approximately 20 years ago. Today he is, as mentioned, president of the board along with other assignments. His daughter Helena Stenström is the representative of the young generation Stenström, who has worked within SIA Glass since 2008.

²⁶ Previously, SIA Glass used the phrase: *Swedish ice cream tradition from Slöinge, Halland*. Today, the word 'Halland' has been removed, revealing that the community of Slöinge is a great part of SIA Glass' identity.

²⁷ More accurately, 70 percent of the family business is owned by six family members (Per Stenström, his brother, Helena Stenström and her three cousins). The other 30 percent of the corporation are owned by the trust fund Bertebos Stiftelse in order to preserve the family business for future generations. Yet, the trust fund is controlled by the Stenström family with Per Stenström as president of the board.

5. The Fairytale about SIA Glass

In this chapter the organisational stories – from the document study as well as from the phenomenological interviews – will be presented as a narrative analysis. Firstly, the management’s version of the story is presented and, secondly, the employees’ version. Thirdly the authors’ version is presented which will be intertwined with the theoretical framework.

All the summer Robin Hood and his merry men roamed in Sherwood forest, and the fame of their deeds ran abroad in the land. The sheriff of Nottingham waxed wroth at the report, but all his traps and excursions failed to catch the outlaws. The poor people began by fearing them, but when they found that the men in Lincoln green who answered Robin Hood’s horn meant no harm, but despoiled the oppressor to relieve the oppressed, they ‘gan to have great liking for them. And the band increased by other stout hearts till by the end of the summer fourscore good men and true had sworn fealty. (McSpadden, 1923:14)

5.1 The management’s version of the fairytale

In the first part of the fairytale, we will present the management’s view of how storytelling is used in the management communication and their perspective on how it influences the corporate identity of SIA Glass. As mentioned, the three representatives are Per Stenström, Rolf Frid and Helena Stenström²⁸. In this first part, a variety of stories from the documents will be presented and analysed in order to demonstrate and comprehend what kind of stories that the management is communicating to the internal stakeholders.

5.1.1 The righteous kings

Organisational stories, both oral and written, about the Stenström family are indeed evident at SIA Glass. When searching for symbols and metaphors, we noticed a connection between the Stenström family and legendary leaders and kings from medieval sagas. This symbolism has

²⁸ What is noteworthy is that Helena Stenström is not part of the management team today. However, due to the fact that she is a member of the Stenström family, it is not appropriate to consider her as an ordinary employee. Consequently, she is included in the management’s version of the fairytale. On the whole, we believe that her perspective is more similar to the management’s than to the employees’.

been done due to the fact that the storytelling primarily is romantic/epic and that the Stenström family members mostly are described as very powerful and noble men (Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004). We view the family as the good and righteous kings, or heroes, for the people of Slöinge. In the legend of King Wenceslaus, the king sets out to give food to a poor peasant on the second day of Christmas. But during the journey, his attendant struggles against the freezing cold and is close to giving up on the mission. King Wenceslaus valiantly keeps walking and his attendant is able to continue due to the king's footprints that miraculously heat up the snow. After a long struggle, the king and his servant reach their goal and are able to serve food to the poor peasant (Mason Neale and Manson, 1999). An analogy can be made between this saga and the Stenström family, who enabled the inhabitants of Slöinge to have food on the table by starting a business that provided a livelihood for many families in the community. The citation below is, what we believe to be, the core story of SIA Glass since it deals with the founding of the company and its reason for being (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

SIA Glass started as an employment project when the local butchery Isaksons in 1959 was sold to the farmer cooperation Halmstads Slakteriförening. At that time, the butchery was the largest employer in the municipality of Årsta, where Slöinge was the principal town. Many people were offered employment in Halmstad or Varberg, but the public transport was inferior [...] Anxiety spread in the community. The Stenström family had for several generations been running Berte Qvarn with flour grinding activities, farming and milk production. For numerous generations, the family had also been engaged in the political life as well as in the Church. Olof Stenström was, since 1945, responsible for the family business. He was politically engaged in the municipality and had, consequently, a great influence in the community. When job opportunities at the local butchery disappeared, unemployed Slöinge residents asked him for help and he took rapid actions.

However, the initiative was in fact taken by Sven-Karl Numell, who had been a butcher at Isaksons butchery [...] He did not have a car and, consequently, he did not want to be forced to take a job in another town or village. An important factor is that he had formerly been a classmate to Olof Stenström. One Sunday morning during spring 1961, Sven-Karl Numell went down to Berte and looked for his old classmate. His message was short and concise: "You have to do something" [...] Olof immediately got engaged in the process of finding potential buyers for the old butchery building. He grabbed the phone and started to make phone calls. Via his cousin Bernt Stenström in Falkenberg, he reached Gunnar Javerfors in Varberg. Gunnar owned a lollipop factory and was initially

interested in buying the building but, later on, did not find the building appropriate. Nevertheless, there were even greater obstacles on the way. There was namely a list with activities that were not allowed in the building of the old butchery, such as all kinds of food production. Yet, Olof noticed that the list of forbidden activities did not mention lollipops and candy. Olof contacted Gunnar once again and together they discovered a creep hole. The writers of the list had forgotten to put production of ice cream on the list [...] Furthermore, Gunnar was familiar with a real legend within the ice cream world called Oskar Olsson – alias Glass-Oskar – who founded Trollhätteglass in 1933 [...] Olof Stenström contacted Glass-Oskar who, after a brief inspection of the building, bursted out: “Buy the damn thing!” Things got started.

The time was scarce and it was important that nobody found out that the old butchery was going to turn into an ice cream factory. Because then, Olof knew, the list would immediately expand and also forbid production of ice cream. Entirely on his own, Olof acted quickly. He bought the building for the municipality’s money without any approval. Otherwise, the seller would find out about his plans. Olof only ensured that the building would not be used to any of the forbidden activities. The same afternoon, the people who initiated the contract, met to establish a company. A name would rapidly be created. The decision was a simple and resolute name: Slöinge Industri AB, which, later on, became SIA Glass AB. The owner condition at that time was: Oskar Olsson 80 percent, Bernt Stenström five percent, Gunnar Javefors five percent and Olof Stenström ten percent. SIA Glass turned into a subsidiary company of Trollhätteglass. The fairytale had just begun for the small ice cream dairy in Slöinge but the beginning had been dramatic. In 1961 the production of ice cream got started (SIA Glass, 2009).

This story, about the founding of SIA Glass, is certainly heroic and brave, and written with an epic tone. In the story a struggle is evident; the heroic and powerful Olof Stenström fought the adversary – the large and frightening farmer cooperation who bought the old butchery without caring about the inhabitants of Slöinge. Hence, the conflict was that many people were about to be unemployed when the local butchery in Slöinge was sold. However, due to the righteous deeds of Olof Stenström, the harmony could be re-established in the village (Fog *et al.*, 2005). What is evident is that Stenström family members of today are very proud of this core story and we noticed that this pride is something they want to highlight and insert in the organisation. What is more, Rolf Frid argues that the Stenström family greatly imbues the business and that the identity of several of the family members reflects the company. He further stresses that the core values of SIA Glass corporate identity are based on the identity of the Stenström family.

I work on the basis of how I believe the family wants to be [...] You cannot just come here and change everything and do your own thing, one has to see to how their image of the company is, how it has been managed for 440 years, one cannot turn everything upside down. (Rolf Frid)

The way that the family runs the company with a long-term perspective, the love for food and sense of quality, is a reflection of the intentions, moral and identity from former family members. He further explains that it is important for him as CEO to preserve the family values and to manage the company in the same way as the family Stenström has done in generations. Several times during the interviews, the participants told stories about the dedication family members have had. By telling these stories we believe that the management want to imbue feelings of dedication and drive among their employees and, in addition, pervade their feelings of pride. An example of such a story is one about Olof Stenström, when he became the owner after buying out the rest of the family.

Olof bought the company from the rest of the family but it resulted in great conflicts within the family [...] he believed that they tricked the others [...] He had a strong drive to run this place and that is something that has formed the family today and something I work after today. (Rolf Frid)

Again, we make out romance and heroism in this statement; the family business has been run in the same way for 440 years and, after years of struggle and some family conflicts, it is finally successful. This can be symbolised as the kings who fight for justice. Just as King Arthur, in the legendary story, fought to save his people from the invading anglo-saxons (Lang, 2002), Olof Stenström fought for his people of Slöinge. Furthermore, Per Stenström further tells us a story about the social and political engagement that has always been a highly important part of the entire Stenström family, including himself. He believes that this engagement in the society has had a great influence on the family business and that the heroic identity or moral still is reflected on the company today.

I am brought up in an entrepreneur family where dad was incredibly engaged in the business and the civic life and I think that it also influenced our companies. We are not only engaged in the companies but also in politics and the society for the conservation of nature [...] this has continued even in my generation that's why I am so engaged in everything. (Per Stenström)

Per Stenström clearly believes that the family identity imbues the business and, in particular, the family values and the great engagement to the environment. The fact that the identity of the Stenström family imbues the business is also evident when analysing SIA Glass (1994) and SIA Glass (2009). Old as well as new romantic and proud photos of the family and family trees are presented in the books and it feels as if the management's aim with the storytelling is to form a SIA Glass family and community, by creating a feeling of belonging to the Stenström family. In the organisational stories, the family is often described as driven and powerful people with strong words and a great deal of emotions. For instance, one story is about the influential and charismatic Nils Johan Stenström²⁹ who lived a life fighting for something he believed in and what he also, in the end, died for.

In the year of 1863, Nils Johan Stenström got married to Augusta Gudmundsson, the oldest daughter of Anders³⁰ [...] When Nils' father in law died, the family left Moss and moved to Slöinge in order to take over the management of Berte. With Nils Johan, the history of Berte got new energy. He was very eager to face the great challenge with the impending big tasks [...] Nils Stenström was not any different from previous generations at Berte. His name was often mentioned in the parish meeting protocol [...] and regarding the construction of the railway through Slöinge, Nils Stenström was one of the most driven powers in the neighbourhood.

Nils Johan Stenström passed away when he was 61 years old, on the 25th of January 1893. Just arised from a few days of illness, Nils was one Sunday morning on his way to the Church with horse and sleigh [...] The people using the road made the smallest possible turn around the – to many people's aggravation – poorly placed station-building. When Nils Stenström arrived to the station, the railway personnel had put large stones in front of it in order to force the passing-bys to take a detour. Hot-tempered, tall and strong as he was, Nils got out of the sleigh and threw away the stones after which he could, as normally, take the shortest way to the Church. However, by the weight of the large stones, an old rupture opened and he had to be transported rapidly to the hospital in Gothenburg. He died during the operation. (SIA Glass, 1994)

This romantic story, with a quite tragic end, is just one of the many stories told about the fighting spirit that seems to be a great part of the Stenström family's identity. Righteous deeds and powerfulness are evident in the organisational stories of the family and the family

²⁹ Nils Johan was Georg Stenström's father, and the first family member with the surname Stenström to run Bertegruppen.

³⁰ Anders Gudmundsson.

business but the stories are also about caretaking and selflessness for the people of the community.

5.1.2 Taking from the rich and giving to the poor

My favourite story is the one about the founding of SIA Glass, which is about social responsibility. This is a story I can tell for a long time. (Rolf Frid)

Social responsibility was mentioned several times during the interviews and we were told that it is considered as one of the cornerstones of the identity of the Stenström family as well as of SIA Glass. As is revealed in previous section in the story about the founding of SIA Glass, social responsibility is the entire reason for being and the foremost plot in most of the organisational stories of the family business. The core story about the founding of SIA Glass is imbued with a strong sense of social responsibility and ‘saving’ the people of the neighbourhood. Just like Robin Hood – the epic outlaw in the English legend fighting against injustice and cruelty (McSpadden, 1923) – the motto of the Stenström family seems to be helping the less privileged, thereof the symbolism for the name of this chapter. According to the stories, family members in all generations have had a great engagement and commitment to employees and inhabitants of Slöinge.

In the year of 1867 many people was hit hard by the bad harvest. Anders Gudmundsson³¹ could often be seen in the front when it came to different help motions [...] Anders Gudmundsson put a lot of effort on helping the less fortunate. (SIA Glass, 1994)

Anders Gudmundsson is only one example of family members who have helped the less fortunate in the neighbourhood. Another example of how the heroic family history reflects on the core values of the business today, are several stories about Georg Stenström³² who became the CEO of Berte Qvarn in 1895. In both SIA Glass (1994) and (2009), the romantic story of this man is revealed and he was brought up several times during the interviews, by for instance Helena and Per Stenström.

We have been tremendously engaged in civic life. My grandfather and my grandfather’s father were and my father was. It was not for their own sake, but to build this community [...] My grandfather build a vacation house by the sea. The grinder was historically seen

³¹Anders Gudmundsson is of the ancestors to the Stenström family and the father-in-law to Nils Johan Stenström.

³²Olof Stenström’s father and, hence, Per Stenström’s grandfather.

as dusty, one could get asthma, grandpa then decided that the flour millers should have two weeks vacation by the sea. (Per Stenström)

Georg Stenström is certainly described as the Robin Hood of Slöinge with a great passion for helping the less fortunate. His caring spirit and motto of giving to the poor seems to still imbue the family business and the stories about this man is greatly emphasised in the storytelling of SIA Glass.

A pioneer for the care of employees and the neighbourhood that has always existed within the family. That is how Georg Stenström often is described [...] Already in 1918, before the mandatory vacation law in 1938, Georg arranged holidays for all of his employees. A villa by the coast was built where the living was free of charge and where groceries could be bought at the merchant at the company's expense. Furthermore, in the 1920s and 1930s, long before the free school dental service, Georg made it possible for all employees to send their children to the dentist and Georg offered to pay for half of the charge. Georg was also responsible for the building of a swimming school in Slöinge and Ugglarp and further allowed the construction of a trampoline in the lake just above the grinder. Additionally, Georg gave his attention to the deprived people of the community, even though they did not have an employment in the corporation. For instance, he organised occupations for disabled people and arranged a health care association within the community. Amongst several awards, Georg Stenström was awarded with Wasaorden³³ (SIA Glass, 2009).

In this romantic story of Georg Stenström, the honourable man is given a royal award for his righteous deeds, just as the brave Arthur in the legend of King Arthur is rewarded by being crowned as king after pulling the sword from the rock; a task no other man was able to achieve (Lang, 2002). What is more, this caring spirit seems to have been passing down across generations of Stenström family members; from the noble king to the heirs. For instance, Rolf Frid remembers the attentive Olof Stenström and how he was concerned about his employees. He tells us a short comical story with a genuine smile on his face:

When I started, I was the first employee that didn't live in Slöinge. I lived in Kvibille, ten minutes away by car. Olof was very concerned about hiring people that lived so far away. I was even offered an apartment in the grinder if I didn't have time to go home in the evening. (Rolf Frid)

³³ Wasaorden was a Swedish royal and a reward for meritorious achievements within various areas, handed out between 1772 and 1975.

Rolf Frid also tells us that SIA Glass over the years has helped and supported employees with alcohol and money problems, and how this is a reflection of the Stenström family's compassion and empathy to fellow-men. What is more, during the interview, Helena Stenström tells us a story where we clearly can observe how the social responsibility from the past is reflected on the organisation today and how former family members' way of being reflects SIA Glass and present generations.

I remember when we had to fire people, it was a few years ago [...] I came home and dad told me we had to fire people, he was completely heart-struck! He thought it was really hard [...] we never fire people. It always works out one way or another, someone retires or one can find other tasks to do. (Helena Stenström)

In this citation, it is evident that Per Stenström struggles to keep on working in the same caring spirit as his grandfather once did in order for the storytelling about the Stenström family to be trustworthy and believable. During the interviews, it seems fairly evident that the management works hard in order to make the righteous deeds in the stories imbue the organisational culture at SIA Glass; something we have chosen to refer to as angels and rituals.

5.1.3 Angels and rituals

As mentioned, the brand of SIA Glass is the guardian angel of Swedish ice cream and this angel is also a cornerstone of the organisational culture and corporate identity of the family business. Rolf Frid explains how the logotype is a symbol of everything that SIA Glass stands for, hence, the metonymy of the family business (Czarniawska, 2004). The guardian angel has been used in order to packet the family business history and core values in a way that is understandable³⁴ and the angel is the foundation for their organisational storytelling. In the Bible, angels are beings of good, characters of love and the messengers of the saviour Jesus Christ. Angels are perceived as the spiritual link between God and mankind and are sent forth to protect the human race (Catholic Encyclopedia, a). In SIA Glass (2007) we can notice how the management tries to spread their values to all their employees by the use of storytelling and how the employees are portrayed as angels who should help the righteous kings in their work of helping the people of Slöinge. By creating a SIA Glass spirit where family matters,

³⁴ However, Per Stenström states that the angel was created in the 80's because SIA Glass wanted to have a logotype that was different to the competitors. Other ice cream producers at that time had the same logo; a logo with stripes in different colours. Hence, the aesthetic part is not based upon any values or history.

there seems to be an intention to create a feeling of belonging and significance amongst the angels which, in turn, will help the kings to keep on spreading the aura and furnish their traditions that have existed in generations. The management evidently wants the angel to imbue everyday rituals³⁵. With the symbolic angel, they want to share organisational values among the employees and, create a joint organisational culture. According to Per Stenström, this joint culture has created the strong ‘we’ feeling that imbues the family business which he believes that the employees can identify with.

One knows that it's a family business and some parts (of the history, authors' comment). I think that the people that have worked here for a long time feel some kind of 'we' feeling. Not that they think about the owners but I think there is a 'we' feeling, they can identify with their workplace [...], we care about our employees [...] and we try to involve as many as we can and that is something we have done for many years. To be the good company, not only think about the wallet but to see to the whole. You will never reach good results if you don't start with the personnel. (Per Stenström)

The way Per Stenström views the organisational culture could metaphorically be explained by angels; the angels are gathered on the green grass in the royal park and the sun is just about to set. One can hear a beautiful song from far beyond the nation border; *in this night, in this hour I call angels to raise power* (Raven Wolf, 2004:96). It is the song of a strong angel group, the angels sing to achieve power within themselves as a group in order to later spread it to the people of Slöinge. Regarding organisational culture, Per Stenström emphasises the importance of a strong internal organisation in order to achieve good corporate results.

Long-term perspective and the care of the employees. That doesn't mean that one should be a pushover, but to have clear game rules so that one gets the personnel to enjoy their work place [...], it's vital that they have a feeling for the company and its identity. (Per Stenström)

Correspondingly, Helena Stenström believes that the caring for people is a cornerstone in the organisational culture of SIA Glass and that if the management cares about their employees, the employees will care about each other and also about the management and the organisation.

³⁵ Rituals represent the everyday operations and routines within the organisation, or in other words, the way of doing things at SIA Glass.

Just like wiccans say; angels are eager to work with those who want to do good for others so one should show respect and treat others the way one wants to be treated (Raven Wolf, 2004). By doing this the management will attain assistance from their employees, in the same way as the angel Gabriel assists God with his deeds of justice and power (Catholic Encyclopedia, b). From Helena Stenström's perspective, the management has succeeded in passing down the heritage to the employees, the heritage they so proudly carry on their shoulders.

Yes, that's how I experience it [...] It's more in the ambience, and then it doesn't matter what one says or how nicely one writes it. (Helena Stenström)

Helena Stenström also states that SIA Glass, in her experience, has proved itself to have a very caring and sympathetic atmosphere. For instance, there was once a woman that for many years worked for a company which did not treat her very well and after starting at SIA Glass she virtually felt blessed.

It's very important that you are the way you say you are [...] We are pretty endearing and nice. Or SIA Glass is [...] I thought about it last night and, I think we are pretty simple and honest [...] it's actually true. There was a girl that worked at a hotel [...] she got a substitute position for only six months here and after, that she quit her old job after 20 years of employment and started here. She had heard that we take care about our employees. And then it was another girl [...] (Helena Stenström)

Moreover, according to both Per Stenström and Rolf Frid, stories about the family business history function as a security factor for the employees. They believe that the feeling of security and the sense of pride amongst the employees forms a strong 'we' feeling.

No one will close down SIA Glass only because of one bad year, one has worked here for 440 years! The employees can feel safe at this workplace. (Rolf Frid)

In this romantic statement, SIA Glass and the Stenström family are yet again described as the saviour who never will let their people down. Furthermore, Rolf Frid states that he finds it important to be a good role model in order for the angels to follow his lead and to delegate and trust people since this will spread throughout the organisation. Giving employees independence seems, from all interviews, to be important and Helena Stenström emphasises the fact that there is a sense of helpfulness and problem-solving in the organisational culture of SIA Glass. She also stresses how the managers are positive about employees who contribute with their own ideas and suggestions. From the stories of driven and helpful key characters of the Stenström family, it seems as if the employees have adopted this behaviour.

Metaphorically speaking, just like Robin Hood needed help from little John and brother Tuck in order to succeed with his missions, the management of SIA Glass needs help from the employees to succeed with theirs.

I see all our 120 employees as sales people, if everyone is proud of working at SIA Glass and at least makes one sales conversation a day, that makes 30 000-36 000 sales conversations a year. We would never be able to do that if we only used the sales force. It is very important to have personnel that enjoy their job and workplace and who are proud of working here and have certain knowledge about what we do. (Rolf Frid)

I think that one enjoys working here and that one is loyal to SIA Glass, it's many small things. If we perhaps only had bonus trips then perhaps it wouldn't have such a great influence alone or if we only served fruit [...] What is important is that one can influence [...] and people listen to your ideas and suggestions. I think that it's more important for people to flourish [...] People try to come up with a solution instead of just whining and becoming angry because it doesn't work. What can we do for it to be better?! [...] I think that's something that characterises SIA Glass. (Helena Stenström)

5.1.4 The kingdom

When analysing stories from the SIA Glass books and interviews, we find the surroundings of Slöinge to be a frequently repeated subject. In addition, numerous picturesque photographs and drawings of the scenery of Slöinge are apparent in all three books. Slöinge is undoubtedly a great part of SIA Glass identity and the Stenström family has, through all times, acted after the motto: *local and locally produced*. Metaphorically speaking, Slöinge is viewed as the kingdom that the righteous kings want to preserve for future generations.

The family Stenström philosophy of a healthy grocery production goes back several decades [...] SIA Glass has its heart in Halland, Slöinge. Here, the Stenström family has worked with food since the medieval times. (SIA Glass, 2009)

We are local, we are small and we are personal [...] we produce our products in our own ice cream dairy in Slöinge at the countryside of Halland [...] As an ice cream producer, we follow a Swedish food tradition. To prioritise real raw materials and work with respect for the nature and environment is a tradition that we shall protect. We shall be proud of our heritage and that we have our heart in the countryside of Halland. (SIA Glass, 2007)

In the novel *The Lord of The Rings*, King Theoden fights the evil wizard Saruman in the battle of Hornburg to save the kingdom of his people, the Rohirrim (Tolkien, 1997). An analogy can be made between King Theoden and the Stenström family who fight for the kingdom of Slöinge, and to ensure a home for forthcoming generations. Hence, there is a pride of the long family business history and the location of Slöinge which is revealed in the stories of the past (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005). What is more, Per Stenström tells us that Bertegruppen is presently planning on starting its own milk production in Slöinge and aims to become self-sufficient in energy. This is an example of how stories about the future, where the family business' visions are articulated (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005), are connected with the history and traditions of SIA Glass. Furthermore, as stressed during the interview with Per Stenström, the fact that Slöinge is significant is also revealed in the way the management of SIA Glass recruits since they almost only recruit new employees from the region. Metaphorically speaking, when increasing the trope of angelic messengers, only the good angels are selected whereas the fallen angels carrying out acts of wickedness and dishonesty will not be allowed into the kingdom of God (Christ-centered Mall). Hence, to secure the heritage and preserve the kingdom of Slöinge, the angels must have the same vales and similar backgrounds as the royal family.

We needed a new head of sales [...] He has all his customers in Stockholm [...] we hired a guy from here who flies to Stockholm three times a week, because he has his roots here, he knows how we think, he has the same values and he feels at home here. (Rolf Frid)

Moreover, SIA Glass (1994) begins with a citation with indeed very romantic words. We view the citation as a metaphor for the importance of the long-term perspective that SIA Glass acts upon and that it is important to preserve the land for future generations (Czarniawska, 2004). There is a clear will to be the saviour of the people also in the future and the kingdom is obviously important for the Stenström family in order to continue reign.

We do not inherit the land from our parents. We borrow it from our children. (SIA Glass, 1994)

5.1.5 The message

The corporate management's intended message in the organisational stories of SIA Glass is that the Stenström family has done good things for the people of the kingdom of Slöinge since 1569 when it all started. Similarly to how angels are messengers of God, used by God to

protect and help human beings, the management spreads its message to accomplish what it believes in, through their employees (Catholic Encyclopedia, a).

Most of the people you know are of course aware of the fact that you work for SIA Glass and the image that your friends have of you will, consequently, also be a part of how they perceive our brand. In other words, you carry a great responsibility on your shoulders. Or should we say wings. Because, in practice, you are the SIA Glass angel embodied.
(SIA Glass, 2007)

As stated in this citation, the management views their employees as the angel embodied and by telling stories about the family business history is a means to make employees feel as they are an important part of the business and the family. What is more, by printing SIA Glass (2009), the management aimed to make employees aware of the origin of SIA Glass and what has been accomplished throughout history, in order to form a strong organisational culture and create a sense of pride amongst the employees. Rolf Frid highlights the importance of maintaining the understanding of the company's traditions and values, that it is a perishable notion which the management has to continuously reinforce.

What is more, during the 440 years anniversary of Bertegruppen³⁶, the management arranged a guided tour around all the companies and the land owned by the corporate group. Sharing the family business history with the employees was an attempt to make the core values more concrete and easier to grasp. Rolf Frid argues that this was an enjoyable and informative way to communicate who SIA Glass is and, at the same time, create a social community within the company. This anniversary was used in order to communicate the message to the angels and teach them how to fly.

It was in order to spread a message, mainly internally in our own organisation [...] to make people understand the history we have and for them to identify with it. (Per Stenström)

The identity becomes real when you connect it to buildings, houses and land. (Rolf Frid)

In the citation of Rolf Frid, the old buildings and the land owned by the family corporation can be regarded as signs; signs that make the stories become real and more tangible which, in turn, can help the employees to easier absorb the stories (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005).

³⁶ The anniversary was held in December 2009.

According to Rolf Frid, storytelling to the office employees and production workers is an internal tool in order to create internal relationships and devotion to duty. However, Helena Stenström points out that the employment process for the production workers is different from the employees in the office. The office personnel are introduced to the stories when first coming to the company, whereas the production workers are not. What is more, Rolf Frid is uncertain about how much the employees actually know about the organisational stories. There is an evident dissatisfaction in his voice when stressing that:

I don't know. They have heard them several times and they have the book to read but I still get surprised when I meet people that don't know of them. (Rolf Frid)

Moreover, Helena Stenström seems to believe that the ones who are familiar with the stories of the family business are the old-timers while the newcomers are probably less familiar with them. Speaking in metaphorical terms, there are fully grown angels that learnt to fly a long time ago while the new angels are still trying their wings, not yet ready to take off (Raven Wolf, 2004).

Most of them probably know stories about the history because they have worked at the company for a long time. They have heard the stories or read the books. But maybe not the new employees. They might not know much about it. (Helena Stenström)

5.2 The employees' version of the fairytale

This second part of our narrative analysis will give the reader an opportunity to take notice of the employees' version of the fairytale about SIA Glass. More explicitly, the reader will get an opportunity to distinguish if the employees' perspective of the organisational storytelling within the family business is coherent with the management's perspective.

5.2.1 The righteous kings

The thing with the Stenström family has been a very big deal here in Slöinge, it's like that. Olof Stenström was the general manager and ran the old Årsta municipality so he is somewhat of an influential man in the community of Slöinge, so they have always been there and been special. (Employee A)

The employees interviewed further believe that the Stenström family has a great influence on the company and that the organisational stories at SIA Glass are largely intertwined with the

family's history. They also seem to think that it is from the Stenström family where the company's core values have its origin and when talking about them, there is an evident admiration in their eyes.

The family stands behind the company [...] Before I started working here, SIA Glass was probably the Stenström family to me. You knew that it was the Stenström family.
(Employee C)

Moreover, the employees were familiar with SIA Glass and the Stenström family, in particular Per Stenström, before coming to SIA Glass. It even feels as if they were more familiar with the family than with the company. Metaphorically speaking, the kings have a central role in the community of Slöinge and the surrounding region and all the people are familiar with the royal family and their image of this family, and particularly about Per Stenström who is currently the reigning king, is indeed heroic (Czarniawska, 2004):

Per Stenström is quite well-known in the municipality [...], that he is caretaking, he spreads the aura that he takes care of all people. (Employee B)

Employee B further argues that there are stories about SIA Glass and, above all, about Per Stenström in the entire food industry of Sweden. What is more, ordinary people in the surroundings tell stories about the family business and its long history and Per Stenström. She further stresses that many people are familiar with the work that the Stenström family has done throughout history. Just as Robin Hood, the hero of the common man and king of the Sherwood forest, was well spoken of abroad in the land (McSpadden, 1923), it seems as if the whole nation speaks about the righteous kings of Slöinge.

A friend of mine who works with conferences has always said so good things about SIA Glass and mainly about Per. It was primarily she that said that Per seemed so friendly and nice, and this is perhaps not so common that you have this impression of a business leader. But he sees the little person, you could say. (Employee B)

Employee A has numerous stories that he shares with us during the interview and they are all about Stenström family members, primarily Per Stenström, and we get the feeling that Per Stenström is a role model for him as well (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005). For instance, he shares with us some stories which to him appears to be highly significant. They can be viewed as an analogy to how the angel Michael was educated by God to perform his tasks of kindness (Llewellyn, 2003). Per Stenström educated his employee on how to be a good fellow-man and angel.

Our first real meeting that we both remember is when we were down in Berte and there were small swallow's nests and I was just going to put my hand there to grab an egg and Per caught me and was enraged [...] That is perhaps my first meeting with Per that I can remember, ten or eleven years old [...] Another story, we had an old truck [...] Per did not think it was going to start. Per left and I got it to start and drove around like a maniac. Per came out and was furious [...] He got a bit annoyed with me. This is typical SIA in a way, that you are like a parent to each other, or at least Per is. (Employee A)

The same employee further highlights the family atmosphere that he believes imbues the entire organisation, which clearly demonstrates that family matters at SIA Glass.

My mother, my father, both my brothers, one of my brothers wives, my former partner and my present partner work here. Everyone ends up here somehow and it has probably been the sense of Per and Olle³⁷ too. (Employee A)

5.2.2 Taking from the rich and giving to the poor

I have heard these stories several times [...] Taking care of the people, which they always have done [...] It was the people of the neighbourhood that came to him³⁸ and wanted him to do something. It is quite amazing really. And now we are here today and it works perfectly. You can ask yourself, how many would have done the same thing today! If you had the opportunity and the means, and someone had come up to you and asked you if you could do something with that old place so that we could get some employment here in the neighbourhood? I don't believe many would have done that. So the entire way of thinking has been there all the way and exists still today I would say. (Employee A)

There seems to be a certain pride amongst the employees working within the family business; a pride of working and being part of an organisation that actually started because of the Stenström family's sense of social responsibility and caretaking of the people of the community. It is evident that they are proud to be a part of this noble royal family and to be one of the chosen guardian angels.

The idea from the beginning was to save Slöinge. It has imbued the history. Seven people that would become unemployed when the butchery was shut down. They saved their jobs. (Employee C)

³⁷ Olof Stenström

³⁸ Olof Stenström

It is much about the acting in the neighbourhood, the environmentally friendly [...] It is really exiting, amazing! The fact that they have such a commitment in the community and engaged in the welfare of the neighbourhood. It is rather unique I think. (Employee B)

Furthermore, employee C thinks that that the story about the founding of SIA Glass is a good story where the family's sense of social responsibility is quite evident but, in contrast to the others, he has some comments about the way things were managed during that time.

It is a good story. But one thing comes to my mind regarding this, I don't really know but it was somebody with a lot of political power who made the decision on his own. It was nothing democratically, they just decided that it would be an ice cream factory, or something like that, I mean, the 60s is not that long ago but this feels very far away. I don't really remember how it was but I remember that I reacted when hearing it. (Employee C)

There is clearly a dislike in this employee's voice when saying this. Speaking in metaphorical terms, he seems to believe that the royal family has slightly too much power and that there is an element of despotism in the kingdom of Slöinge. Hence, employee C seems to have a different belief than the others. From the interviews with employee A and B, it is apparent that the stories about the Stenström family and their commitment to social responsibility have a positive impact. For employee B, being the SIA Glass angel embodied and do what God aims to do – making the world a better place – seems to be essential to her and, evidently, she takes her responsibilities very seriously (Catholic Encyclopedia, a). She even seems to take on these responsibilities when she is off duty, hence, being the messenger for the saviour of Jesus Christ and helping humans on the planet of earth (Raven Wolf, 2004).

I am really proud of working here I think! It is not only a job, it is a lifestyle as well [...] But yes, it is some kind of role model (Per Stenström, authors' comment), because the business leader is so kind-hearted that you want to care about and work in the same way I think. (Employee B)

Speaking of fairytales, just as Beowulf – the hero of Gates – joins the beloved king Hrothgar of Denmark in the fights against monsters and dragons (Raffel, 1999), this employee is a loyal follower that proudly joins the kings of Slöinge in their fight for making the world a better place. What is more, employee A stresses that it has always been a sense of social responsibility in the Stenström family. This is evident in the organisational stories that he has heard and experienced himself, because this is frequently what the stories are about. For

instance, he tells us that SIA Glass, for several years, was a non-profitable organisation, receiving money from the grinder in order to survive. Just like stories about the grand leader (Seely Brown et al., 2005), employee A tells us how Olof Stenström – the leader with the great fighting spirit – was caught up with red numbers every Christmas, but he carried on, believing that what he did was good. Then suddenly, the red numbers were history and they started to make a profit. The employee explains how good it feels when you succeed with something you believed in and worked hard for.

You think: we have made money. Not the Stenström family has made money. (Employee A)

The three employees agree that working within a family business, in particular one as old as Bertegruppen, gives them a feeling of security. The caretaking and the security for the employees are evident in the organisational stories that are mediated from the management and in every decision they take. It seems as if the Stenström family's sense of social responsibility largely has contributed to the sense of security that the employees emphasise several times during the interviews. Employee A argues that the company will continue running the way it always has and that it will be located where it always has been located. During the interview it is rather clear that the employee wants to talk about the next generation Stenström – the new heirs of the throne – and he is confident that the company will stay in the family during the coming generations. Similarly, employee C stresses the fact that there is a sense of security within the family business.

This is the only company I have worked for. But I can imagine that it is, well yes, it feels secure to work here. That it is a family business and not a multinational corporation. (Employee C)

From this citation, a connection with one part of the saga The Lord of The rings can be made. This particular part of the story takes place in the Shire, the beautiful land of the hobbits. Here the hobbits are happy and comfortable, singing, feasting and dancing without fear of harm under the protection of the wizard Gandalf. The impression one is given when reading the book is that the entire hobbit race is like one big happy family (Tolkien, 2002). In the same way as the hobbits feel harmony and security in their hobbit holes in the Shire, the employees interviewed expressed feelings of safety at SIA Glass – the castle of Slöinge. We notice clear symbolism with the Stenström family who take care of their employees and protect them from

all evil. This is evident from the interviews with the employees as well as in the organisational stories of SIA Glass.

5.2.3 Angels and rituals

The spirit that once was created, the SIA spirit was it called back then but it was rather a bit of Per's spirit – how to be – it incorporates very much really. It is the sense of quality and how to work but also this with people and how to handle people so that they will be happy and considerate. That we should care about each other here and that we should be like a little family here. It is a bit of this SIA spirit that in fact Per was the founder of so to speak. And which still exists really. Sometimes it can be really hard to describe this feeling or how it is. (Employee A)

It is evident that this employee believes that the organisational stories about the family business' origin and history have formed a certain family spirit amongst the employees and a strong corporate identity.

I'm convinced that it has shaped a special identity; everybody has sort of heard these stories [...], if it has been to emphasise the history or if they should get people to feel as if they are a part of a history, I don't really know. But it has been highlighted in many situations and you should not forget your history. I think that many feel that it's fairly cool to be a part of this history. (Employee A)

The SIA spirit has evidently formed the organisational culture and identity at SIA Glass. He believes that emphasising on the family business' long and unique history creates a unique and valuable spirit within the organisation; a spirit where the guardian angel imbues the everyday rituals at SIA Glass and holds the organisation together. The SIA Glass angel carries the heritage and is the foundation for the internal storytelling; a symbol for how decent and caring Bertegruppen and the Stenström family have been for 440 years and it is now the employees' responsibility to be as good fellow-men and to keep on working in the same spirit. These words are remarkably romantic and the Stenström family is portrayed as heroes of the people (Fog *et al.*, 2005). Throughout the interview, employee A further points out that SIA Glass is like a family where everyone knows each other and knows each others' daily rituals.

It feels like a family sometimes [...] We know each other and we know what other departments are working with and which people that work there. Everyone knows each other even if we work at different departments. (Employee A)

Nevertheless, in contrast to employee A, employee B and C argue that there is still a feeling of ‘we’ and ‘them’ between the employees working in the office and the employees working in the production. From what Raven Wolf (2004) says about angels, we notice a metaphor between angels and magic, and the employees and their influence on the internal brand. We are back in the royal park, the sun is about to set, the beautiful song one could hear before is now more silent and not as beautiful. There is a disturbance evident in the harmony of the angel group and their magic spell is not as powerful (Raven Wolf, 2004).

I believe that it could actually be somewhat better. But it is hard when we have such a big production and we here at the office. Perhaps it could have been somewhat clearer. Even if we work at the same place, the feeling can be a little like ‘we’ and ‘them’. (Employee B)

Hence, the employees have different impressions about the relationship between the different departments. Employee A has worked within SIA Glass for almost his entire life and, according to himself, has a special bond with the Stenström family, whereas employee B and C were employed quite recently. Within the different departments, however, all employees agree that the ambiance is excellent. Employee C argues that, when working in the ice cream factory, people do not talk much due to the noise. During the breaks, though, there are quite a great deal of gossip in the staff coffee room and some storytelling. Particularly between the elder and the younger employees, we notice a tradition of storytelling within the ice cream factory. Since a great part of the employees, in particular in the factory, have worked there for a long time, there are numerous stories told about the past to the younger generations (Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005). In the ice cream factory, it seems as if the stories told are often quite comical where dilemmas, such as injuries and misfortune, are involved.

It’s not every single day but sometimes they get into a certain mood when they just sit around and tell old things [...] It’s fun. It is quite a lot you hear. How it was back in the days and so on [...] Stories about when it went wrong [...], when someone lost a finger [...] And they tell stories about flavors that weren’t good. And stories about difficult stuff. (Employee C)

It also seems as a way of educating the younger generations by telling stories from the past in order for the younger employees to become more involved in the family business’ history and to become better angels. It is almost as the elderly angles have taken on the role of Per Stenström, or the prior generations of honourable family members, when educating the

younger angels, acting somewhat as their parents and trying to make them a part of the family too. This is probably due to the family spirit that imbues the organisation.

5.2.4 The kingdom

During the interviews with the employees, they tell us several stories about Slöinge; the great and legendary kingdom of SIA Glass where the Stenström family – the caretaking royal family – is well-known and respected by its people. When talking about mythical Slöinge, all three employees explicitly consider it to be a significant part of the corporate brand identity of SIA Glass. They agree that Slöinge and Halland is a part of the family business and what the family business stands for.

They find it really important that everything should be local and environmentally friendly and so on. (Employee C)

Throughout the interview we got the feeling that employee A was very proud of being a part of the family business identity but also the identity of Slöinge, an identity that is greatly emphasised in the stories. Mythical Slöinge is evidentially very important in this fairytale and it has some kind of spiritual importance for both the angels and the kings. SIA Glass – the castle – is the centre and the identity of the kingdom. The region of Slöinge is greatly significant to the employees, in the same way that Middle-earth in *The Lord of The Rings*, is important to Gandalf, Aragon, Legolas, Gimli, Frodo and the other hobbits. It is their home, their life, and a part of their identity (Tolkien, 2002).

What employee A states, is strengthened by employee C, who seems to think that the location is significantly more important than the fact that it is SIA Glass he works for. During the entire interview it is quite evident that the employee believes that SIA Glass and Slöinge is the same thing. Metaphorically, the whole kingdom is reined by the royal Stenström family (Czarniawska, 2004).

To me it's important because otherwise I wouldn't have worked here. If it wasn't ice cream, it would probably be something else [...] The fact that so many who live here also work here. And the store that is here, if you are invited over to someone here in Slöinge, you always get ice cream [...] If you live in the community, then SIA Glass is the entire community and all, or many, work here and to me, Slöinge and SIA Glass is the same thing [...] But I have not thought about it too much before, it has sort of always been here. (Employee C)

Employee B, who is not from Slöinge nor lives there, also seems to believe that the location of SIA Glass is of great significance but perhaps mainly from an external perspective.

Externally I believe that it can be somewhat exotic, that SIA Glass is located in such a small village that you hardly know where it is. If you look historically it is still this commitment for the community that it would be just here. I believe that it gives quite a big credibility that the dairy is still at the same place. Internally, we have everything here so moving away from here, no, I don't think it would ever be an option. (Employee B)

5.2.5 The message

The internal communication at SIA Glass is, judging from the interviews with all three employees, open and honest which is appreciated by the employees, and it is obvious that they believe that what is communicated by the corporate management corresponds well with the reality. Furthermore, employee C stresses that the core values of SIA Glass are, to a great extent, used in the internal communication and that they try greatly to get the employees to understand the way that they should think when working and what SIA Glass strives for.

I think that, I don't know if I have become indoctrinated and don't think myself, but I believe that it corresponds well with the reality. That it is Swedish, that it is a Swedish-owned company, a family business that has existed for many generations. Honesty, nothing is hidden. It is pretty words they are trying to mediate. (Employee C)

Regarding the organisational stories, employee B stresses that the SIA Glass books are amazing. Nevertheless, she thinks that the stories are not communicated enough. Metaphorically speaking, the message from the saviour Jesus Christ has not entirely been transmitted to all angels (Catholic Encyclopedia, a).

We could put even more emphasis on it. It's more than half the book that talks about the history you could say. Perhaps we don't see the value of it enough to talk about it more. (Employee B)

Regarding the books distributed by the corporate management, employee C stresses that he has received them during the educational days that are held on a regular basis but he says that he has not read them thoroughly. He further argues that what is communicated, orally and literary, by the corporate management seems to correspond well with the reality. However, regarding SIA Glass (2007), we notice a clear sign that this angel is not entirely absorbing the message that has been sent to him.

I have received that one. But it feels somewhat bootlicking from their part – you are an angel [...] I think it's a bit comical. The fact that it's a guardian angel that protects the ice cream. No, but they communicate the brand a lot. I play football and we have it printed on the sportswear. Because they sponsor us. It has probably always been there.

(Employee C)

Evidently, there is a sign of resistance in this statement (Gabriel, 2000). Referring to angels, we can draw a parallel to the rebellious angel Lucifer (Catholic Encyclopedia, c) who revolted towards God when demanding all angels to show obedience. However, despite some apparent resistance from this employee, all three employees highlight the 440 years anniversary that, as mentioned, was held for the entire corporate group during 2009 and stress that it was a very successful and appreciated event where they obtained an opportunity to learn more about the family business.

Then you got to know much more and it was still Per who told the stories since he is the only one of the brothers who is involved in the daily operations. He told stories about his dad, no in fact it was even further back. It was the entire family relationship. It was the first time I heard this. (Employee B)

I have a positive image of Per, he talked about his family and Berte Qvarn, I think he has a quite cool attitude to everything and so on. (Employee C)

Regarding the organisational stories communicated to the employees, during this anniversary and else wise, the favourite story of Employee B and C seems to be the one about the founding of SIA Glass. Employee A, on the other hand, stresses that it is difficult to tell what his favourite story is since he has worked within the family business for almost his entire life and finds it difficult to see it from an objective standpoint.

I don't know really. I am right in the middle of it! If I hadn't been at SIA Glass it would probably be easier to answer such a question because then I would really get it told to me. I am experiencing it! It may perhaps I who am the story, I am in the middle of it the whole time. (Employee A)

Employee B, in turn, tells us how much she appreciated the stories from the past and the guided tour she was given when she first came to SIA Glass. According to her, the stories were a highly motivating factor. An analogy can once again be drawn from the saga of King Wenceslas (Mason Neale and Manson, 1999). The servant in the tale was motivated to continue the journey by the strength of will and character of King Wenceslas, just as the

management's storytelling is motivating employee B to follow the family values and traditions.

It was something that I thought was amazing to get a schedule for the introduction sent home to me before I started here. So I started to sit here with Per, then he took me to the flour grinder and to Hallands Frökontor [...] and showed me around and I got everything from the start and the story about how SIA Glass was founded. (Employee B)

Nevertheless, according to employee A, the organisational stories are not sufficiently emphasised in the communication to the production workers; they are told approximately once or twice per year during certain events. He seems to believe that these employees are, to some extent, neglected and there is a sense of dissatisfaction in his voice when talking about this.

Perhaps the marketing must be formed internally before you communicate it externally, that I believe is totally correct. In order to get a strong marketing that you know that the entire company supports, then begin with creating it within the company [...] This I strongly believe. Something that is just made up by the sales force and then everyone shall support this, it doesn't work [...] If there is something that is not rooted in the family, then it's not easy to do something externally, it will not be trustworthy. Then others will feel as you run around talking garbage. (Employee A)

Employee C, who works in the factory, agrees. When starting at SIA Glass he did not obtain an opportunity to take part of the storytelling as did, for instance, employee B. Possibly this angel feels somewhat neglected. Raven Wolf's (2004) explanation of angels is that, for the angel wheel to work you need a set of paint brushes, colours, a piece of paper and a list about what you want to achieve and the name of the angels that you would like help from. In order to call an angel or to provoke the right feeling or intent, one needs to use the right colours. Metaphorically, the right colours are not used within SIA Glass, hence, not all angels are reached. In other words and in contrast to the employees in the office, the production workers have not utterly been reached by the organisational storytelling.

No, not at all. I got my job somewhat hastily because I knew somebody so I don't know if it was only in my case but it felt like it was handled very quickly. I had to find out quite a lot on my own. (Employee C)

Concerning the fairytale of SIA Glass, the three employees agree, however, that the stories are unique and valuable and they seem proud of telling us the stories. They also seem to believe

that the stories about righteous kings, brave heroes and angels will carry on in the future. As written in the SIA Glass books, the fairytale has just begun...

The stories will probably be here and be told and then new ones will come. And then we sit here and then someone asks and then we have been here for a long time tell them about how it was in the past and tell stories about things that happened in the past [...] It is somewhat like a family, it passes on from generation to generation. (Employee A)

5.3 The authors' version of the fairytale

This is where the organisational members' versions of the fairytale of SIA Glass end. The following four sections will cover our – the authors – version. More explicitly, we will from our theoretical framework, give our narrative of how organisational storytelling is used as management communication tool within the family business and how this affects the internal stakeholders and, in turn, the corporate brand identity of SIA Glass. We will also clarify differences and similarities between the management's and the employees' perception about the fairytale of SIA Glass.

5.3.1 The conflict

It is fairly evident from our narrative analysis that the stories used within SIA Glass are greatly romantic and heroic where analogies can be made to legendary fairytale characters such as Robin Hood, King Arthur and King Wenceslaus, where power, righteousness and a caring spirit for the people of the kingdom are apparent features. Biblical stories about angels can also be used in order to describe the storytelling within SIA Glass. From our narrative analysis, it is further evident that the family business puts a great deal of effort into communicating their storytelling and that they comprehend the significance of bringing marketing mechanisms into the organisation and using external marketing strategies for internal purposes (Gummesson, 2008). The management clearly considers the employees as part-time marketers and finds it essential to use storytelling as a means to get the employees understand their history and core values. The whole organisation is a part of the SIA Glass brand (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; King and Grace, 2008). In order for the employees to work as part-time marketers, their culture has to be coherent with the management's perception of the organisational culture (de Chernatony, 2001). The stories about Nils-Johan, Georg and Olof, and the rest of the Stenström family, help the employees to make sense of their

organisation and we think that there are good indications pointing on the great influence the storytelling has on the organisational culture (Weick, 1995).

We would like to highlight the fact that the narrative analysis showed us that many angels, hence employees, feel that there is a strong team spirit within SIA Glass and that they have absorbed the message communicated by the management. Some employees mentioned that they feel proud of being a part of SIA Glass and others have even saluted the company in the local newspapers. Nevertheless, we can identify some angels that have not yet learnt how to fly and who do not feel like they belong. What we discovered is that the office employees' perceptions to be in congruence with the management's perceptions but the production workers' perceptions are somewhat sprawling. The narrative analysis demonstrates that the management of SIA Glass tries to have a clear communication, however, the interviews with the employee shows that they do not fully succeed. The executives have succeeded in their communication with the office employees but the communication with the production workers has not been as successful as intended (Unzicker *et al*, 2001), There is a sense of harmony within the different groups of angels in the castle, however, a split between different groups is evident. Hence, we notice a conflict between the production workers and the office employees and that there is a feeling of 'us' and 'them' in the organisation. Two reasons for this conflict have been identified.

The first reason for the conflict is that, the production workers have been given fewer symbols than the rest of the employees. The SIA Glass books seem chiefly to be addressed to the employees in the office and the production workers are to some extent neglected and, consequently, not a part of the collective sense making. If more symbols are handed out, the possibility for them to be realised into the organisation is greater. The management can use storytelling as a way of forming a collective organisational culture (Boyce, 1995). Values that were highly emphasised by the management during the interviews, such as social responsibility, are imbued in the organisational culture by the office employees but not fully by the production workers, it is clear that there is a difference in the level of absorbed artifacts between the angels. The artifacts are there, by the means of the books, but we do not believe that all employees have thus far turned them into values (Hatch, 1993). Employee C stressed that he finds the message rather forced, which could be an indication that he is not able to relate to the stories, which in turn makes it hard to fill them with meaning (Gabriel, 2000). Since all employees are playing a vital role in brand management, it is crucial for SIA Glass to encourage a strong organisational culture where all employees are devoted to the internal

brand. By the means of storytelling, SIA Glass must try to make the production workers understand their role in relation to the brand and their importance for the success of SIA Glass (King and Grace, 2005).

External marketing should always start from within and intraorganisational relationships are essential since they would, for SIA Glass, work as a competitive advantage (Gummesson, 2008). If SIA Glass succeeds in spreading the stories to all employees, and not only to those that work with external contacts, motivation and team spirit will flourish within the organisation (Fog *et al.*, 2005; Axenbrant and Dennisdotter, 2008). One way to improve the inadequate collective centring that exists in the factory could be by selecting key persons in the ice cream factory who would act as messengers and communicate the organisational stories on a daily basis (Boyce, 1995; Denning, 2004). ‘Ordinary’ workers as storytellers can possibly even be considered as more reliable than the Stenström family members. The tradition of storytelling is evidently already present within the ice cream factory, what is needed is only the accurate message sent from the management.

The second reason for the somewhat shattered organisational culture may have to do with the fact that some employees easier can identify with the corporate identity of SIA Glass. A great number of the employees, both in the office and the factory, have worked there for several years. They have to some extent grown up with the family business and the Stenström family and consequently, can virtually be viewed as family members. The long term employees, in conjunction with the office employees, feel a stronger degree of organisational identification than the general production workers. It is possible that the old-timers, just like employee A, even feel as they are a part of the stories³⁹ (Lievens *et al.*, 2007). More emphasis on internal branding activities by means of storytelling as an internal marketing tool would help the management to increase the level of identification among the production workers (Bergstrom *et al.*, 2002).

The management has to adapt the storytelling to the workers to make all employees identify with the company. A suitable strategy would be to have historical company and family photographs displayed on the walls in the factory or the staff coffee room. Like storytelling, the photographs will encourage the production workers to be aware of the importance and value of their job (Ashforth and Mael 1989). This could enhance employee partaking,

³⁹ What is noteworthy is that the old-timers have experienced the stories themselves, rather than been exposed to them in the management communication, which we believe influence their perspective of the organisation.

motivation and their sense of belonging (Gabriel, 2000; Seely Brown *et al.*, 2005). Smiths *et al.* (2001) further state that partaking can enhance a positive communication climate. It might be difficult for production workers to identify with the heroic stories, where family members are described as very driven and powerful people. This could be a reason why the production workers are somewhat indifferent to the stories; to protect themselves from feeling inferior. Hence, by connecting the family to the everyday worker the management can encourage employees' feelings of being part of the family.

5.3.3 Controlling through storytelling

The management at SIA Glass clearly wants to spread the strong emotional feelings that they have regarding the company to the employees. In their storytelling, the management highlights the fact that they are a family-owned company, in order to enable the employees to feel as a part of the family. They aspire to create an internal feeling of belonging and a strong organisational culture. In other words, they are trying to steer the organisational culture and organisational behaviour by communicating the importance of the family. Making the employees feel as a part of the family will ensure that they feel responsible for nurturing and passing down the heritage to the next generation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Lievens *et al.*, 2007).

By using a great deal of symbolism and powerful words in the storytelling, we believe that the management is seeking to control their employees and to encourage them to act as the heroic characters in the stories (Boyce, 1995; 1996). However, in order to entirely succeed with controlling the employees, the management of SIA Glass has to work on how their message is perceived since all angels do not perceive the message as the senders intend it today (Unzicker *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, from the narrative analysis we notice how the owners through generations have been skilled in controlling the organisation. Employees have been made into family members and Per Stenström and other key characters have been, and still are, acting as parents. Theory explains this as humanising the organisation in order to form guilt or responsibility towards the workplace (Gabriel, 2000).

Furthermore, the SIA Glass management has to recognise all employees as internal customers in order to achieve a strong culture and, in turn, form a strong corporate brand where all employees are devoted to the branding process and act accordingly to the core values (King and Grace, 2005, Khanyapuss *et al.*, 2009). Organisational stories must be told in a way that is relevant to each and every employee in order to have full control of their behaviours. The

executives of SIA Glass must make the production workers perceive the significance of the brand and ensure that they feel important to the organisation (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).

As stressed by Gabriel (2000), factory work can become rather monotonous at times, and the workers might feel rather controlled and that they have no power of influencing the organisation. Stories can then be used in order to form organisational perceptions and encourage motivation and commitment to the production workers. On the basis on the theory by Berry and Parasuraman (1992), we believe that stories about the family can create a team spirit. This spirit will help the management to exert control over the behaviour of their entire workforce. In the case of SIA Glass, as in any other company, it is important to remember that the production workers are vital part-time marketers. If the production labourers received more exposure to the storytelling, they would strengthen the company's external marketing and contribute to a positive reputation (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Grönroos, 1994). The majority of the employees live in Slöinge and, as in most small villages, word gets around quickly. If the employees spread negative publicity, SIA Glass may lose the whole identity that they attempt to build their corporate brand upon. This would further ruin the collective sense making and culture that the internal organisation is based on.

A way to make the production workers more committed could be to introduce the stories to them when they first start working at SIA Glass, to make the production workers feel as part of the family (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Boyce, 1995). If the management of SIA Glass develops a storytelling system that reaches all organisational members, an even stronger team spirit can be shaped (Baruch, 2009). As a result, psychological contacts will be formed, which the management can use in order to steer the angels and make them act according to their interests and nurture the core values of SIA Glass, which will form a stronger organisational culture (Grönroos, 2007). By succeeding in controlling the employees' behaviour, SIA Glass can enhance the brand's advertised values. A failure in doing this can, on the other hand, damage the trustworthiness of the values, hence, the essence of SIA Glass which is honest, simple, natural and Swedish (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).

What is more, even though there is a feeling of 'us' and 'them', we would like to highlight the fact that we got the impression that there is great pride among the employees at SIA Glass. We believe that, among the office employees as well as old-timers, this pride comes from feeling one with the company and its core values. With reference to the younger production workers, we believe that the pride is primarily based on the fact that SIA Glass is well-known

and has a good reputation among external stakeholders rather than on identification with the family business and the Stenström family (Lievens *et al.*, 2007). We further believe that storytelling can strengthen this pride and turn it into feelings of social belonging.

5.3.2 The new generation

SIA Glass is eventually facing a change of generation; hence, we believe it to be of extra importance to insert the core values in the entire organisation. The management has to steer the employees' behaviour into a collective sense making in order to make sure that the angels extend the heritage to the next generation and to make the artifacts turn into values that are imbued among all employees. In the case of SIA Glass, the perceptions are consistent between the managerial members; both family members and non-family members, and they act in correlation with their history and values. It is now important to make sure that the next generation also continues working in the same spirit. The brand perception has to be coherent among all organisational members in order for the company, the values, the traditions and everything that has been built up during all these years not to fade away (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

Storytelling keeps historical stories alive, they shape the family identity and also the organisational identity (Kellas, 2005). Since it is up to the employees to make symbols into values, it is of high significance that all employees actually read and understand the books (Hatch, 1993). Among office employees and the old-timers, we can identify a collective sensemaking. Since the collective sensemaking already is present, the employees are acting in accordance with the management without the need for supervision. This could be the reason why the employees are able to influence the organisation and enjoy a large degree of freedom (*ibid*). We strongly believe that, if the production workers are also captured in the collective sense making, SIA Glass could succeed in passing on the heritage to the next generation.

As noted earlier, SIA Glass has to form their internal marketing to suit all their internal target groups (Gummesson, 2008). In order to ensure that the heritage is kept intact in the future, the communication to the production workers must be improved. In this way, all organisational members will feel accessorial, the collective sense making will be stronger and the identification among all employees will be enhanced. In addition, the stories should make them see something more valuable in their job than just the work tasks. All these factors will make them proudly share the stories with others (Fog *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, language is a powerful control weapon for the management and the SIA Glass books are possibly written in a language that is difficult for the production workers to identify with (Gabriel, 2008). A younger generation would possibly be easier to target if the language was younger. In order to steer the employees, the communication has to be comprehensible, hence, they need to understand what the management wants. During the interviews it came to our attention that the book SIA Glass (2009) was under reconstruction; a shorter version with less text and more pictures will be handed out to ice creameries. This version would possibly also be appropriate to hand out to the workers since it may be easier to get their attention with a less extensive book. What is noteworthy is that we believe it to be important for the management to improve their strategies about getting all employees aware of and interested in the stories. If they do not, there is a possibility that the heritage will come to an end and not be evident in the future.

5.3.4 The internal branding and storytelling at SIA Glass

The internal marketing of SIA Glass is based on personal relationships and the management clearly tries to make organisational individuals feel as they are a part of the history (Gummesson, 2008). Furthermore, according to theory, SIA Glass has shaped their storytelling in a proper manner; there are different combinations of stories. However, romantic stories, where the reader is faced with heroic and powerful characters such as heroes and saviours, are most frequent (Czarniawska, 2004). Success is a recurring subject together with feelings such as pride and care. What is more, symbols and metaphors are further used when dramatising, such as describing the employees as angels in SIA Glass (2007). Despite the fact that the Stenström family is influential to the degree that we have referred to them as the royal family and righteous kings in our narrative analysis, the employees interviewed stressed that the family has a great deal of self distance to the stories, which we believe to be important in order to be trustworthy storytellers.

As argued, despite the fact that the management works hard to steer the organisational culture by the means of storytelling, the management communication is inadequate. The flaw lies within the ice cream factory where the brand perceptions are rather torn which, in turn, has a negative effect on the internal brand and, consequently, on the external brand (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). SIA Glass needs to improve the way they communicate their stories, in order to strengthen the internal brand (Berry, 2002, Khanyapuss *et al.*, 2009). It is vital to work with the production workers perceptions and a jointly sense making and collective

culture between all organisational members is necessary. All angels must feel as one of the family and that they are significant for the righteous kings and for the kingdom (Berthon *et al.*, 2005). Finally in our analysis, in order to demonstrate the situation at SIA Glass, we have modified the model by Harris and de Chernatony (2001), demonstrating the relationship between internal brand resources and brand performance.

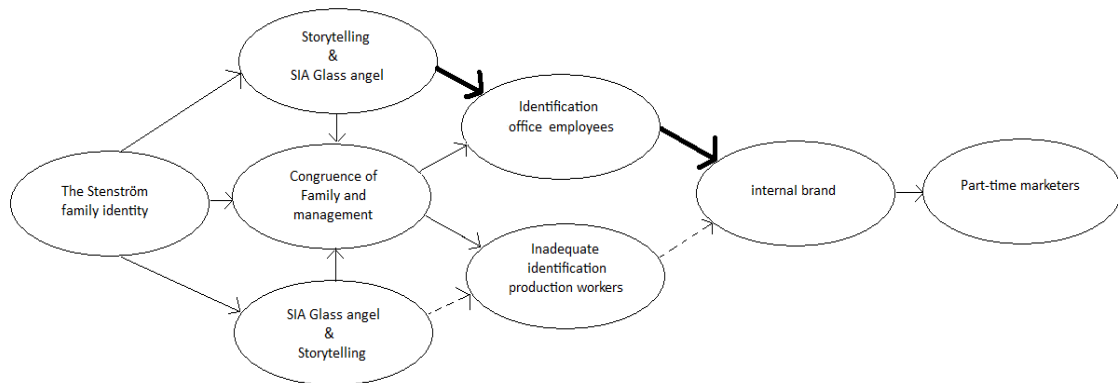


Figure 5:1; *The internal branding and storytelling at SIA Glass (Authors' revised model).*

The Stenström family's identity is, as demonstrated, the essence of the organisational stories as well as the SIA Glass angel, meaning the family business' values, at SIA Glass. As further shown, there is a clear congruence between the management, such as the external CEO and the family members, who acts accordingly to the identity of the Stenström family. Furthermore, the dotted and thick arrows in the model represent the lack of symbols and storytelling among the employees respectively the high amount of artifacts the employees in the office are supplied with. The lack of stories communicated from the management to the production workers forms the insufficient identification, which weakens the internal brand and reduces the force of part-time marketers. Today, the internal brand of SIA Glass is not as strong as we believe it could be since it is, in several respects, only shaped by employees from the office who are greatly exposed to the stories and, hence, take on the responsibility to act as part-time marketers. Accordingly, SIA Glass does not fully take advantage of their internal brand resources and, consequently, the brand performance is not as good as could be.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter the conclusion from our study will be presented in form of our model called 'Storytelling and internal branding within a family business context', which is an extension of the model by Harris and de Chernatony (2001). We regard this model as our contribution to corporate brand identity and internal branding literature. In addition, we will give some suggestions for future research.

6.1 Storytelling and internal branding within a family business context

In this study about organisational storytelling in a family business setting, we have investigated SIA Glass and how stories about the family business' unique history and core values are used in the management communication and what influence they have on the internal stakeholders and, in turn, the corporate brand identity. As stressed, family businesses have a unique advantage due to the fact that a family is linked to the company. Storytelling is one way to humanise the organisation, by telling stories about the family history and by trying to make the employees feel as part of a particular family. In this way, the management can create strong emotional bonds between the employees and the company, similar bonds that the family members themselves have to the organisation.

From our study, it could be argued that SIA Glass, as other companies alike, needs to capture all organisational members in order to have a successful management communication and, in turn, form a strong internal brand. We have found that a strong internal brand requires a strong feeling of identification among all employees and a coherent organisational culture. Family-owned companies should thereby give significantly more emphasis to organisational stories that are derived from the family business origin, history and special traditions since this kind of organisational storytelling can spread emotional values among employees. The study shows that, these emotional values can help the management to steer employees to a collective sense making, which forms a stronger corporate brand identity and, in turn, strengthens the company's part-time marketers. Hence, SIA Glass which we consider being a role model regarding the practice of organisational storytelling, and other family businesses, should emphasise on internally communicating their family history and values to all organisational members. In order to demonstrate how internal brands can be strengthened we

have created the model *Storytelling and internal branding within a family business context* which is a modification of the model by Harris and de Chernatony (2001).

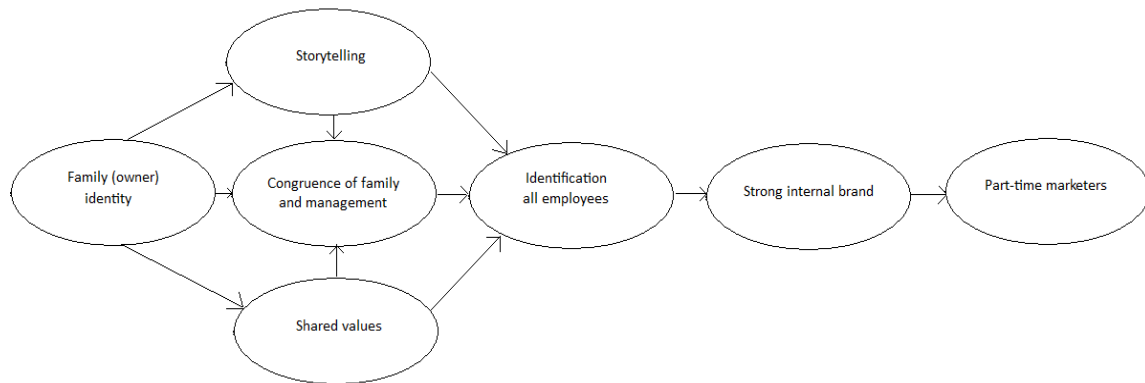


Figure 6:1; *Storytelling and internal branding within a family business context* (Authors' revised model)

The first circle in the model represents the family identity which is the identity the company is based upon. The family identity should internally be communicated to the corporate management in order to share organisational values based on family history and traditions. It is important to remember that the management may include both family members and non-family members and there must be congruence among the management concerning the organisational culture in order to deliver the correct message to the employees. The management should, in turn, communicate the coherent organisational values through storytelling to all employees. For a strong corporate brand identity to be formed the management perception of the organisational culture must be coherent with the employees' organisational culture. Consequently, the circle 'identification all employees' will be evident if a congruent management team communicates a message through storytelling that is received the way it was intended to. The result is a collective and joint organisational culture. Given that all employees can identify themselves with the company and that they have a feeling of belonging, a strong internal brand will be shaped, which, in turn, will lead to good part-time marketers.

6.2 Future Research

In this study we have examined the internal aspects of organisational storytelling as a management tool. For future research we suggest that studies should be conducted on external aspects. What are the customers' perceptions of a family business' storytelling? We recommend investigations into how the internal brand affects the external brand, in other words, how organisational storytelling affects the corporate brand identity and, in turn, the external brand and the corporate brand image.

Furthermore, future research could involve interviewing a greater number of employees at SIA Glass, to attain an even better understanding of how storytelling can strengthen the corporate brand identity and to gain a deeper insight of the employees' perceptions of the management's storytelling. It would further be interesting to conduct a case study, using more companies than just SIA Glass. A proposal is to carry out an investigation where a comparison between several family-owned companies is possible.

As stressed, organisational storytelling can work very well in order to create a familiar atmosphere and spirit. We therefore suggest that future researchers could investigate if our model is consistent, by investigating other family owned-companies as well as nonfamily-owned companies and examine if it is possible to spread similar emotional values by the means of storytelling in these companies as well in order to create a strong internal brand and corporate brand identity.

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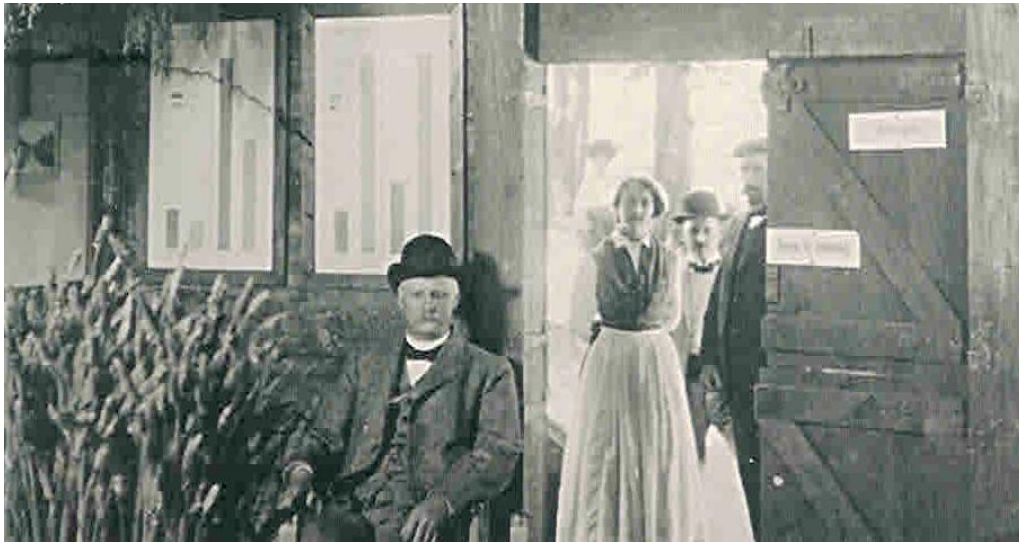
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Appendix 1: Photographs from the storytelling of SIA Glass



Photograph 1: *Georg Stenström – the role model for the caring for the employees and the community that has always been evident in the Stenström family (SIA Glass, 2009).*



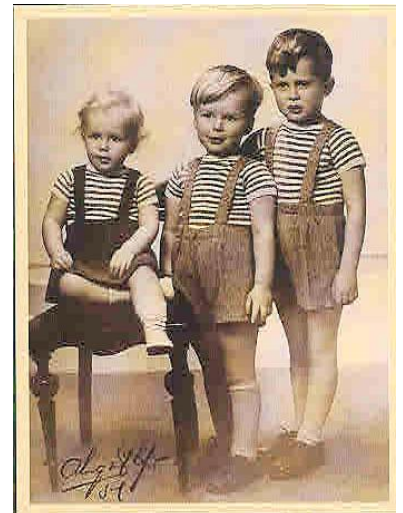
Photograph 2: *The old butchery that turned into an ice cream factory in 1961 (SIA Glass, 2009).*

Family matters!

How storytelling can be used in the management communication in family-owned companies



Photograph 3: *The Stenström family in 1898 during a coffee break at Berte Gård (SIA Glass, 1994).*



Photograph 4 (left): *11th generation of the Stenström family; Anna, Georg and Anders Kristofer.*

Photograph 5 (middle): *12th generation; Nils, Bengt and Olof.*

Photograph 6 (right): *13th generation; Anna-Karin, Per and Anders (SIA Glass, 1994).*



Photograph 7: *Berte Gård in 1931 (SIA Glass, 2009).*



Photograph 8: *Georg Stenström with four of his sons (SIA Glass, 2009).*

Appendix 2: Interview guides

Interview guide to Stenström family members and CEO

General questions

- All: Could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself and your background?
- All: Are you born and raised here in Slöinge?
- All: Could you describe the company and your role in it?
- All: What are the characteristics for a family business would you say?
- All: Do you believe that there are any advantages and disadvantages of being a family business compared to a nonfamily business?
- Family members: Have you always wanted to work here or in any of the other companies within Bertegruppen?
- Family members: Would you like to tell us a bit about your relationship with SIA Glass and the entire family business when you were younger?
- Family membes: How do you believe it has affected your upbringing and yourself to be a part of a family business?
- CEO: You are the first external CEO of SIA Glass. How does this make you feel?
- CEO: What is your relationship with the Stenström family?

Internal marketing/management communication

- All: How would you say that you work with internal marketing at SIA Glass?
- All: Can you please tell us a little bit about the core values of SIA Glass?
- All: Do you communicate these values to your employees? In what way?
- All: Can you tell us a bit about the SIA Glass guardian angel? What does the angel represent? And is there a connection between the guardian angel and the project/book called Du är en ängel? How much do you emphasize the book in the communication with your employees?
- All: Can you tell us a bit about the management communication here at SIA Glass? How do you work with this?

Organisational storytelling

- All: Could you give us any examples of stories that exist within SIA Glass? And where do these stories come from?
- CEO: As an external CEO within the family business, how did you experience your first meeting with SIA Glass and the rest of the family business and did you get the opportunity to take part of the stories?
- All: Do you believe that all of the employees are familiar with these stories?
- All: For instance, do you think that the employees know who Georg Stenström is?
- All: Overall, do you often hear coworkers telling stories for one another in the corridors or in the staff coffee room? What are these stories about?
- All: From a management perspective, do you use stories about the family business and its history in your internal communication? Or do you use other types of stories?
- All: Would you like to tell us a bit about the book Glass på svenska?
- All: How do you believe that this book is perceived by the employees?
- All: When you recrute new employees, do you find it important to make sure that they take part of the stories and anecdotes of the family business? Do you communicate this actively?
- All: Do you spread other stories within the company; stories that are not about the family's and the family business' history?
- All: Do you use the stories about your family's and the family business' history in order to progress the company and express your visions and goals?

Organisational culture and identity

- All: How would you describe the *Stenströmska företagskulturen*? Do you believe there is a family spirit within the organisation?
- All: Do you see a correlation between the organisational stories and the culture at SIA Glass?
- All: Tell us a bit about the identity of SIA Glass!
- All: Do you feel that the Stenström family's identity imbues the organisational identity of SIA Glass?
- All: Do you find it important to communicate the Stenström family identity to your employees?
- All: How does it affect SIA Glass that the company is located here in Slöinge? What affects does this have on the organisational identity?
- All: Do you experience that the employees share the same image of the family business' identity?
- All: How do you think the employees are affected by working in a family business? Do you believe that there is any difference between new employees and old servants?
- All: Do you believe that the organisational stories have an affect on the identity of SIA Glass?

Corporate brand identity

- All: Do you use the same communication externally as internally regarding your storytelling? Are the same stories communicated to both these groups of stakeholders?
- All: Do you consider that the employees have any responsibility to talk about SIA Glass outside of the company?
- All: Do you believe that your specific organisational culture and identity affect your relations with the external stakeholders? Do you find this to be a competitive advantage?
- All: According to you, what is SIA Glass?

Interview guide to employees

General questions

- Could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself?
- Are you born and raised here in Slöinge?
- What does Slöinge mean to you?
- When did you come to SIA Glass for the first time?
- Did you have any connection with the family business before coming here?
- Why did you start working for SIA Glass?
- How well do you know the other companies in the corporate group?
- How would you describe an ordinary day at work?
- Do you believe that there are any specific characteristics for a family-owned company? And in that case which?
- Do you believe that there may be any differences between working for a family-owned company versus a nonfamily-owned company?
- What kind of relationship do you have with the Stenström family?
- Have you been to Berte museum?

Internal marketing/management communication

- Tell us a little bit about the guardian angel and the core values of SIA Glass!
- How are these values communicated to you as employee?

- Do you think that you have the possibility to take part of what happens in the organisation?
- Have you taken part of the book *Du är en ängel*? Could you tell us a bit about what it is about?
- How do you think that the management communication functions at SIA Glass?
- Do you talk much about your workplace with people outside of the company? What do you say then?

Organisational storytelling

- Could you share with us your favourite story about the family business? What makes this your favourite?
- Could you tell us a bit more about the history of SIA Glass?
- Do you know when SIA Glass was founded?
- Do you know who Georg Stenström is? Tell us a bit about him!
- Are you familiar with other people that are related to the history of SIA Glass?
- What do you and your colleagues talk about?
- Are stories about SIA Glass told every now and then? What are they about and who tells these stories?
- How do you feel when you hear these stories about the history of SIA Glass? (Happy/bored/indifferent/engaged etc.)
- What do you think about the other employees? How do you think they feel?
- Have you taken part of the book *Glass på svenska*? Could you tell us a little bit what this book is about?
- How much did they tell you about the history of SIA Glass and the core values when you first started here?

Organisational culture and identity/identification

- In the book *Glass på svenska*, we can read somewhat about “den Stenströmska företagskulturen” (the organisational culture of the Stenström family business). Could you describe this organisational culture? Do you experience any special family spirit at SIA Glass?
- Do you believe that the stories about the family business and its history somehow affect the organisational culture? In what way (belonging/fellowship/motivation etc.)?
- Could you tell us a bit about the organisational identity of SIA Glass?
- Do you believe that the stories about the family business have, to a certain extent, formed a specific identity here?
- Do you feel that the identity of the Stenström family imbues the identity of the organisation? How?
- Do you believe that the community of Slöinge affects the SIA Glass identity? How?
- According to you, what is SIA Glass?