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“My Heart Belongs To Telenor”

A Case Study of the Employee Branding Process

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ABSTRACT

- Title:** “My Heart Belongs to Telenor” - A Case Study of the Employee Branding Process
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- Authors:** Caroline Isaksson and Daniel Isaksson
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- Keywords:** Employee Branding, Employee Perspective, Influential Factors, Employee Branding Process, Brand Promise, Brand-Supporting Attitudes
- Thesis Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to contribute to theories of employee branding. The aim is specifically to explore the employee perspective of the employee branding process, as well as the factors influencing the result. The purpose is also to contribute to increased understanding of the entire employee branding process. We further hope to contribute with guiding practical implications for managers to keep in mind when engaging in employee branding to avoid failures.
- Methodology:** The study has an explorative nature and is based on a social constructionist and interpretive view of the employee branding process. To fulfill the purpose, a qualitative case study was conducted. Primary data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews.
- Theoretical Perspective:** Theories on employee branding, and on identification, commitment and loyalty, as well as on potential factors influencing the employee branding process have been examined to construct a theoretical framework for the study.
- Empirical Foundation:** Primary data was gathered through 13 semi-structured interviews of about one hour’s length with management and store employees at Telenor.
- Conclusions:** When seeing employee branding as an entire process, understanding of the employee perspective and the influential factors can be gained. Four dimensions related to the employee branding process is found to have great impact on employees’ perceptions and processing of employee branding means: Aligning means to the brand promise, employees’ emotional attachment to the organization, the closest manager and if employee branding can contribute to fulfillment of employees’ personal goals.

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DEFINITIONS

Brand Promise:	A company's communicated values, visions, and mission. These add up to a promise that the customer can expect to be fulfilled when coming into contact with the brand
Employee Branding:	The means aimed to engage employees to form attitudes and behaviors, which deliver the brand promise
Employee Branding Process:	The means aimed to engage employees to form attitudes and behaviors, which deliver the brand promise and how these means are perceived by employees and subsequently processed into identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand
Influential Factors:	Factors that can influence the employee branding process and its results
Brand-Supporting Attitudes:	Identification, commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline the background to the study and subsequently define the purpose and the research question. First, a background to our research will be presented. Second, lack of research will be discussed. Third, the purpose of the study will be outlined. Fourth, the research question of this thesis will be defined followed by a presentation of the case company. Finally the Employee Branding Process Model will be presented.

BACKGROUND

In an increasingly competitive context, with higher pressure from e-commerce and other sales channels, there is a prominent need for retailers to differentiate themselves to attract customers. With product offers becoming more and more similar in terms of performance and price, the brand offer a possibility for companies to distinguish themselves among competition (e.g. Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Melin, 2002; Miles & Mangold, 2004). Employees have become an important factor to achieve unique points-of-difference that can distinguish the brand (e.g. Kotler & Keller, 2012; Miles & Mangold, 2004).

Employees are often the outward face of the organization, whereby they personify and communicate the brand (Henkel, Heitmann, Hermann, & Tomczak, 2007). This is especially prominent within the retail sector, where the employees are the main points-of-contact between the organization and customers and where the customer experience is linked to and dependent upon encounters with employees (Zentes, Morschett, & Schramm-Klein, 2011:180). A brand that is differentiated through the employees can thus become a unique competitive advantage for the organization, which is difficult for others to copy (Mosley, 2007). Therefore, it is important to engage employees with the brand (e.g. Ind, 2007), a practice often referred to as *employee branding*. By doing this, companies strive to make employees internalize the brand promise and the organizational visions and values into their attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Boyd & Sutherland, 2006), so that they can project this to customers by living the brand (Mitchell, 2002).

The phenomenon where organizations engage employees to internalize the brand promise are besides Employee Branding (e.g. Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Miles & Mangold, 2004) often described in terms such as Internal Marketing (e.g. Dunne & Barnes, 2000; Kotler, Wong, Saunders, & Armstrong, 2005) and Internal Branding (e.g. Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Raj & Jyothi, 2011). To avoid confusion, only employee branding will be used in this thesis and it is defined as *the means aimed to engage employees to form attitudes and behaviors, which deliver the brand promise*.

Several scholars (e.g. Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Harquail, 2004; Henkel et al. 2007; Miles & Mangold, 2004) have stressed how efforts of employee branding may result in employees' internalization of the brand promise, which in turn can lead to employee satisfaction, customer retention and positive business results. Kotler et al. (2005:635), have further argued that employee branding, such as investing 'heavily in employee quality and performance', is more important than practices of external marketing to prevent that the organization heads in a different direction than the externally communicated brand promise. Urde (2009) supports this in arguing that promises given but not lived up to at point-of-contact, for example between customer and employee, will risk harming the customer relationship, thus supporting the importance of employee branding.

There are companies with seemingly organization-wide commitment to the brand promise, such as Apple or Nike, which can be assumed to engage in employee branding activities such as communicating values and visions internally. However, Ind (2007:105) has argued that many companies do not live up to their brand values and statements, and has further emphasized the use of employee branding to transform organizations to bring the brand alive among employees. On the other hand, Kotter (2007) has argued that many attempts to transform organizations are unsuccessful, for example because management fails to inspire change among employees. Given this contradiction, to successfully transform an organization towards delivery of brand promise, there is a need for managers to understand what can make employees form brand-supporting attitudes.

Punjaisri, Wilson, and Evanschitzky (2008) have argued that brand-supporting attitudes can be indicated in employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand. The retail sector is represented by high employee turnover (Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2009), which could be assumed to be a result of absence of such brand-supporting attitudes. By engaging in successful employee branding, employee identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand can be created. Through employee branding, retailers may thus lower the employee turnover *and* achieve a competitive advantage in employees portraying brand-supporting attitudes towards customers.

IDENTIFYING A LACK OF RESEARCH

When studying the concept of employee branding, attention was quickly drawn to the fact that employee branding mainly is discussed and studied from the management perspective (Punjaisri et al. 2009). Studies thus generally focus on the means and ends of employee branding, i.e. how management should engage in employee branding and what favorable outcomes there will be (e.g. Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Marshall & Mayer, 2012; Morsing, 2006). However, the employees are the targets of employee branding and it could therefore be concluded that their perceptions and processing of the employee branding means are crucial to the eventual outcome. The success of employee branding can therefore be said to be dependent upon how employees perceive the employee branding means and if they subsequently process it into brand supporting attitudes, such as identification, commitment and

loyalty to the brand. Therefore, beside the management perspective, there is also an equally important employee perspective of employee branding. There are however only a few studies focusing on this perspective (e.g. King & Grace, 2008; Pappasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Punjaisri et al. 2008).

The two perspectives of management and employees, namely how organizations engage in employee branding and how employees perceive and process it, together creates the concept and definition of the employee branding process:

The means aimed to engage employees to form attitudes and behaviors, which deliver the brand promise and how these means are perceived by employees and subsequently processed into identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand

This definition is based on and inspired by the works of several prominent scholars in the area of Employee Branding (e.g. Henkel et al. 2007; King & Grace, 2008; Miles & Mangold, 2004; Mosley, 2007; Ind, 2007; Punjaisri et al. 2008).

The employee branding process is not isolated from influence and hence, the success of employee branding and employee's identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand might be dependent upon other influential factors. Punjaisri et al. (2008) have listed the employee's age, level of education and tenure in the company, as factors that can influence the result of employee branding. Other scholars have pointed out clarity in brand promise (Burmah & Zeplin, 2005), the psychological contract between the employee and the employer (Miles & Mangold, 2004), and making employee branding a key objective (Boyd & Sutherland, 2006), as also influencing the result. Only a few studies have however examined how these factors might affect the employee branding process as a whole.

Similarly, Panigyrakis and Theodoridis (2009) have also stressed the lack of empirically described examples of employee branding in a retail context. As described in the background, employee branding could be of high importance in the retail sector, which has been confirmed in a few studies (e.g. Bäckström & Johansson, 2006). The employee perspective of the employee branding process is however also fairly unexplored within a retail context.

Based on the reasoning above and in the background, the employee branding process in its entirety was deemed relevant for further study with a main focus on: I. The employee perspective and, II. The influencing factors. As employee branding has been emphasized as particularly important within the *retail sector*, where customers meeting employees face-to-face is part of the core business, we aimed to conduct the study within this sector.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to contribute to theories of employee branding. The aim is specifically to explore the employee perspective of the employee branding process, as well as the factors influencing the result. The purpose is also to contribute to increased understanding of the entire employee branding process. We further hope to contribute with guiding practical implications for managers to keep in mind when engaging in employee branding to avoid failures.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the described background and thesis purpose, the guiding question for our empirical investigation is:

How are means of employee branding perceived by employees and subsequently processed into identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, and which factors can influence the result?

THE CASE OF TELENOR SVERIGE AB

Guided by the research question, a case study was conducted on Telenor Sverige AB. The Telenor Group, based in Norway, is one of the world's biggest network operators, employing more than 32 000 with a yearly turnover of approximately 95 billion NOK. Its Swedish branch, Telenor Sverige AB, employs approximately 2200 with a yearly turnover of approximately 11 billion SEK. Telenor Sverige AB, one of Sweden's biggest mobile network operators, operates 75 retail stores all over Sweden, employing around 500 salespeople. The Telenor Group expresses their brand as built around people, focusing on benefiting people's lives, and further has clearly stated values, vision and mission, thus making Telenor an interesting case of employee branding research within a retail context. (Telenor.se; Telenor.com).

THE EMPLOYEE BRANDING PROCESS MODEL

Inspired by the works of several prominent employee branding scholars (e.g. Miles & Mangold, 2004; Punjaisri et al. 2008), as well as the definition of the employee branding process, the following model was developed to guide the research:

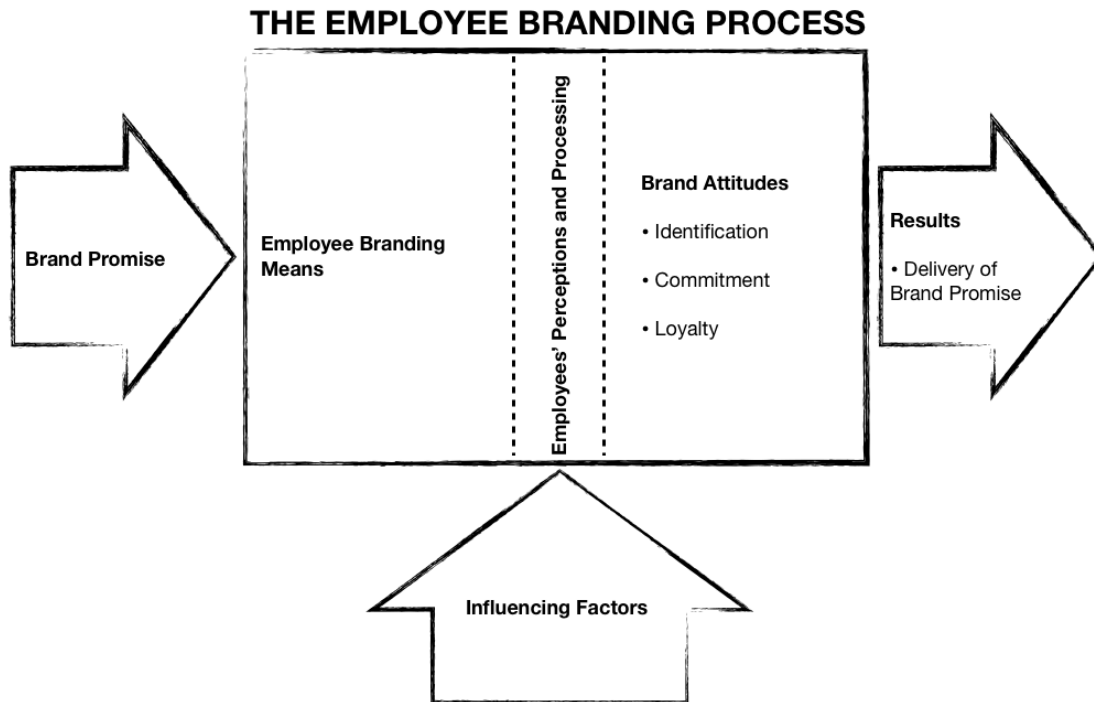


Fig. 1 The Employee Branding Process Model. *(Own model)*

Chapter 2 Method and Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to present our ontological and epistemological considerations relevant for this thesis. Our chosen method and procedure will be based on these considerations and will be thoroughly outlined in our research strategy, research design, collection of empirical data and our analysis process. Finally, the study's limitations will be discussed.

ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ontological perspectives result in assumptions about the nature of reality, i.e. whether reality is perceived as objectively true or as a social construction (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, et al. 2008:58). We are inspired by social constructionism since we believe that the employee branding process is socially constructed by the parties involved, and further is influenced by factors specific to the context. Bryman and Bell (2011:20) argue that ontological and epistemological considerations cannot be separated in the study of businesses, as the ontological approach defines both research questions 'what is knowledge' and research itself 'searching for knowledge'. Thus, our ontological perspective will affect our epistemological standpoint. How the world and reality is perceived, affect how we perceive knowledge, i.e. if knowledge is discovered or invented (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008:63). Drawing on our ontological considerations we are inspired by an interpretive approach and thus believe that the employee branding process is a social construct that is subjectively interpreted. We also believe that employees' perception of employee branding means, and further their identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, is subjectively understood, interpreted and made meaning of by both participants in the study and by us. These assumptions affected which methods we adopted and how the research and analysis was conducted.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The chosen method should as far as possible be aligned to the research purpose (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008:68). We considered a quantitative approach but found it unsuitable due to difficulties to capture the cognitive and emotional character of our research question, which is to research how employee branding means are perceived and further processed into identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, and which factors can influence the result.

A qualitative study guided by the research question was therefore conducted to help us fulfill the thesis purpose. By choosing a qualitative mode of inquiry, we also recognized our aim to explore the employee perspective of the employee branding process. We furthermore wanted to explore how these perceptions and meanings affected employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, as well as to explore the factors influencing the employee branding process. To be able to do this, we also had to examine the employee branding means.

We emphasized aspects of both an inductive and a deductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011:11) to theory. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:17) describe this as an abductive approach where the researchers move between theory and empiricism. This abductive approach guided the construction of the theoretical framework and the analysis of the empirical material.

We further considered the employee branding means' impact on employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, to be a subjective construction that we aimed to interpret. This interpretive approach guided our strategy when interpreting and analyzing the empirical material, which was conducted in a hermeneutic manner.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We conducted an explorative research study. Due to the lack of theory and empirical research on employee branding from the employee perspective (Punjaisri et al. 2008), we aimed to explore and capture employee branding as a process, focusing on the employee perspective and factors that might influence the result. When conducting explorative research, a case study is best suited (Yin, 2009:9-11). This is also preferred when the aim is to study contemporary events through observations and interviews with people directly involved in the events. Therefore, a case study was deemed suitable for the purpose and research question in this study.

When searching for a representative case company (Bryman & Bell, 2011:62) to study, a case that could exemplify the employee branding process in the context of a retail organization was looked for. Telenor Sverige AB was chosen due to their engagement in employee branding and their characteristic of being both a service and a retail company where store employees encounter customers face-to-face. This made the study of the employee branding process in this particular case relevant, since many scholars point to the importance of successful employee branding in the sectors of service and retail (e.g. Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009; Zentes et al. 2011:180). We however focused our study on Telenor Sverige AB's retail stores to draw boundaries for our research. Restrained by time and to be able to provide a rich and detailed picture of the employee branding process within a retail context, the study was limited to one case.

To examine employee branding means, to explore how employees perceive and process the means, as well as to explore influencing factors, in-depth interviews of one hour each were

conducted. The intention was to probe employees' personal experiences (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008:144), perceptions and meanings of the employee branding means and how these further could be processed into identification, commitment and loyalty. Employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise imply cognitive and emotional dimensions, which may be difficult to measure. The aim was however *not to measure* employees' identification, commitment or loyalty, but rather to qualitatively *evaluate* signs and indications, as well as the extent of such attitudes among employees.

The interviews were semi-structured and revolved around themes rather than structured questions. The intention was to remain open to changes and alterations during the course of the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011:248), and to be able to capture opportunities given when the interviewees touched upon subjects and situations that were found interesting and relevant. The interviewees were the initiators of employee branding at Telenor Sverige AB and their store employees, which can be seen as the recipients of the means.

In addition, secondary data such as Telenor's websites and corporate material was studied to build a perception of the company's brand promise, which subsequently helped us when formulating the interview guide and questions.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Sampling Respondents

The aim with the research was to explore the employee perspective and the influential factors of the employee branding process. To be able to do this, interview respondents from the employee perspective had to be carefully selected. To examine the employee branding means, interviewees from the management perspective also had to be selected. Jacobsen (2002:200) emphasizes that interviewees can be selected according to whom the researchers deem as representative for the typical unit of study. With this in mind, a Telenor Manager responsible for all activities related to the retail stores assisted us. He helped us to come into contact with management interviewees that had been involved in employee branding means, and store employees that had been the recipients of the employee branding efforts.

We had thoroughly discussed the criteria set for choosing respondents, which is recommended by Jacobsen (2002:196). With criteria, such as position in company, field of business, age, tenure in company and gender, in mind, we picked respondents that could give us a full picture of how Telenor engage in employee branding. Five respondents from the management were chosen, namely the HR Partner for Sales (responsible for HR-issues related to store employees), the Head of Sales Education, the Head of Stores and finally two regional managers.

When selecting respondents from the employee perspective, the criteria used for selection were employees' age, gender, tenure and position in company. These criteria were inspired

by factors found in Punjaisri et al's (2008) study to affect employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand. The intention with these criteria was to study if the respondents' emotions and attitudes could differ depending on their age, gender, position, tenure in the company and which store they had worked in. We also selected respondents from different stores to prevent a certain store culture or jargon limiting the diversity of respondents' answers. From these criteria, two store managers, one male and one female, and six salespeople, five male and one female, were chosen from different stores in the south of Sweden. These eight respondents represented the employee perspective, with ages ranging from 21 to 29 and employment tenure from one and a half year to six years.

The number of respondents was selected due to our perception of what was deemed necessary (e.g. Kvale, 1996:102) to gain a rich picture of how Telenor engage in employee branding and how employees perceive and process the employee branding means. At the stage when the interviews had been conducted, the number of interviews deemed enough as a sense of saturation in the respondents' answers was reached.

Collecting Primary Data

Kvale (1996:126) emphasizes advanced preparation before conducting an interview. We prepared ourselves by constructing open questions put into themes. Themes for management interviews were corporate values, spread of values, employee branding means, the employee perspective and possible influential factors. Themes for the store employee interviews were Telenor's corporate values, spread of values, employee branding means and identification, commitment and loyalty. These themes were drawn from our pre-understanding of the employee branding process obtained through the study of existing theories on employee branding, as well as theories on identification, commitment and loyalty. By having the interviews revolve around themes rather than straightforward questions, the aim was to avoid putting words in respondents' mouths, and instead let them put own words on their meanings.

Easterby-Smith et al.'s (2008:150) emphasize the importance of choosing the right location when interviewing. We tried to select locations where the respondents would feel secure and where they could talk freely without being interrupted and overheard by colleagues. Obtaining trust is another parameter both Kvale (1996:125) and Easterby-Smith et al. (2008:149) deem relevant. By explaining our roles and the interview purpose of studying a phenomenon, we hoped that the interviewees would perceive us as trustworthy and reliable. By further emphasizing and assuring that employee interviewees would be anonymous, and that management would only be referred to as their titles in the company, we hoped to secure that they would answer the questions honestly.

To examine the employee branding means at Telenor we interviewed management. We tried to elicit if they perceived the means as successful and how they perceived the employee perspective. We also wanted to inquire into factors influencing the employee branding process and examine if there was awareness of these possible factors. To examine the employee perspective of the employee branding process, we interviewed store employees. We tried to

elicit personal experiences and perceptions of the employee branding means. We also tried to capture employees' attitudes, feelings and emotions concerning the organization and the brand and how they further process it into identification, commitment and loyalty to deliver on the brand promise.

Open questions were posed using a laddering technique (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008:146) where the interviewees were constantly asked to exemplify and clarify what they had said. This provided rich and descriptive answers. To try to secure that our pre-understandings of the employee branding process had not guided the interviews in directions where important answers would be missed, the interviews were finished by asking if the interviewees had any questions and if they had anything to add. All interviews were further recorded, which is recommended by Bryman and Bell (2011:482).

Collecting Secondary Data

To gain insights in and knowledge of Telenor's brand promise we studied Telenor's corporate websites and advertisement. By doing this, a clear picture was gained of Telenor's vision, mission and corporate values, i.e. their brand promise. When gathering theories for the theoretical framework library databases were searched using key words such as employee branding, internal marketing, retail, identification, commitment, loyalty and more.

Analysis of Empirical Material

To fully capture interviewees' subjective attitudes, feelings and emotions, put in their own words the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcribing verbatim helped to avoid and minimize our own pre-understandings' and meanings' influence on the initial processing and interpretations of the empirical material.

When analyzing and interpreting the empirical material, a hermeneutical circle was emphasized (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000:66). By applying a hermeneutical circle, parts of the empirical material, i.e. separate interviews, were related to the material as a whole, i.e. all interviews together, and vice versa. The specific context and culture were taken into account when examining the material by examining the interviewees' answers in relation to that the company studied operates in a sector characterized by a strong focus on selling and commission. We also took our and the interviewee's pre-understandings of the interview themes into account when examining the empirical material. For example, employees' pre-understanding of the intention of the study could affect the answers they chose to give us. When analyzing and interpreting interview accounts in relation to the context and the whole, as well as taking pre-understandings into account (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:66), a deeper understanding of the various parts of the employee branding process could be gained.

When analyzing the empirical material the transcripts were read thoroughly. Parts of the material related to the three overhead themes of employee branding means, employee attitudes and influential factors were color-coded. The data was then categorized according to the dif-

ferent parts of the employee branding process model by putting interview answers under appropriate subcategories to the overhead themes. As an example, the major employee branding means were identified and interviewee answers sorted according to these. Similarly, answers related to the three subcategories of identification, commitment and loyalty were sorted accordingly. Quotes that did not fit in to the subcategories but was found interesting were sorted into extra subcategories. During this process the research question was constantly kept in mind to keep our analysis aligned to the study's purpose and aim.

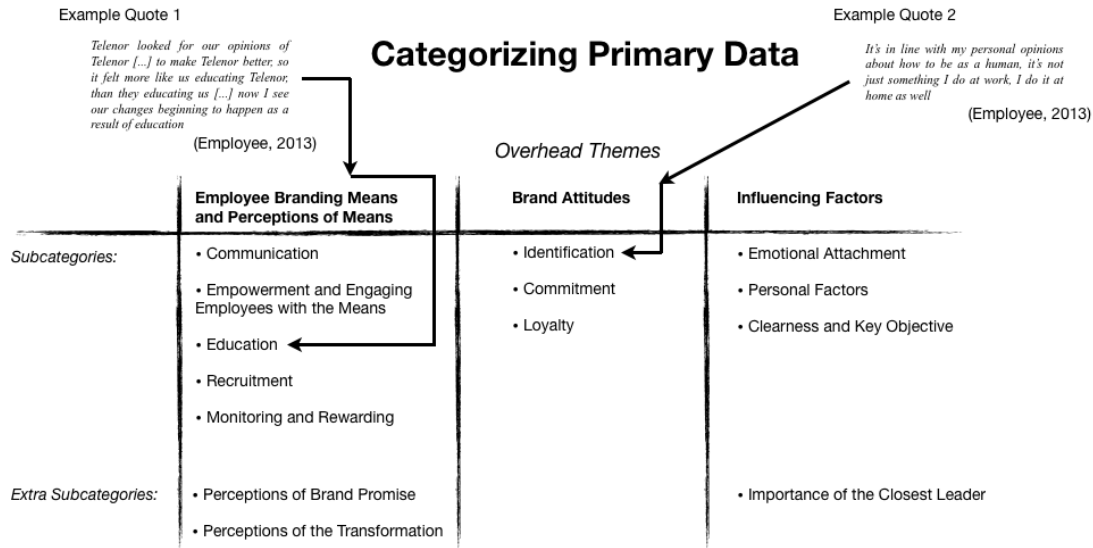


Fig. 2 Categorizing Primary Data. (Own model)

To be able to evaluate employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, we moved back and forth between the theoretical framework and the data to examine signs and indicators of identification, commitment and loyalty that we further could analyze and interpret in relation to the brand promise. Employees' identification to the organization was evaluated through indications of when employees' self-concept had similar characteristics as the organization. Identification was also evaluated through indications of employees feeling pride and belongingness to the company. Employee commitment was evaluated through signs and indications of their psychological attachment to the organization and the brand. Indications of employees' psychological attachment could be found in them expressing love to the company, wanting to see the company successful and actively work to improve the organization's reputation. Loyalty was evaluated through indications of employees' wanting to stay in the company and feeling the success of the company as their own.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish and the material was therefore analyzed and interpreted in that language. The quotes chosen for presentation of the empirical findings were freely translated and not word-by-word, as this would have made the quotes difficult to understand. In translating freely, the aim was a to recreate the feeling and meaning of the origi-

nal quote. Recommendations concerning anonymity of quotations are discussed by Bryman and Bell (2011:130), where they advocate anonymity to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. We wanted to put focus on if the quote belonged to the management or the employee perspective rather than which particular person had formulated it. Therefore, and also to make employees' quotations anonymous, these were only presented as stated by employees (e.g. Employee, 2013) or store managers (e.g. Store Manager, 2013). The management quotations were presented with the interviewee's title (e.g. Head of Stores, 2013) to draw on nuances from the management perspective. To use titles on the management quotations was approved by the management interviewees.

TRUSTWORTHINESS, BIAS AND REFLEXIVITY

Trustworthiness

Bryman and Bell (2011:395) emphasize that many scholars deem measures of validity and reliability as inappropriate for evaluating a qualitative study. They therefore present Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, which is built around trustworthiness, as an alternative framework for evaluating and assessing quality and credibility of a qualitative study. This framework has been applied, drawing on the study's credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility: To ensure credibility of the study all interviews were recorded. The management quotations were also sent back for review by the interviewee. As management is presented by their titles, this was needed to assure their solid stance for what was said during the interview. As for the store employees, whose opinions and statements are anonymously presented, the intention was to capture their spontaneous attitudes towards the company and perceptions of employee branding, which is why their quotations has not been sent back for review.

Transferability: Qualitative research and the specificity of case studies and small respondent samples can imply that the findings cannot be directly transferred to any other company engaging in employee branding. The study was only based on one case company, and this company operates in one specific part of the retail sector, namely the mobile network operator sector. This might hinder the transferability of our findings. We addressed this problem by describing details of the context and employee branding means to as large extent as possible, to give a rich picture of the research and facilitate transferability of this study's findings to other circumstances. Regarding employee respondents, the material is only based on respondents from three out of 75 Telenor stores in Sweden. We however do believe that the findings represent a good description of the employee perspective of the employee branding process. We further believe that the findings can be used by other companies, especially those active within the retail sector, as a guiding tool when engaging in employee branding.

Dependability: To address dependability of the study, records of all phases of primary data collection was kept and evaluated to ensure that intended research procedures was followed, as well as to ensure agreement on what was observed concerning views of how employee branding had been conducted, perceived and processed in Telenor. The thesis supervisor partly reviewed interview transcriptions, where names were reduced to initials for the interviewees' anonymity.

Confirmability: We tried to keep our subjectivity at bay in this study to assure confirmability and that we acted in good faith. For example, when choosing individual quotes for analysis, we tried to analyze them in light of the whole interview and not just the individual quote to avoid misinterpretation and our personal values and subjective interpretations to take over. Analysis was mainly done together, and all parts of the study was read and evaluated together to avoid subjective interpretations that the other researcher could not confirm as valid.

Criticism of Bias

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:72) present the risk of *interviewee bias*, whereby employees, intentionally or not, try to skew the information or provide false answers. Since Telenor so clearly has engaged in employee branding during the last few years, there was a risk that we were encouraged to conduct this study because Telenor knew, or thought they knew, they had done a good job, and thus saw a benefit in us doing the study to confirm their success. This brought about a risk that we got *too positive* answers. With management as initiators of the employee branding means, there was a risk that they exaggerated answers to portray a successful picture of the transformation and the employee branding means. With employees, there was a risk that they wanted to portray themselves as good employees, whereby they might have given the answers they thought Telenor expected from them. We therefore emphasized the employees' anonymity to avoid these risks. With both management and employees we drew on the hermeneutical circle when analyzing to try to see past their direct answers and instead look for underlying meanings when we felt insecure of the sincerity of answers.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:72) also present the of risk *interviewer bias*, whereby researchers affect the interviewees. The context, our appearance, body language, our two against one situation with the interviewee, as well as the setting in which the interview took place might have influenced the interviews and the interviewees. These potential risks are to some extent inevitable. There was also the risk of employees giving us the answers they thought we wanted to hear. We however tried to minimize this risk by conducting the interviews by following the interview guides to avoid the interviews heading in the wrong direction.

If we had conducted the study on behalf of Telenor, there would have been a risk that we as researchers were biased to give Telenor the results we thought they wished for. We therefore want to emphasize that the study was not conducted on behalf of Telenor, and we did not perceive the company to draw boundaries to or limit our research. Beside interviewees' ano-

nymity we felt we had great freedom in conducting our research, as well as good access to dimensions of Telenor that was relevant for conducting our study.

We are also aware of the risk in translating quotations from the original language, wherein we did not translate word-by-word but freely to avoid confusion for the reader. In recreating the feeling and meaning of the original quote in English, there was a risk that our perceptions of the quote influence the presentation of its original meaning. We therefore translated the quotes together in light of the whole context to try to ensure their original meanings.

Reflexivity

When interpreting interview transcripts meaning is constructed. In moving back and forth between different levels of interpretation, a process described by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:249) as reflexivity, we tried to reflect on our subjective interpretations and meaning constructions. The levels of reflexive interpretation are first interaction with the empirical material, for example reading it, second interpreting underlying meanings of the material, third critically interpret these meanings whereby our own ideologies and personalities influence our perceptions of the material and finally reflection on text and language use, by which we try to explain certain circumstances or feelings by using certain quotations and language (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:250). By moving back and forth between these reflexive interpretation levels, we aimed to minimize our subjectivity's impact on the analysis and interpretation to as far as possible portray the original meaning.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

The objective of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework, which subsequently will be the basis for the analysis. First, the concept of brand promise and alignment gap will be presented. Second existing theory on the means of employee branding will be outlined. Third, taking on the employee perspective, the three elements of employee identification, loyalty and commitment will be described in relation to employee branding. Fourth, existing theory on the factors, which can influence the employee branding process, will be examined and finally, the theories will be summarized in the employee branding process model, which will be used as a tool for analysis of the empirical material.

BRAND PROMISE AND THE ALIGNMENT GAP

A name, a symbol or a logotype is only one part of a brand (Kapferer, 2012:10). A brand further has a number of elements and characteristics, such as benefits, an image, a value system, an identity system and a personality (Ghauri & Cateora, 2010:295-296). Kapferer (2012:158) similarly describes the brand's identity in the following six facets; physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection and self-image. The identity facets as well as a brand's elements and characteristics add up to several dimensions of the brand. Among these brand dimensions are the organization's strategically formulated vision, mission and values, which together can be defined as the brand promise. The brand promise is thus what the organization wishes to stand for. It is communicated, for example on the corporate website, and state what stakeholders can expect the organization to live up to. Consistent performance over time in line with the brand promise creates a brand track record (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007), which strengthens the brand and can enhance its different functions, for example as an image creator or a risk reducer in customer purchase decisions (Melin, 2002).

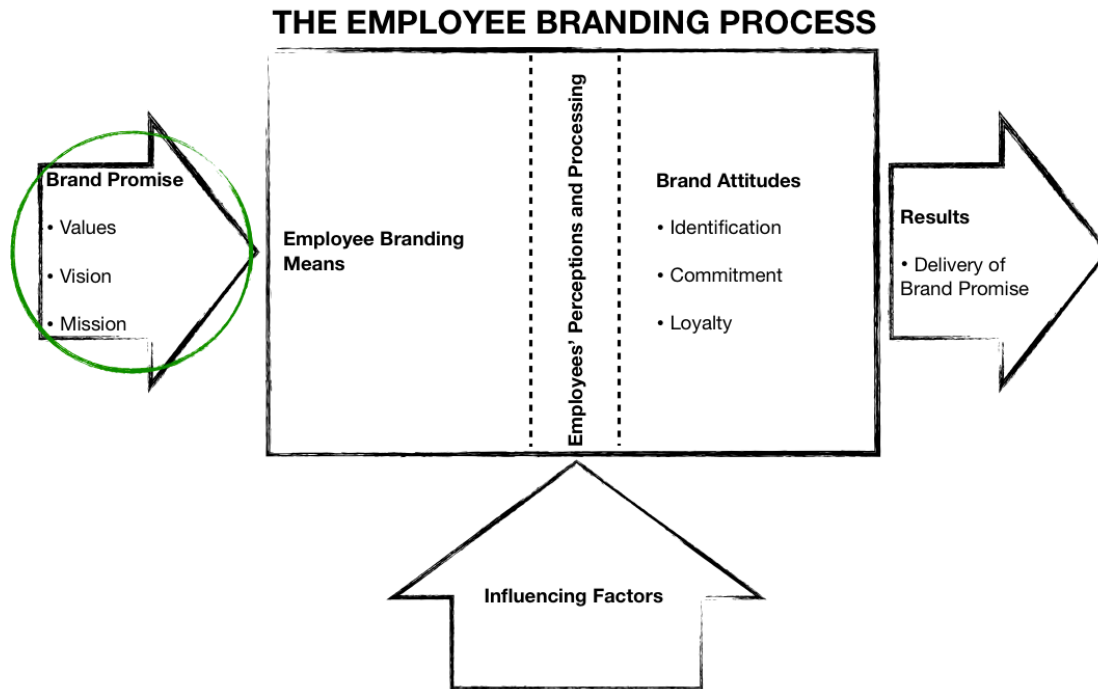


Fig. 3 The Employee Branding Process: The Brand Promise. (*Own model*)

For the employees to be able to deliver the brand promise, the organizational culture formed by the employees’ attitudes and behaviors has to be aligned with the strategic vision, mission and values constructing the brand promise (Hatch & Schultz 2008:11). An alignment gap between the formulated brand promise and the organizational culture, especially in the retail sector where customers interact directly with floor-level employees, could be expected to generate brand experiences deviating from customers’ expectations based on their perceptions of the brand promise. If the experience is below expectations based on the brand promise, one could conclude that this could weaken the brand image among customers (e.g. Miles, Mangold, Asree, & Revell, 2011).

Hatch and Schultz (2008:84) argue that all brands will experience alignment gaps over the course of their lifespan. These gaps can emerge over time if the organizational culture becomes self-going and thus loses track of the formulated brand promise. Sudden large alignment gaps can naturally coincide with radical strategic changes (Hatch & Schultz, 2008:84). An example of this could be when the brand promise is reformulated in an attempt to transform the brand. Given its definition in this thesis, *the means aimed to engage employees to form attitudes and behaviors, which deliver the brand promise*, employee branding becomes an instrument to close alignment gaps between the formulated brand promise and the organizational culture. Its usage should be both necessary in everyday work to prevent the organizational culture from heading in another direction than the brand promise, and in times of transformations to adapt the organizational culture to a reformulated brand promise.

MEANS OF EMPLOYEE BRANDING

The *means* of employee branding described in theory are many, ranging from the use of employee clothing in communicating the brand (Harquail, 2004) to all-encompassing guides for how to successfully include the employees in transformations of brands (Marshall & Mayer, 2012). The most effective usage of different employee branding means is to conduct them simultaneously and interdependently, by engaging several parts of the organization (e.g. Burmann, Zeplin, & Riley, 2009; Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 2008; Punjaisri et al. 2008; Sartain, 2005). In doing so, employee branding aims to prevent the brand promise from being nothing but hollow statements (e.g. Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976). However, to make the framework more comprehensible and to facilitate applicability to the analysis, the means will be outlined under separate headings as shown in the model.

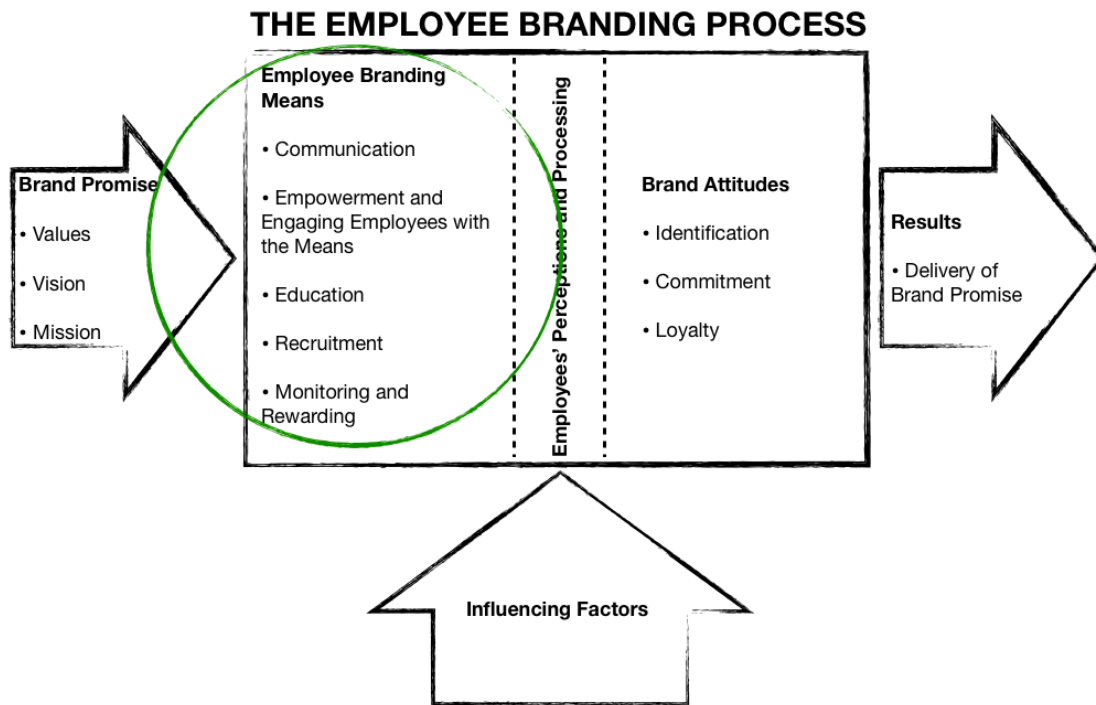


Fig. 4 The Employee Branding Process: Means of Employee Branding. (*Own model*)

Communication

The key to communication is coherence. Internal communication aimed to make employees internalize the brand promise is thus most effective if the communication is coherent with what is communicated externally about the brand, for example in advertising (e.g. Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Miles & Mangold, 2004; Mitchell, 2002). Several scholars also point out the effectiveness of identifying or developing a narrative, which can help people understand

the essence of the brand (e.g. Ind, 2007:143; Sartain, 2005). Miles et al. (2011) further emphasize that communication of the brand promise can only be understood and internalized by the employees if they experience the brand promise in the everyday organizational reality. This supports the need for multiple employee branding means within several parts of the organization. Management also needs to communicate clearly defined targets related to the brand promise, to make the employees aware of what is actually desired from them (Kotler et al. 2005:644). The importance of such targets is supported by Henkel et al.'s (2007) notion that simply asking employees to display competence and friendliness towards customers, is not enough to make employees display brand values. Communication towards employees should also underline how employees can impact business results by delivering the brand promise (e.g. Berry et al. 1976; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006), to make them understand the importance of their contribution.

Means of communications are plentiful. Harquail (2004), for example, emphasizes employees' work clothing to no longer only serve customer purpose, but also to make employees feel connected to the brand. This, the author continues, works both to put the employees' intangible understandings of the brand into tangible branded clothing, and to visually communicate the brand to other organizational members. Regarding other means of communication, Sartain (2005) argues for the importance of powerful slogans and words that should be included in guidelines and materials. Such materials can be value statements on walls (Marshall & Mayer, 2012), on notice boards and in newsletters (Punjaisri et al. 2008). Punjaisri et al. (2008) also advocate two-way communication to enable employees to send messages or give suggestions to management. In their study they further found that among manners of communication, employees preferred face-to-face personal communication due to its directness and clarity. Linking this to the importance of employee input through two-way communication, several scholars highlight that CEOs of many successful companies take the time to personally listen to their employees' ideas and suggestions (Berry et al. 1976; Heskett et al. 2008). By doing this, besides receiving valuable input, CEOs exercise the employee branding means of empowerment.

Empowerment and Engaging Employees with the Means

Kotler and Keller (2012:644) call for the importance of 'encouraging and empowering personnel to produce more ideas and take more initiative'. Henkel et al. (2007) support this in arguing that informal management and employee empowerment are more effective than formal instruments in the process of making employees deliver on the brand promise. For example, in a study of retail salespeople, Simintiras, Alan, Ifie and Georgakas (2012) found that empowerment both increased commitment and moderated the correlation between employees' selling skills and affective commitment to the organization. Also Berry et al. (1976) mention a function of empowerment in advocating that decision making authority given to as low hierarchical levels as possible results in employee personal growth. Several scholars also underline the advantages in regarding employees not merely as receivers, but as customers and co-producers of employee branding (e.g. Marshall & Mayer, 2012). They should therefore be asked what output they want from their work and how they would like to deliver the

brand promise (e.g. Sartain, 2005). Marshall and Mayer (2012:40) support this in stating that ‘successful brand activation efforts start with understanding employee views, barriers and passions - and giving them the opportunity to shape solutions.’ For example, they further argue that employees can be involved in building a unique customer experience that deliver the brand promise. However, whether the employees are involved in the shaping of employee branding or not, a crucial mean for spreading the brand promise within organizations is education.

Education

Kotler et al. (2005:635) argue that companies should educate and motivate all customer-interface employees to provide customer satisfaction. Developing a strong customer orientation among employees is thought to, beside customer satisfaction, increase employee job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and development (e.g. Heskett et al. 2008; Kotler & Keller, 2012: 386). Harquail (2004) describes conventional brand education as being built on the assumption that the more employees know of the brand, the more they will translate the brand into everyday activities. However, Harquail (2004) further argues that employee branding programs ask employees to become brand ambassadors at all times, regardless of their job position, thus concluding that conventional brand education is not enough to achieve brand ambassadors. To achieve such, Marshall and Mayer (2012) advocate unique and branded training programs that should include the brand promise and could contain product or core business hands-on experience for all employees. In their study in the retail sector, in which the core business could be concluded to be selling, Simintiras et al. (2012) found that high selling skills among employees had a positive impact on their commitment to the organization. The reasoning above thus calls for sales training programs built on the brand promise. In line with this, Berry et al. (1976) emphasize that practices such as employee branding programs should also aim to develop human potential, so that both individual and organizational goals can be fulfilled. To effectively be able to do this, one can conclude a need to recruit individuals, which have personal goals that can contribute to the goals of the organization.

Recruitment

Boyd and Sutherland (2006) emphasize that the best employers excel in attracting, training and retaining individuals with the right attitude and talent related to the business. Simintiras et al. (2012) highlight this in their study in the retail sector, where they found that employees with talent for selling have higher commitment to their organization, and similarly but not equally, employees who do not enjoy selling tend to have less commitment than those who do. To facilitate recruiting the right individuals, Berry et al. (1976) calls for adoption of HRM practices to make the job suitable for these individuals. Selecting the right employees can moreover contribute to employee satisfaction and subsequent retention (e.g. Heskett et al. 2008). Thus, to select employees with the right brand-attitude, the brand promise need to be prominent in the recruitment process. To assure the brand promise’s presence in recruitment, the recruiter can ask candidates, both those selected for employment and those not, about their perceptions and experiences of the recruitment process (e.g. Sartain, 2005). To further

ensure delivery on brand promise after recruitment, monitoring and rewarding are two effective means of employee branding.

Monitoring and Rewarding

Several authors stress the importance of standards and measures to track performance of delivery on brand promise (e.g. Berry et al. 1976; Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Ind: 2007:160; Sartain, 2005). Such monitoring measures could for example be employee questionnaires, asking personnel to what extent the brand promise is present in their everyday work (e.g. Ind, 2007:160). Another measure is frequent supervisory feedback, which Berry et al. (1976) also emphasize is a key to personal growth. A third measure is presented by Heskett et al. (2008) who call for both internal and external customer satisfaction measurement for each business unit. In retail, customer feedback could be concluded to be of particular use for measuring employee delivery of brand promise, since the customers meet employees face-to-face.

Marshall and Mayer (2012) emphasize the importance of celebrating and elevating brand consistent behaviors. This is supported by other scholars, stating incentives and compensation as essential employee branding tools (e.g. Berry et al. 1976; Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009; Punjaisri et al. 2008). Besides contributing to employee satisfaction (e.g. Heskett et al. 2008), Berry et al. (1976) present reward programs as key to employee commitment and to a long-term customer-focused orientation. The authors further question the fact that in retail organizations, the customer-facing employees often receive the lowest wages. In a sector with high employee turnover such as retail, they argue that financial incentives could attract, retain and reward talented employees. This could further result in increased employee retention, thus financing the higher wages through lower recruitment costs. The rewarding programs could however be concluded to have to be aligned with delivery on brand promise. Berry et al. (1976) emphasize this, in arguing that long-term customer-focused brand statements will not be lived up to, if rewarding programs still are built on short-term economic goals. Thus concluding, if employees are to change their attitudes and behaviors, the financial incentives should encourage them to do so.

CRITICAL VIEWS ON EMPLOYEE BRANDING MEANS

Although several scholars support the effectiveness of the above mentioned means of employee branding, there are those who are not so convinced. As an example, Boyd and Sutherland (2006) present implications that neither financial rewards nor employee input to the employee branding development and implementation contribute to employees' commitment to the brand promise. Employee branding can also be seen from a more critical perspective by relating it to identity control and normative control (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Cushen, 2009). Taking on a more negative stance, employee branding can be seen as a mean of organizational control in trying to produce the right individuals.

Regardless of how the means of employee branding are constructed and implemented, the outcome is ultimately decided by the employees' perceptions and processing of these means.

This is why intangible guidelines such as inspiring belief (Marshall & Mayor, 2012), being authentic (Sartain, 2005) and other seemingly evident appeals are so prominent in employee branding literature. Whether employee branding means are deemed authentic, or in fact do inspire, is determined by the recipients of the means rather than the initiators of employee branding. This leads us on to the theories for how employees can process employee branding means.

PROCESSING EMPLOYEE BRANDING MEANS

The success of employee branding can be concluded to be dependent upon employees' perceptions and processing of the means and their motivation and commitment to deliver on brand promise. Further, employees who identify with the organization and its core values are more likely to deliver on the brand promise and to be committed and loyal to the brand (Punjaisri et al. 2008). Balmer (2008) further argues for total employee commitment to the brand to achieve a successful differentiated brand. The success of employee branding in differentiating the brand, can therefore be said to be dependent upon how employees process the means into identification with the organization and the brand, commitment to deliver the brand promise and subsequently loyalty to the brand. Theories on identification, commitment and loyalty will accordingly be delved into to explore employees' motivation and commitment to deliver on the brand promise.

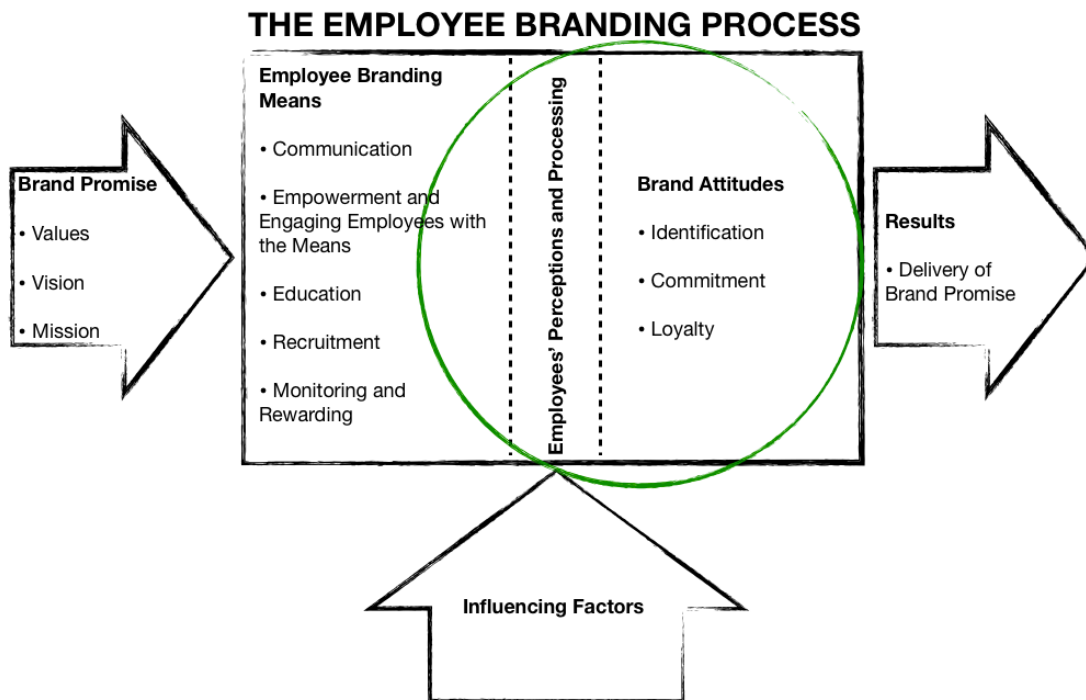


Fig. 5 The Employee Branding Process: Processing Employee Branding Means. *(Own model)*

Organizational and Corporate Identification

Ashforth and Mael (1989) draw on Tajfel and Turner's (1985) principle of social identity theory, which describes social identification as how people tend to identify themselves with a group and their perception of belonging to this group. Social identification derives from group identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), which further can be applied on an organizational level.

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) list two dimensions of organizational identification. An individual strongly identifies with the corporation when (I) their organizational identification is more salient than other alternative identities and (II) the employee self-concept has similar characteristics as the organization (Dutton et al. 1994). Employees consequently identify strongly with the organization when organizational belonging is salient and when characteristics of the organization, e.g. values and attitudes, correspond with the characteristics of the employee. This further results in attitudes that are congruent with the group identity and further leads to support for institutions, which embody the identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Moreover, Ashforth and Mael (1989) stress the disparity between identification on one side and commitment and loyalty on the other. Individuals can be psychologically intertwined with the faith of an organization, i.e. identify with the organization, without feeling the need to expend effort toward the goal of the organization. Identification is thus separated from commitment and loyalty, which rather should be seen as consequences of identification. An individual can thus identify with an organization and define itself in terms of it, and yet not be committed to incorporate organizational values and attitudes, and reversely, incorporate the values and attitudes without identifying with the group or organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Drawing on previous arguments; identification with an organization will not automatically lead to internalization of values and commitment to the organization and vice versa.

Organizational identification is thus the individuals' identification with a group and can further be applied on a corporate level. Balmer (2008) draws on the previously mentioned social identity theory and relates it to corporate identity theory. Corporate identification refers to outward symbolic presentations of corporate culture and individuals identification with the corporate culture. Balmer (2008) claims that corporate identity can serve as a uniting corporate purpose and create a sense of belonging among employees. As previously argued, this can further be related to employee identification with the corporation, which is influenced by employees' knowledge about the organization or a corporation (Cardador & Pratt, 2006). Employees' perceptions of and experiences of the corporation can further affect their behavior and attitudes (Martineau, 1958).

Brand Identification, Commitment and Loyalty

When an employee identifies with the corporation, characteristics of the corporation and the employee's self-concept are alike. However, drawing on Ashforth and Mael's (1989) argument, employees can identify with brand promise, without internalizing it. Employee branding theories desire that employees deliver on the brand promise, but to achieve this, the connection to the brand promise has to go deeper than cognitive identification with the brand. Ind (2007:174) argues that when strongly identifying with the corporation, the more likely the identification will turn into commitment and conclusively create commitment to the brand. In support of this, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argue that commitment can be seen as an extension of identification. Burmann and Zeplin (2005:284) define brand commitment as 'the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals'. According to the authors, brand commitment can be equalized to organizational commitment, which they define as 'a psychological bond between the employee and the organization' (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005:284).

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) moreover argue that brand commitment further will lead to brand loyalty (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Eskildsen and Nüssler (2000) supports this argument when considering the emotional bond to the brand, and claim that when employees are committed and show personal responsibility to the work and do not look for other jobs, employees can be considered as loyal to corporation and the brand.

Commitment and Employee Branding

Employee branding conceptualize the work of engaging employees to be committed and loyal to the brand. Ind (2007:27) stresses the importance for initiators of employee branding to understand the motivation of employees to join a company, identify with the corporate brand values, and their motivation to stay. Ind (2007:29) also draws on Maslow's hierarchy of needs when arguing that employees want to have a deeply motivated sense of purpose and want to achieve self-actualization. Relating this to theories of employee branding it is important for organizations to secure a sense of purpose with their work among employees, which can increase employee motivation to deliver on brand promise.

Ind (2007:174) further states that employee identification further commitment with the organization and the brand is easier to achieve when the organization stands for something clear and distinctive and when values and beliefs are clearly communicated. In addition, organizations must possess emotional intelligence to be able to relate to the needs of employees. When satisfying needs and creating a common purpose among employees, the employees are more likely to care about the company and the brand and are motivated to work hard for the company and stay loyal (Mitchell, 2002). Also Boyd and Sutherland (2006) draw on this when emphasizing the importance of creating a sense of belongingness and relate accountability and empowerment to being motivated and committed to deliver on brand promise. To

summarize, employee branding theories stress motivation, belongingness to company and emotional connection as important dimensions for employees to identify with and further be committed to deliver on brand promise and be loyal to the organization.

Identification, Commitment and Loyalty Relating to Customer-Interface Employees

As previously mentioned, employee commitment to deliver on the brand promise is especially important in sectors where the customer experience is linked to and dependent upon encounters with employees, such as the service and the retail sector (Zentes, 2011:180). Heskett et al. (2008) argue that employee satisfaction will lead to customer satisfaction. Also Mosley (2007) draws on this and discusses that the foremost driver of customer satisfaction among service companies is employee behavior. When linking these arguments, the success of employee branding in a sector where the employee-customer interaction is evident, is dependent upon satisfying employees and motivating them to identify with, be committed to and be loyal to the organization and the brand and consequently affect employee attitudes and behavior.

Employee branding means have been delved into in studies focusing on customer-interface employees, mainly in the service sector (e.g. Miles et al. 2011; Mosley, 2007; Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Punjaisri et al. 2008; Schlager, Bodderas, Maas, & Cachelin, 2011). Punjaisri et al. (2008, 2009) and further Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) identified a need for studying the employee perspective and drew on the relevance of employee identification, commitment and loyalty to the success of employee branding and brand promise delivery. The authors drew similar conclusions as previous scholars on theories of identification and commitment, and argued that organizational identification focuses on cognitive dimensions, such as pride and sense of belonging, while organizational commitment reflect emotional connections and attachments (Punjaisri et al. 2009). The authors further argue for the importance of distinguishing identification and commitment from loyalty, in the way that loyalty can be seen as a consequence of identification and commitment to the organization and the brand (Punjaisri et al. 2009). They conceptualize identification, commitment and loyalty as brand supporting attitudes, which subsequently positively can affect brand supporting behavior and delivery of the brand promise (Punjaisri et al. 2008).

The authors conducted a study among hotels in Thailand to empirically assess the validity of their conceptual framework. They focused on customer-interface employees, due to their importance of living the brand, where they wanted to study employee branding and its effect on brand supporting attitudes, i.e. identification, commitment and loyalty, and brand supporting behaviors (Punjaisri et al. 2008). They found that the employees felt a sense of pride and belonging to the organization and the brand, which was an indication of organizational identification. The employees also revealed emotional attachment and organizational commitment when stating that they love working for the organization, wanted to see the brand successful and their guests satisfied and actively worked to improve brand reputation and make it better. They also found that the employees expressed a longing to stay in the company, although the service sector usually is characterized by high employee turnover, which can be confirmed as

a sign of loyalty (Punjaisri et al. 2008). They also found that employee branding means, such as training and communication, made them appreciate the brand and the organizational values. They really felt that they were the brand, and therefore wanted to contribute to it and deliver on its promises and subsequently felt the success of the company as their own (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Punjaisri and Wilson (2011), (based on Punjaisri et al. 2008, 2009), could in their study confirm the relationship between identification, commitment and loyalty. They further found that employee branding means had an effect on brand supporting attitudes and brand supporting behaviors, which subsequently had an effect on delivery of brand promise. These links were heightened when the employees were satisfied (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). To summarize their findings; influencing employees' brand identification, commitment and loyalty through employee branding increased employee delivery of brand promise.

King and Grace (2008) had the same objective as Punjaisri et al. (2008, 2009) when conducting their study and wanted to research employee branding from the employee perspective. They conducted interviews with customer-interface employees from the service industry. In their study they found employees who expressed that they loved working for the company and that they felt a sense of emotional connection to the employer because they felt looked after. Employees also expressed that they wanted to be part of the company's efforts of making a difference in the world. When not going the extra mile to satisfy customers, they felt that they did not give back what they received from the company. This could be a strong indication of an emotional connection to the company (King & Grace, 2008).

CRITICAL VIEWS ON PROCESSING OF EMPLOYEE BRANDING MEANS

The success of employee branding can, according to the theories described in this chapter, be said to be dependent upon employees strength of identification to the brand and the corporation and further their motivation and commitment to deliver on the brand promise. Some authors (e.g. King and Grace 2008), take on a more critical view and stress that employee branding could not be processed without cynicism, negative attitudes and resistance, thus indicating difficulties when engaging in employee branding. This indicates that employees' resistance towards employee branding means can influence their perceptions and processing of the employee branding means. Other authors (e.g. Harquail, 2004; Morsing, 2006) further draw on negative aspects of employee branding and stress how it can lead to demotivation of employees as well as them feeling they have to present themselves in ways not congruent with their self-definition.

The employee branding process is however, as described in the background, not isolated from factors influencing its success. To further be able to investigate how these factors could affect the success of the employee branding process, and further the extent to which employees

identify with, and are committed and loyal to the brand, influential factors will be delved into.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

The employee branding process, as defined in this thesis, is not isolated from external influence. This means that the manner in which employees perceive and process employee branding means is not solely dependent on the construction of employee branding. Many scholars (e.g. Burmann et al. 2009; King & Grace, 2008; Miles & Mangold, 2004) emphasize influential factors affecting the result of employee branding. They can be both external to the company's control, such as employees' personal characteristics, and internal, such as management dedication, treatment of employees and clarity of the brand promise.

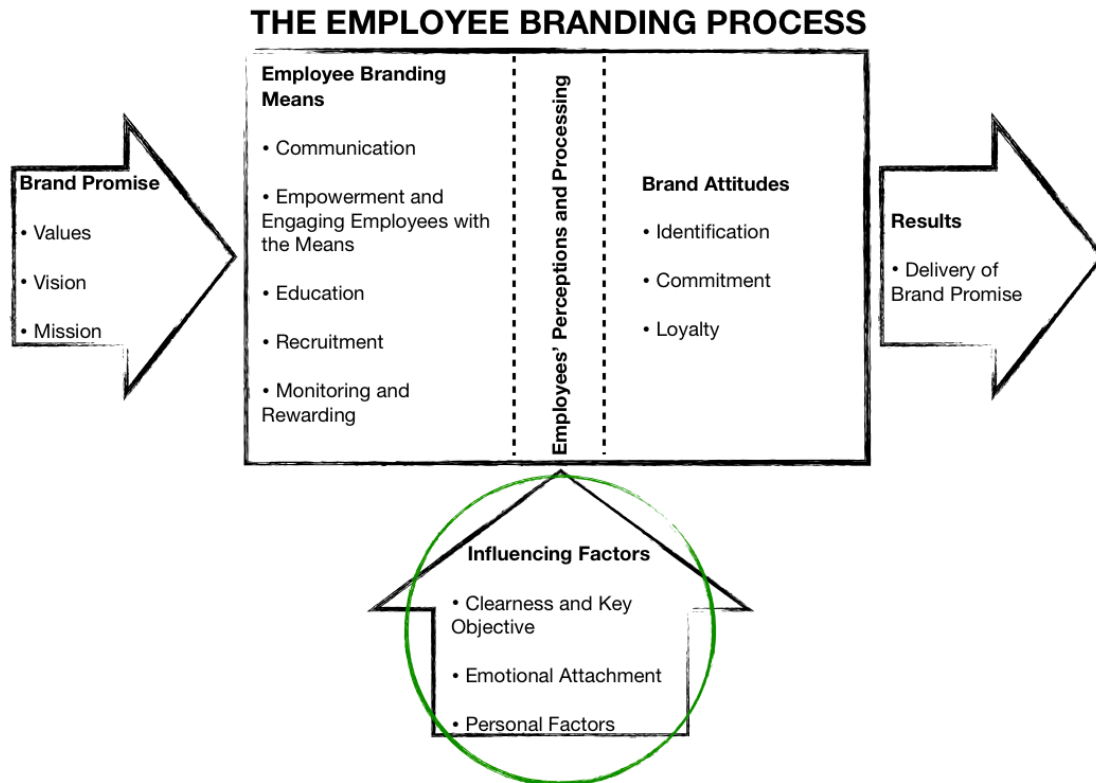


Fig. 6 The Employee Branding Process: Influencing Factors. *(Own model)*

Clarity and Key Objective

For employees to successfully internalize the brand promise they have to fully comprehend it (e.g. Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Therefore, Ind (2007:175) advocates a simple message to facilitate employees' understanding of the cause they are supposed to join. The success of

employee branding is also argued to be dependent upon its level of priority. Boyd and Sutherland (2006) emphasize that employee branding should be made a key objective of the organization, and, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, many scholars argue that it has to encompass multiple units of the organization, including HR and Marketing (e.g. Punjaisri et al. 2009). If employees are asked to commit to the brand purpose, then managers and leaders must be committed to it as well, to not risk disillusionment (Urde, 2009). Thus, Urde (2009) presents the notion that commitment has to be encouraged by the leaders through authenticity in their own attitudes and behaviors related to the brand.

Emotional Attachment

A number of scholars argue for the importance of the employer-employee relationship to employee branding success: Punjaisri et al. (2008) emphasize that such relationships have to be well-functioning if employee branding is to succeed; King and Grace (2008) calls for long-term mutually beneficial relationships as crucial for employee delivery of the brand promise; and Miles and Mangold (2004) suggest that the degree to which employees will deliver desired behaviors is dependent upon their perceptions of how the employer delivers on the psychological contract. The latter authors describe the psychological contract as a set of expectations from both the employer and the employee. As long as the employer fulfills the employee's expectations, the employee will feel trust and remain loyal to the organization. Punjaisri et al. (2008) also emphasize the relationships between employees as important to the success of employee branding. Besides relationships, how much the employee actually likes the job can affect satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Simintiras et al. 2012). Berry et al. (1976) mention the opportunity of personal development as key to employee satisfaction. Thus the possible career opportunities, work duties and educations that lead to personal growth can increase employee commitment to the organization. The factors described above can all be concluded to contribute to the organization's attractiveness, which if high can result in employee satisfaction as well as identification with the organization (Schlager et al. 2011).

Personal Factors

Employees' personal characteristics can have a great influence on their identification, commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand promise. The only way for organizations to control the personal characteristics of their employees is by recruiting and terminating employees. This may explain the low presence of personal factors influencing the employee branding process in employee branding theory. Punjaisri et al. (2008) however identify age and education as two personal factors. Their findings indicated that younger individuals were found less loyal in their intention to stay within the organization. The same was true for employees with high level of education. The study also found that those who planned to stay within the organization were more committed to deliver on brand promise. Further, as mentioned previously, Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) found that employees' level of identification with the brand will be higher if the brand values are correlated to their own. Thus employees with identities overlapping the brand promise will have a greater fit to the brand

promise and will more easily stay aligned to it (e.g. Harquail, 2004). Finally, to give an example from the retail sector, Simintiras et al.'s (2012) study showed that employees enjoying selling were likely to have higher commitment to the organization than those not. This imply that employees' personal affection for their everyday work activities affect their commitment to the organization they work for.

SUMMARIZED: THE EMPLOYEE BRANDING PROCESS MODEL

The model illustrates the completed employee branding process model based on the theoretical framework. This model has further guided the analysis of the empirical material.

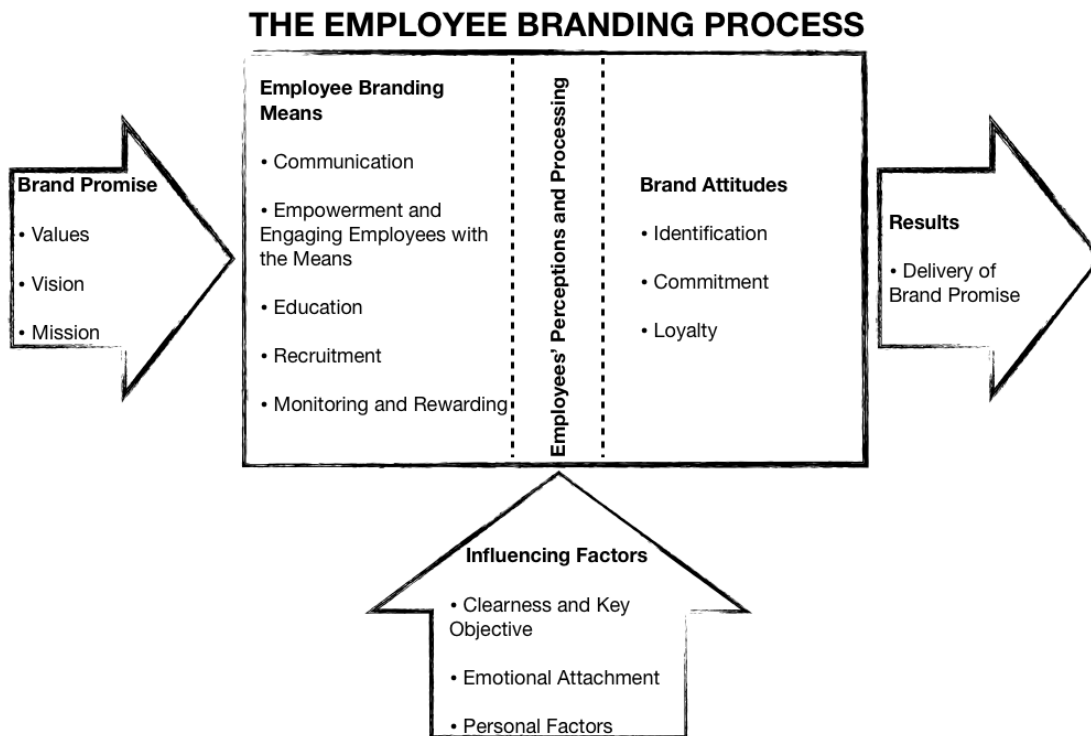


Fig. 7 The Employee Branding Process. (Own model)

Chapter 4 Empirical Findings & Case Analysis

The objective of this chapter is to present our empirical material and analyze this based on the theories and the model presented in the previous chapter. First, Telenor's brand promise will be identified through secondary data. Second, based on primary data, Telenor's means of employee branding and employees' perceptions and reactions to these will be described and analyzed. Third, the interviewees' perceptions of Telenor's brand promise will be presented. Fourth, employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise will be examined. Fifth, the factors influencing the employee branding process will be described. Finally, both management's and employees' perceptions of the transformation will be outlined.

TELENOR'S BRAND PROMISE

The Telenor Group has four communicated corporate values: *Make it easy, Keep promises, Be inspiring and Be respectful*. The communicated vision is: *Telenor exists to help customers get the full benefit of communications services in their daily lives. We're here to help*. The values and vision should guide all employees in their everyday work, 'They provide a fundamental guide for taking care of our customers' (Vision and Values, telenor.com). In Sweden, Telenor's slogan is *the flexible operator*, which is given substance by enabling the customer to pause the contract, as well as change the plan, during subscription time.

To summarize, Telenor's brand promise communicates a strong customer orientation, where the customer's needs and satisfaction is central to business. Telenor commercials for Swedish television reinforce this brand promise in communicating messages like *tailor made - the best contract for you* and *coverage guarantee*, besides *the flexible operator*.

EMPLOYEE BRANDING MEANS AND EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF SUCH

Below, Telenor's employee branding means and employees' perceptions of these will be presented. These are based on thirteen interview accounts; the Head of Stores, the Head of Sales Education, the HR Partner for Sales, two regional managers, as well as two store managers and six store employees.

Transforming Telenor's Retail Stores

Three years ago, a new Head of Stores was appointed with the mission to *transform* Telenor's retail stores. His mission was to increase sales, lower costs, enhance the customer experience and change the sales-focused and money-driven culture within stores. He described it not as one big move, but as plenty of details making up a whole, and further stated:

In large terms I have run this big transformation for three years... building change through processes: frameworks, processes, methods [...] clear policies, that in some manner get people into straight lines in order to build a solid foundation and a culture based on how we, rather than who, do things

(Head of stores, 2013)

The Head of Stores emphasized that these changes could not suit everyone, but that Telenor also had to work with employee turnover to adapt the organization to the changes. He further described the challenge as to connect the store concept, incentives and employee understanding to strategic goals. Thus he supports the importance of employees' understanding of their roles in achieving strategic goals (e.g. Berry et al. 1976, Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). Practically all management interviewees also emphasized the retail employees as the most important channel to affect customers' perceptions of Telenor, thus confirming the importance of successful employee branding:

The store employees are the most important, they meet our customers every day. We can talk all we want about expectations, but if they cannot deliver, we will never get to where we want to be

(Regional Manager, 2013)

Communication - From Sales to Customer Focus

"How many would send their mother into a Telenor store, asking her to get a contract? How many would trust that she wouldn't be fooled, please raise a hand"... 500 people, no one raised a hand... that says quite a lot about the culture

(Head of Stores, 2013)

The Head of Stores posed this question soon after his appointment at a conference with store employees. Several of the store employees interviewed also referred to this very situation when describing the old ways of doing business, thus indicating that it became an organizational narrative. Such narratives are advocated as means of employee branding (e.g. Ind, 2007:143; Sartain, 2005). Several interviewed employees expressed their wish to comfortably be able to send their friends and family into any Telenor store, knowing that they would receive proper and honest service. The Head of Stores further described that communication

has been brutally honest, transparent and clear throughout the transformation, which is confirmed from the employee perspective:

They [Telenor] have become much better, compared to before. Now we get to know when things happen, and what happens... there's been a large reorganization, we got to know about it in time, thus we in stores weren't the last [to hear about it]

(Employee, 2013)

However, some employees complained that sometimes the communication is not coherent with what is actually done, and also that employees sometimes are asked to act in ways not consistent with how they are treated by the company, thus supporting Miles et al.'s (2011) argument that communication has to correspond to organizational reality if employees shall internalize it.

The HR Partner for Sales argued that although the HR department has overall responsibility for the corporate values, it is up to the closest manager to deliver them throughout the organization, thus underlining the importance of management dedication to brand promise at each hierarchical level. A regional manager supported this in emphasizing that values has to permeate all activities and should be used as support when legitimizing new initiatives that are presented for employees during morning meetings, held weekly in each of Telenor's stores. Both the Head of Sales Education and a regional manager argued that the values are generally printed on the walls of the stores' back offices, but that the challenge lies in reminding employees of the values continuously. In the interviews, when asked to list the values, employees generally had a difficult time remembering all four of them, arguing that although values occasionally are mentioned at weekly meetings they are not spoken of frequently in store, thus supporting the challenge described by management.

To communicate the new focus, employees' nametags were changed to new ones with the title Customer's Coach. This seems to have had an effect as many of the interviewed employees refer to their roles and work behavior as being the customer's coach. This supports Harquail's (2004) emphasis on employee apparel not only being for customer purpose, but to make employees more connected to the brand.

Communication from employees to management is described by a regional manager as mostly having to run through each hierarchical level. She however tries to visit morning meetings in different stores every week to get feedback directly from employees. Employees see the necessity of messages having to run through every level, but anyhow call for more direct contact with top management, thus confirming the appreciation of top management listening to employees (e.g. Heskett et al. 2008). The Head of Sales Education on the other hand argues that leadership presence among employees is high to make employees feel part of the whole. As an example she mentions the Sales Academy, held twice annually, where employees get the chance to mingle with top management. One employee confirmed the latter in saying that during the Sales Academy they get a good and transparent view of the com-

pany. However, although employees understand that top management have other duties than to tour stores all over Sweden, we found an appeal for more leadership presence:

There is much talk about the Head of Stores and the Head of Consumer Sales, but many do not know what they look like [...] If they would have shown themselves I think one would have felt 'OK, these are the guys in charge and they take time for us, get to know our situation'

(Employee, 2013)

Recruitment - Aligning it to the Brand Promise

As described earlier, the Head of Stores saw the opportunity to work with employee turnover to implement changes, thus making changes directed to future employees possible. This calls for aligning recruitment to the changes, supporting Boyd and Sutherland's (2006) emphasis on the importance of attracting individuals with attitudes and talents related to the business and brand promise. The HR Partner for Sales described sales cultures as mainly inhabited by *money-driven* individuals, which often results in incorrect behavior when selling. To avoid this, he argues that Telenor today tries to attract *value-driven* individuals.

We found this change of direction in recruitment to be coherently confirmed by all interviewees, whereby everyone agree that those employed today differ substantially from before, for example in the way that Telenor now look for individuals with the 'customer's-coach characteristic'. A store manager argues that Telenor have moved to employ more humble individuals. This is confirmed with the employee perspective:

Today, Telenor no longer choose to employ the best salesperson, but the most diverse, who both can sell diversely and perform and follow the values

(Employee, 2013)

Focus on Career and Personal Growth

Berry et al. (1976) indicate personal growth as key to employee satisfaction. The importance of personal growth was acknowledged by the management in the change of how Telenor wants to motivate the employees:

Three years ago, we spoke of how much money you can make when you joined Telenor [...] Today we put emphasis on leadership education, trainee programs [...] You can become regional manager, you can become all these things, so we speak of personal development

(Head of Stores 2013)

The Head of Stores further described three things that should attract new employees to Telenor: a great selling school, a great retail school and the customer focus. This is confirmed

in interviews with recently employed employees, having been drawn to Telenor by a reputation, heard among friends, of great education and opportunities for personal growth:

Telenor was the kind of company that invests in internal know-how and internal recruitment. It was that kind of company I wanted to work at

(Employee, 2013)

I only applied for one job, and I specifically wanted to work for Telenor, because they have a reputation of taking care of their personnel. They want you to grow, and that opportunity exists because there is so much you can do here

(Employee, 2013)

Other employees complained that career opportunities are limited to the headquarters in Stockholm and call for more regional and in-store responsibility areas. In the recent reorganization top management has listened to this appeal: By having one store manager for every store, instead of one per two-three stores as used to be the case, they create more positions available for employees wanting to climb within the company. Several employees appreciate this and further emphasized that it will result in increased presence of their store managers.

The Teacher Bank, Introductory Education and Telenor Business School

The Teacher Bank is an initiative that came from Telenor employees wanting to share their store and selling experiences. The best store managers, team leaders and salespeople can apply to become internal teachers, educating new employees at the introductory education, and act as Telenor ambassadors. Employees can thus be engaged as co-producers of employee branding means (e.g. Marshall & Mayer, 2012). With the Teacher Bank, Telenor achieves this by making employees teach other employees Telenor's brand promise.

When starting to work at Telenor, employees have to sign a code of conduct including the values. They then have to go through an introductory education, held by employees in the Teacher Bank, where the new recruits among other things are taught the new customer focused selling method, which contain the brand promise and the customer's coach approach. Marshall and Mayer's (2012) argue that training programs should include the brand promise. Clearly in line with this, when asked of what is communicated during the introductory education, one employee states:

It was Telenor's vision, Telenor's goals and how we should work towards these, what make us different, what is important for Telenor and how we should be the flexible operator [...] And that was probably very good given that one today not only want to employ sales-focused people

(Employee, 2013)

Telenor Business School is an e-learning portal with educations ranging from product-based to value-based, but also including courses on how the organization is built. The Head of Sales Education also emphasized the portal as a tool to make employees feel more connected to the company. Both store managers and employees described Telenor Business School to have improved substantially lately from being very unclear:

When I begun, there was Telenor Business School... but you know, you didn't know how to log on [...] It was very unclear and that has changed a lot over time [...] Now there's a really nice portal

(Employee, 2013)

It was really messy [...] If you did not understand you got no help... now it's really good

(Employee, 2013)

YAMAT - You And Me Are Telenor

In line with Marshall and Mayer's (2012) appeal for unique and branded training programs, You And Me Are Telenor, shortly put YAMAT, was the single biggest employee branding initiative at Telenor. Store employees, event salespeople, leaders and others attended the two-day brand education program mainly based on workshops, adding up to more than 120 days of education for about 600 employees:

It was an enormous educational venture where we focused on getting the employees to understand the individual's part in the overhead strategy and what it means to be customer focused... It was immensely time-consuming, and immensely expensive, but necessary... It was just these type of things we discussed with our employees, 'what does it mean to be professional?'

(Head of Stores, 2013)

...There we took all these values and customer coach and our business plan and trained them in how to relate to them in practice

(Head of Sales Education, 2013)

YAMAT was highly appreciated among all employees interviewed, and many positive effects were identified. Harquail (2004) advocates that employee branding programs should ask employees to become brand ambassadors at all times, and the reactions to YAMAT point in that direction. The regional managers argued that YAMAT is one of the foundations for where the company stands today, and that it has changed the behavior of 90 percent of the employees. The employees' own descriptions are plenty and indicate that employees *felt involved* in the creation of YAMAT:

It was probably among the better one has ever attended [...] It was really to make everyone head in the same direction, to understand 'OK what is meant by agenda 2012, agenda 2013? What is meant by the different brand pillars?' [...] After YAMAT I really feel more motivated [...] It differs SEK 10-20 between the different operators, what's most important in the end? It's the service you get

(Employee, 2013)

It was actually the education [YAMAT] that made us realize that Telenor had listened to us salespeople, and the feedback we have given during other educations... they really wanted to integrate us [...] and I know that was tremendously appreciated among salespeople, that they actually listened to us

(Employee, 2013)

Telenor looked for our opinions of Telenor [...] to make Telenor better, so it felt more like us educating Telenor, than they educating us [...] now I see our changes beginning to happen as a result of education [YAMAT]

(Employee, 2013)

One regional manager emphasized that YAMAT was an experience that has remained within the minds of employees, but the Head of Stores points out that such a venture cannot be repeated on an annual basis, which poses a future challenge in how to retain the positive feeling created through the education. This challenge is confirmed from the employee perspective:

It was really good [YAMAT] and we had an evaluation after one month but after that we heard nothing and that's really not how it works. You don't keep it in mind for a year if you don't get any kind of follow-up [...] like dedicating half an hour once per month to talk about what we actually worked with [...] Then I don't really see the point with spending all that money and time...

(Employee, 2013)

Measuring Brand Performance

Just as Berry et al. (1976) stress the function and importance of supervisory feedback, both management and employees interviewed described feedback as very much central to working at Telenor. Feedback is given both in everyday work and during the morning meetings where employees can give and take feedback from the rest of the group. A store manager described that individual goals are developed, together with the employee, and evaluated continuously.

To ensure performance according to the brand promise, Telenor has developed a number of measures. Besides common measures such as mystery shoppers, the Head of Stores created a checklist on just over 60 different points related to store appearance that has to be completed every day. The Head of Stores described this initiative as initially hated by store managers, but eventually appreciated when results appeared. Instead of communicating its contribution

to strategic goals of Telenor, the checklist was communicated as a way to win Sweden's Retail Awards, in which Telenor eventually finished top-three. In relating the checklist to the competition, the employees understood their own contribution to Telenor's performance by completing the checklist. Performance on the checklist is monitored through Loss Prevention. An employee describing it both articulates its benefits and challenges:

Loss Prevention... It's a person coming and completing a checklist once per month and then we get to see the result. That I can take to my heart, because I enjoy the retail dimension [of work], but we do not make any money out of it, and salespeople function like: 'if we make money, we'll do it', but if they don't make money, they don't care...

(Employee, 2013)

This quote clearly indicates the importance of financial incentives for employees in the retail context in which Telenor operates. The employee continued by calling for financial incentives connected to Loss Prevention and to raise its priority among employees. To measure employee delivery of the brand promise towards customers, Telenor further utilize two instruments referred to as NPS and CFL.

NPS - Net Promoter Score

Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a system where customers measure their in-store experience on a scale from 0-10. A few days after concluding a purchase in a Telenor store, the customer is sent an SMS where he or she is asked to rank Telenor based on the last visit. From the beginning the score was connected to the store as a whole, but this was perceived as unfair by the employees as one individual's score would lower the store average. Thus, this was eventually changed to individual scores that employees can track in Telenor's information database. With NPS, Telenor clearly corresponds to Marshall and Mayer's (2012) emphasis on the importance of elevating brand consistent behaviors. Customers scoring 0-6 are categorized as detractors, 7-8 as neutrals, and 9-10 as promoters. Detractors are emphasized to denigrate Telenor, while promoters, as indicated by the term, are emphasized to recommend Telenor to others. One employee described initial skepticism to the system. Another employee filled in with another view:

Of course it's a bit jittery to be ranked by a customer, but if you know that you perform well, then it's given that you will get a good score [from every customer]

(Employee, 2013)

Some employees are however not completely satisfied with the system. For example, one employee expressed doubt over the levels, emphasizing 7-8 as really satisfied customers, even though only 9-10 are promoters in the system. Another employee stated that it benefits the charismatic salespeople and not those actually offering the customer the best solution.

CFL - Closed Feedback Loop

The introduction of Closed Feedback Loop, shortly put CFL, substantially enhanced employees' attitudes towards the Net Promoter Score. CFL is a system where employees call a selection of customers, mainly those scoring very high or low on the NPS, asking for feedback on their store visit. The customer is not questioned by the employee serving him or her, but by another employee working in the same store, to assure no discomfort when giving feedback. The feedback is then logged in a database, and employees can tell each other of what customers appreciated and of what to improve.

Although the system was received by initial resistance, because calling customers took time from selling which in turn led to lower commission, CFL was eventually very much appreciated since it allowed employees to get explanations of customers scoring high or low in the NPS. One employee expressed his enthusiasm:

We are first in the world at Telenor to call for feedback... how cool isn't that, to be a part of history?

(Employee, 2013)

Another employee described appreciation of the system but also indicated a problem with the system:

It's awfully appreciated. And it's actually pretty damn fun to call the customer, like 'shit, he scored a 3, but I was really polite and offered a great solution' [...] one never understood [before]. Now that we call, I have still never called anyone saying that he scored [low] because of the salesperson, 'he did everything he could, he was really nice, but it's the customer service, but it's the service routine'...

(Employee, 2013)

This was indicated as unfair by several of the interviewed employees. Although asked to rank Telenor based on the last store visit, customers scoring low often explains it with circumstances outside the salesperson's control, such as a malfunctioning telephone, or unpleasant calls to customer service. One employee expressed it as Telenor not living up to its promise of being flexible, when not offering its employees the right preconditions to get high scores. This indicates the importance of understanding employees' views (e.g. Marshall & Mayer, 2012) since they may perceive barriers that management does not.

The Commission Model

At Telenor, store employees have always received high wages due to a lucrative commission model. The Head of Stores perceives this as a barrier to personal growth since salespeople do not want to climb the corporate ladder because of decrease in monthly pay, which was one of the reasons for the need to lower wages by remodeling the commission model. This is confirmed by with the employee perspective:

For some it is only positive and for others only negative. The wage might make you stay, although you don't want it [...] If I would finish my education [...] I would have to work almost ten years in some company to reach the same pay I get at Telenor without education

(Employee, 2013)

Most interviewed employees explained the importance of commission to their work by emphasizing the difference between being a salesperson and being a shop assistant. Yet again the specific money driven retail context is made visible.

Financial incentives can effectively be connected to employee branding (e.g. Berry et al. 1976; Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009). In line with this, when remodeling the commission model to demand more work for the same wage, Telenor included the NPS to align wages to having satisfied customers. Management emphasized this as rewarding the right brand behavior as well as giving employees tools to deliver on the brand promise. Employees averaging an NPS score of promoters (9-10) receive extra commission, while those averaging a score of detractors (0-6) get reduced commission. Several employees described this as a great step in the right direction. On the other hand, the NPS plays a relatively little role in the total commission, a fact that employees points out as contradictory to the communicated brand promise, which emphasize satisfied customers as the main objective.

Moreover, to get any commission at all, employees will have to sell 75% of their individual budget. One employee explains that when employees know they will not reach 75% of their budget, they are not motivated to get high NPS scores and satisfy customers since they know they will not get any commission anyway. One regional manager seem to be aware of this, but pointed to the importance of incremental steps when changing the commission model since employees lives may be dependent upon their pay. However, we found that the general feeling among employees is that the commission model is transformed in the right direction.

Sales Academy

The Sales Academy, held twice annually, is a conference event that has been running since long before Telenor begun to transform their stores. Salespeople from all over Sweden are flown in to Stockholm, to receive information on the performance and future direction of Telenor, but also to get information and training on upcoming campaigns. In the evening, there is a prize ceremony and party.

Management described this as the happening of the year for employees, emphasizing it as much appreciated by all employees because of the party and prize ceremony. The employee perspective of this event is however slightly different. Although acknowledging the existence of individuals aligned to management's view, employees emphasized the informational part as most interesting. A store manager described his experience with Sales Academy; from having to stop people from going, to have any employees left to run the store, he today al-

most has to force people to attend it. The store manager believes this is a result of a culture change and also calls for more regional competitions and prizes in saying that a Las Vegas Trip for five out of 400 salespeople results in 80 percent giving up before the competition starts, because they know they cannot win it.

The culture change is confirmed from the employee perspective. Although one prize category is based on the NPS score, i.e. having satisfied customers, the prize ceremony is perceived as mainly celebrating those who sell the most in numbers and not those who sell ‘the right way’. This we found as contradictive to Marshall and Mayer’s (2012) urge to celebrate the right behaviors. One employee argues that the event is not aligned to Telenor’s values and shows us an SMS received recently from Telenor, pointing to a language that belongs to the old ways of doing things:

‘Now it’s just two months left to this year’s first Sales Academy, time to really get ready and fight if one want to go on stage and receive the crowd’s cheering [...] Go for it!!!’

(Employee, 2013)

Empowerment at Every Stage

As described in the theoretical framework, there is also a need for empowerment and engaging employees with the means for employee branding to be successful (e.g. Henkel et al. 2007; Sartain, 2005). We found that management generally considers employees to have had much input to the transformation of Telenor stores.

When asking the employees they both agree and disagree with the management perspective. They argued that initially it was very much top-down, but that with time they have got the opportunity to influence things. Generally, we could see that interviewees that have been with Telenor for more years feel that they have had the chance to give more input. However, many employees call out for increased control over their stores and over what is to be kept in stock, since they perceive that they know the needs of customers better:

‘Telenor spends money on the wrong campaigns [...] no one asks me what I think [...] They [should] ask us, ‘what do you want to sell, what sells good?’

(Employee, 2013)

Summarized: Telenor’s Employee Branding Means



Fig. 8 Employee Branding Means at Telenor. (Own model) Logotype: Telenor Sverige

TELENOR’S BRAND PROMISE FROM THE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

Telenor’s different employee branding means are meant to spread the formulated brand promise throughout the organization. We found that although this had been successfully done, both the management and the employee perspective portrayed a slightly altered brand promise.

When asking management interviewees of what Telenor stands for and what is communicated about the brand, their initial reaction was ‘internally or externally?’, thus contradicting employee branding scholars’ emphasis on coherent internal and external communication (e.g. Mitchell, 2002). Management embraced the values as very central to the brand. When asking the Head of Stores, he however indicates a problem with too many values and visions:

There are a lot of nice words, but the foundation is the customer [...] I'm actually against all these fancy-pancy words [...] It's really basic things: be inspiring, keep promises [...] I think one should use them, but it shouldn't be eleven values, it shouldn't be 'a customer coach', and then Telenor's basic principles [...] I think there should be a few values that are most important and should permeate everything, regardless of if it is the customer meeting or the internal meeting

(Head of Stores, 2013)

He further described that what he really want out of his store employees is professionalism and not the behavior that society usually expects from young people selling mobile network plans. The Head of Stores' point of view has been well incorporated with employees. When asked of what Telenor stands for, employees more than once begin with professionalism and Telenor being the flexible operator. Even when asked specifically about the values, two employees cannot leave being *professional* out:

Telenor's values? Ehm, Keep promises [...] Be respectful [...] Be inspiring [...] the last is be professional... isn't it?

(Employee, 2013)

Ehm, the values are... ehm actually to be profoundly professional: to listen, make it easy for the customer, and to inspire... be a tool for the customer rather than someone who tries to force them into buying things [...] For me that is to be professional, more help to the customer...

(Employee, 2013)

Although employees tend to refer to professionalism, their descriptions of what Telenor stands for is coherent with the formulated brand promise. However, one employee also gave his perspective on the problem described by the Head of Stores, namely that too many changes in visions and value statements has been confusing.

IDENTIFICATION, COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY

Below, employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to Telenor and the brand promise will be presented. First indications of identification will be outlined, followed by indications of commitment and loyalty. The analysis is mainly based on the employee perspective, consisting of eight employees, of which two are store managers and six are store employees.

Identifying with Telenor Due to the Transformation

We found that the employees who worked at Telenor before and during the transformation look back at the past as something they are glad to not be part of anymore. The culture was very sales-driven and the focus were on quantity rather than quality:

In the beginning I felt that I couldn't support everything I sold. I felt I couldn't tell the truth to the customer, which I hated

(Employee, 2013)

One does something that is not so favorable for the customer and in the end it will give you headache

(Employee, 2013)

These quotes indicate that these employees did not like the way they were selling before the transformation. Two employees, when talking about if they could identify with Telenor, said that they feel more identification with Telenor when looking at where they are heading at, than where they used to be, which is an indication that the new organizational identity is more congruent to their own identity and that they now can stand for the corporate values and the new way of selling:

It has been tremendous progress, really, [...] A lot has become better, everything is heading in the right direction

(Employee, 2013)

It's feels good not having to work in that way, to feel that you have to sell this many contracts. Instead you are selling in the right way and Telenor has given me that opportunity

(Employee, 2013)

Several employees were observed to be *proud* to work for Telenor. Punjaisri et al. (2008) stress pride as a sign of identification. This pride is found to be congruent with being part of transforming the organization into something employees can stand for and be proud of. They all indicated that satisfying customers is very motivating, and that they now can deliver on the brand promise without to go against management expectations:

I think it's all about that we have changed a lot during the last years, from practically bulldozing the customer to instead have the customer in focus [...] We have done a great journey and I have been there since the beginning, that means a lot. You feel that you've been part of it and have influenced, created something that actually is really good

(Employee, 2013)

We found several indications that the transformation gained employees that already favored a customer-oriented focus:

For me the transformation weren't that big really, it is more about common sense

(Employee, 2013)

The new way of selling is found to be more in line with the employees' personal characteristics and how they want to conduct their work, which is evident amongst all interviewees regardless of when they started working at Telenor. Three of the interviewees had even chosen to start working for Telenor just because of how they engage in their corporate values and how they treat their customers. This could indicate that they applied to Telenor due to an organizational identity that corresponds to their own identities. This is in line with the theory that individuals support institutions that embody their identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Similarly, several interviewees explained that many employees who could not identify with the new direction have left during the transformation.

Identification - 'Maybe I deny it, but I am a Telenorer'

We observed that Telenor employees express identification with Telenor as an organization and with Telenor's brand promise. This was portrayed when discussing if their personal values correspond with Telenor's corporate values. Several employees indicated that Telenor's corporate values are self-evident and almost taken for granted on how to behave and act in their everyday life:

The values are, it's about being professional, to listen, make it easier for the customer, to inspire, for me that is to be professional [...] They fit me really well

(Employee, 2013)

This is in line with Dutton et al.'s (1994) notion of strong identification when the employee's self-concept has similar characteristics as the organization. Telenor employees demonstrated this when explaining how they use the corporate values in meetings with customers, but also outside of work in their everyday life:

It's in line with my personal opinions about how to be as a human, it's not just something I do at work, I do it at home as well

(Employee, 2013)

Employee identification with Telenors corporate values was also found to be evident when the employees expressed a sense of *belongingness*, which according to Balmer (2008) is a sign of identification. The sense of belongingness was also found to be congruent with identifying with the corporate values. One employee expressed that well-being at work came with supporting organizational values. It was also noted that feeling a sense of belonging went hand in hand with being proud of working at Telenor:

Maybe I deny it, but I am a Telenorer

(Employee, 2013)

No, I would never change [company]. Telenor's salespeople are the most attractive with competitors. Everyone wants Telenor-salespeople, everyone, since we are so well educated. We know exactly how everything works

(Employee, 2013)

The last quote shows that employees feel they work for an attractive organization, a notion that Schlager et al. (2011) argue can result in increased identification with the organization.

Commitment - 'My heart belongs to Telenor'

Overall, the interviewed employees expressed identification with Telenor in terms of possessing values equal to those of the company, feeling a sense of belonging, and being proud of working at Telenor. We found a link between identification and commitment, as interviewed employees who expressed strong identification with Telenor also expressed commitment to deliver the brand promise. The link between strong identification and commitment has also previously been emphasized in theory (e.g. Ind, 2007; Punjaisri & Wilson 2011).

Several interviewed employees, who indicated commitment toward the organization, stated that the biggest motivation for them was not financial incentives, but rather to satisfy customers, which thus also indicates a commitment to deliver on Telenor's customer-focused brand promise:

For me that have worked for so long [at Telenor] it's not about the money, I don't care if I only get my basic wage or a lot of commission, I enjoy knowing that customers come back bringing cakes and other stuff [...] That gives so much more than money

(Employee, 2013)

An emotional bond to the organization is a sign of commitment (e.g. Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). This was found with several employees, one stating that Telenor provides a feeling of security, another taking personal offense when hearing bad things about Telenor, and a third referring to Telenor as a lifestyle. One employee summarized it in proclaiming:

This is a company you care about, not like any ordinary job. One really cares and it has become somewhat like a family

(Employee, 2013)

Commitment towards Telenor was also found in employees' accounts concerning their contribution to Telenor:

Before it was a lot of competitions and I've done all there is during five years..now it's more about trying to give feedback to Telenor and trying to help the customers [...] That's my intention

(Employee, 2013)

When feeling that they can contribute to the organization, employees can create a sense of purpose with their work (e.g. Eskildsen & Nüssler, 2000; Mitchell, 2002), extending their employment to something more than just a chance to earn money. This was indicated with the employee perspective when talking about motivation at work:

You feel that you do something good, that's the main purpose, every time I go to work I feel happy because I can influence people. I influence my sellers, and every day they influence a customer's image of our company and build our brand

(Store Manager, 2013)

Other employees indicated even stronger commitment to Telenor and used words as sect and religion to describe the company's importance as more than just a job:

My heart belongs to Telenor, it feels like a part of me, my friends say that I'm part of a sect [laughs]. I live and learn Telenor. So if I would change [company] I would lose a part of my personality really, and I wouldn't want that

(Employee, 2013)

As soon as I started to work [at Telenor] I became, well, kind of brainwashed [...] It's kind of like a religion, [...] if you don't feel it fits you, you're an atheist, or something else

(Employee, 2013)

Commitment Barrier - 'They shoot themselves in the foot'

Several employees perceive some dimensions of Telenor as not so satisfactory, which might affect their commitment towards the organization and the brand. Berry et al. (1976) argue that financial incentives should encourage a long-term customer focus. Contrary to this, one employee perceives that Telenor's commission model restrains certain colleagues from delivering the brand promise. He explained this in arguing that the rewarding system still benefits sales-oriented individuals over customer-oriented:

When people don't reach their [individual] budget they start to doubt [...] A change is needed, the values need to correspond with what you earn money on, if they don't, there are mixed messages

(Employee, 2013)

Thus, employees are encouraged to be customer-focused by management, but some do not feel adequately rewarded for it unless they reach their budget. One employee further stated that Telenor contradicts themselves and employees therefore feel less committed to deliver on the brand promise:

It's stupid of Telenor. If they want us to do it the right way, they need to give us the prerequisites to do it [...] They [Telenor] shoot themselves in the foot

(Employee, 2013)

One employee perceives that Telenor pays too much attention to actions that are not in line with the formulated brand promise, thus contradicting Marshall and Mayer's (2012) argument of celebrating the right behavior. For example, the employee perceives management as more attentive when employees sell a lot than when having satisfied customers. The employee also perceives quantity of sales as given most attention at the Sales Academy:

Last year someone got the price for having most fans, and no one really cheered for that person [...] These events need to correspond with how we live

(Employee, 2013)

The employee further pointed to that this decreases commitment to deliver on the brand promise. This was supported by other employees who criticized the commission model and the NPS-system and claimed that they are not given the right tools to be able to deliver on the brand promise:

If the customer is to evaluate me, and give me a fan index [NPS score], then I need to have the right prerequisite to deliver, need to have the right tools. Telenor has become better, but they still don't live up to it

(Employee, 2013)

Loyalty - 'I almost want to have a Telenor tattoo'

To further see how employees process employee branding means, signs and indications of loyalty were looked for. We found indications of loyalty with all employees since they expressed that they would never work for another mobile network operator, even though several had received offers with higher positions and better wage. When asking the question of whether they could see a future working at Telenor, several employees also expressed a longing to stay. Such dedication to the employer is argued to be a sign of loyalty (e.g. Eskildsen & Nüssler 2000; Punjaisri et al. 2008). There were several reasons for employees' willingness to stay with Telenor, for example due to opportunities to grow within the company and due to their willingness to give something back to Telenor due to gratitude:

I really love my work. I more or less prioritize it in all aspects [of life]

(Employee, 2013)

Well, you feel gratitude, so of course you want to give something back

(Employee, 2013)

If you would ask me like this, would I defend Telenor in a private situation? Yes I would, I think we're the best

(Employee, 2013)

Feeling responsible for the company's success and exerting efforts to give back to the company, are described as signs of loyalty (e.g Eskildsen & Nüssler, 2000; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri et al. 2008). We found that one employee, when talking about if he felt part of Telenor, could see the success of the company as his own:

Yes I do [feel the success as my own]. Almost like I want to have a Telenor tattoo. It's my company as well as anyone else's

(Employee, 2013)

The quotes above show signs of loyalty to Telenor, which could be a consequence of the employees' commitment to the company and to deliver the brand promise. When asked about Telenor as an employer, one regional manager manifests identification, commitment and loyalty as well as appreciation of the company:

I only have good things to say [shows her tattoo]

(Regional Manager, 2013)



Pic 1. Telenor Logotype Tattoo. (Source: Regional Manager, 2013)

The regional manager shows identification, commitment and loyalty to Telenor through a tattoo of the brand logotype, and exemplifies the wish to transfer this commitment to the store employees:

Don't work here just because it's a job, work here because you really want it, because you're dedicated to go to work everyday

(Regional Manager, 2013)

This indicates how employees are encouraged to feel a sense of purpose with going to work everyday. The importance of a sense of purpose at work is stressed by Ind (2007:29) who further relates it to reaching self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. So, when feeling a sense of purpose with going to work, and when achieving individual potential, self-actualization can be reached. Indications of this was found with two employees, as they expressed that their foremost reason for staying at Telenor was due to their opportunity for personal growth. Thus Telenor offers them opportunities to achieve self-actualization.

Loyalty Barrier - *Is it all about the money?*

Management stated the importance of employees being driven by other factors than purely financial ones, and the statement seems to be valid when talking with employees about what motivates them to stay at Telenor. Two employees however indicated that the foremost reason for them staying in the company at the moment, is the good wage. These two employees were also the ones who showed fewest indications of a future working at Telenor. Punjaisri et al. (2008) argue that an intention to stay in the company is a sign of loyalty, but this was not found with these two employees, thus indicating a lower degree of loyalty. One of the employees, whose intention is to start studying, indicated that the work is more seen as a way to earn livelihood, and did not have the intention to stay at Telenor even when starting in the company. The other employee on the other hand, who has been working at Telenor since before the transformation, still seemed to have a bit of the old culture left within him, and, even though indicating that personal growth was important, he indicated that the foremost reason for staying at Telenor was financial incentives:

[I stay at Telenor] mostly due to the wage, maybe not in the long term [...] So I guess that's the reason why I've stayed, one has had plans of becoming Store Manager some day

(Employee, 2013)

Some employees thus foremost see financial incentives as motivating them to stay at Telenor. None of them however see financial incentives as a major driver for delivering the brand promise. Seeing purely financial incentives as a motivator to stay in the company thus rather could affect employees' loyalty to the employer, than loyalty to deliver on the brand promise.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EMPLOYEE BRANDING PROCESS

Below, the factors influencing the employee branding process will be described. The analysis of these influential factors were based on those presented in our analysis model; Clarity and Key Objective, Emotional Attachment, and Personal Factors. One more factor was found to have influence on employees' perceptions and processing of employee branding means, namely the leadership of store managers.

Clarity and Key Objective

It was observed that out of the many employee branding means, YAMAT was the most appreciated. Ind (2007:175) advocates simple messages to be able to understand the cause employees are to join. This was confirmed when employees explained that they really appreciated how Telenor communicated their corporate values and where the company is heading during YAMAT. We found that the positive perceptions of YAMAT influenced the employees' commitment to deliver on the brand promise since YAMAT gave them a clear picture of the brand promise. However, several employees indicated that due to the rapid changes in the company, it is difficult to stay on track. They indicated that they do not always know who to turn to and emphasize that they want more clarity in decisions. They also explained that they do not always know the purpose with upcoming changes and that these are not always established in the way they work in the stores. This might have an affect on their motivation to deliver on the changes:

I don't have any problems with changes as long as I understand them, why we do them [...] It's a dictatorship, but you still have to communicate the intention if you want to get the people along with you

(Employee, 2013)

Who sits up there? They are never on the floor like us, they decide on a new thing and you think 'have they never been in a store to see how it looks like?'

(Employee, 2013)

Some employees emphasized that follow-up on new initiatives are lacking. They also emphasized that their contribution to changes and initiatives are not always communicated back to them. This could be an indication of that the employees do not see how they can contribute to the success of employee branding, which is argued by Boyd and Sutherland (2006) to be of great importance to get employees to deliver in the brand promise. The unclarity of what is going on and of what the purpose of changes are, shows that Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Ind's (2007:175) emphasis on simple and clear messages is not completely reflected in the employee perspective at Telenor. This might negatively influence the employees' processing of the employee branding means.

Emotional Attachment

When studying how employees' identification, commitment and loyalty could be affected by influential factors, it was found that employees' emotional attachment to Telenor had an effect on how they processed the employee branding means. Several employees emphasized their trust and confidence in Telenor as an employer. Employees were found to experience a beneficial relationship to the employer where they feel that they get back what they have given Telenor. This is aligned to the theory of psychological contracts within employee branding, emphasized by King and Grace (2008). One Employee even expressed a feeling of getting more back from Telenor than he gives to the company. He also communicated that he feel that Telenor appreciates him and encourages him to do a good job, thus indicating his emotional attachment to Telenor. Berry et al. (1976) argue that opportunities for personal development contribute to job satisfaction, and in line with this an employee told how Telenor had provided personal development:

I love Telenor, [...] I've grown a lot as a person since I started working here. I would recommend it [Telenor] to others

(Employee, 2013)

It was also found that the employees' mutual beliefs and the dynamics of the employee - employer relationship influenced their psychological contract to Telenor. They feel that they have opportunities for personal growth, as well as to climb within Telenor:

There's no limit to it, if we look at the Regional Managers, they started of as salespeople, as long as you want to and bring the A-game [...] There really are opportunities. Telenor is probably one of few [places] where you can grow from nowhere

(Employee, 2013)

I'd heard about it [opportunities to develop] earlier, [they] make sure to show the opportunities within the company, [they] really encourage it

(Employee, 2013)

The three quotations above show that the employees feel that Telenor has made them better people and that there is no end to what you can become at Telenor. Building on Miles and Mangold's (2004) description of the psychological contract, we found that employees feel trust towards the company and that the expectations they have of their employer are fulfilled, thus indicating a strong psychological contract. These employees also indicated strong commitment and loyalty to the company, which might be a result of their emotional attachment to Telenor.

Emotional Attachment Barrier

Some employees, although emphasizing that they feel trust towards Telenor, indicated that there are some aspects that they are not so satisfied with, which might have an affect on their identification, commitment and loyalty to deliver on brand promise. When talking about Telenor as an employer they explained both ups and downs. One employee refers to this when talking about how the company only supports when everything runs smoothly. Another employee explained that people who do not live up to the brand promise are not given as much help as those who do. A third employee stated that the company is good for people who can take high pressure to deliver and who live up to the expectations, but not for those who can not:

They are pretty good, for some, bad for others [...] many salespeople haven't found the motivation to sell, haven't had the support from Telenor [...] It's a good place for me, but I can see it hasn't been for everyone

(Employee, 2013)

Although several employees emphasize great opportunities for personal development, others explained that growth is mainly provided for employees who want to climb the corporate ladder and not for those who want to improve skills and knowledge of other dimensions of the business. One employee also expressed that after all, the career opportunities are limited:

You get a picture that, what the heck, there are actually opportunities, you can become anything, but then you realize, there aren't that many steps that are realistic

(Employee, 2013)

Some employees indicated discontent with Telenor and others pointed to limited opportunities to what Telenor can offer them. This might weaken their emotional attachment to the company, which in turn can decrease commitment. Another employee, on the other hand, contradicts the above stated quote by arguing that career opportunities and a beneficial employee-employer relationship are up to the employees themselves:

It's all about what you make of it [...] you'll probably sit in an interview with people who say 'no, I don't think so' but it's their responsibility [...] if you don't bring your A-game, why should they invest in you?

(Employee, 2013)

Personal Factors

When examining the interview accounts, it is evident that personal characteristics are important factors that can influence employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to deliver on brand promise. What was found most interesting, is how employees whose personal char-

acteristics correspond to Telenor's values, are the ones who indicated strong commitment and loyalty. This is in line with Punjaisri and Wilson's (2011) findings. They were also the ones who had best experiences with the transformation, since they already possessed the new values:

I had a pretty good advantage when the transformation came, because it was exactly how I wanted to work

(Employee, 2013)

Employees who possess values equal to those of the company and can see a future working at Telenor, were found to be more committed to deliver on the brand promise. Most employees also expressed fondness of selling. Referring to themselves as salespeople, they told that they are motivated by commission and that if the commission would be withdrawn, they would only be shop assistants. One employee however expressed selling as uninspiring and do not see a future working at Telenor. This is in line with Simintiras et al.'s (2012) argument that people who do not like selling are less likely to be committed to the retail organization. Thus the disliking of selling might negatively affect the employee's commitment and loyalty towards Telenor:

I feel that I stand still at the moment [...] and I don't really enjoy selling [...] As it is now I don't want to stay working full time at Telenor, even if I shouldn't start studying

(Employee, 2013)

Punjaisri et al. (2008) further argue that age and level of education have an effect on employees' commitment and loyalty towards the organization. This is found evident when examining the interview accounts. The age of the employees interviewed ranges between 21 and 29. The ones who indicated strong commitment and loyalty towards Telenor were generally older than those indicating the opposite. The loyal employees were also the ones who did not plan a formal education and instead could see a future working at Telenor due to the career opportunities in the company. Commitment to deliver on the brand promise was further noted to be somewhat dependent upon what personal goals you have with working in the company:

Well, the values, it depends on what goal you have with working at Telenor, the values are a bit boring to live up to if you don't plan to stay in the company. [...] If you have plans to do something different, then these values are a bit pale

(Employee, 2013)

Conclusively, it was found that personal characteristics, liking selling and seeing a potential future working in the company have a great influence on employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to Telenor. Indications were found that age and level of education might affect the employees identification, commitment and loyalty, this is however difficult assure due to the small sample in this study.

The Importance of the Store Manager

Something not found emphasized to a large extent in theory, but prominent in the interview accounts, was how store managers and their style of leadership affected the employees. The store managers, can be seen as the intermediary between management and the salespeople. The store manager's role is to coach and monitor their salespeople to make sure they deliver on the brand promise. It was found among employees that the store manager has great importance in motivating and engaging them to deliver the brand promise. Several employees indicated that their motivation to change focus from being sales driven to customer focused was all about getting the right incentives, which usually is provided by the store manager, but also that their leaders walks the talk and are good role models. This supports Urde's (2009) argument that leaders' brand-related attitudes and behaviors should be authentic, which further can influence employees' commitment to deliver on the brand promise.

What you encourage, that's what they get good at. It's human, one wants to be seen, get credit, that's worth so much more than money

(Store Manager, 2013)

The store manager stressed that drawing attention to and encouraging the right behavior is the key to motivating employees to deliver on the brand promise. This is clearly in line with Marshall and Mayer's (2012) argument that the right employee behavior should be elevated, and is also supported by one employee when talking about what he thought was the reason to why some salespeople had difficulties to change focus:

Maybe there is not as clear leadership in those stores. [...] Put the right people on the right positions. That I think is the most important change they are doing right now. To put people with the right values on the right positions

(Employee, 2013)

Three employee interviewees, from the above mentioned store manager's store, put great emphasis on delivering on the brand promise, which we found interesting. They told of a leadership style that had helped them to change focus and to now see the value in satisfying customers and in not just being driven by money. One employee argued that when Telenor started to communicate the new direction, the salespeople in his store already worked according to the new direction. So, what was encouraged and given attention to, such as personal growth and satisfying customers, was found to be the most important motivator for the salespeople in this store:

In our store its not about earning as much money as possible [...] For me its more about personal growth within the company [...] I think it's very rewarding when you realize that the customer really appreciate what you do for them

(Employee, 2013)

PERSPECTIVES OF THE TRANSFORMATION

To summarize the empirical analysis, perspectives of the transformation as a whole will be presented. When analyzing Telenor's employee branding means, the employees' perceptions and processing of these, as well as the factors influencing this process, we have found that the transformation of Telenor Stores to a large extent successfully has been accomplished. This was also indicated with both the management and employee perspectives.

Management interviewees emphasize that a transformation of this size has to be given plenty of time to settle. The Head of Stores argue that the change of direction was received with massive initial resistance, because of a very self-congratulating culture, partly as a result of the high wages employees received for their work. An employee added another potential reason to the resistance:

You always enter a phase of rejection, before you reach comprehension and eventually change, that's natural

(Employee, 2013)

The Head of Stores however further argued that the transformation was more easily accepted because no one was completely comfortable with how the business was previously run:

Everyone knew it was chaos, and everyone felt a bit bad, because it wasn't right: to bulldoze customers and cheat in sales competitions, cheat in models, it really was a lot of cheating

(Head of Stores, 2013)

This view was confirmed with the employees, who refer to the past behavior as 'gross cross', basically meaning to sell as much as possible, whatever it takes. Though none of our employee interviewees express appreciation of that type of selling, several mentions that some of their colleagues had a hard time dropping it when the transformation started. However, when asked to describe exactly what 'gross cross' means, one employee began with:

The opposite of what Telenor wants us to do now...

(Employee, 2013)

This quote clearly indicates the change of direction, away from 'gross cross'. In management interview accounts, there is a general perception that the transformation has been successful, and that employees are now given plenty of tools to be able to deliver the new brand promise. Although employees not always agree with the latter notion, they provided a picture that Telenor Stores has transformed in the right direction, from sales-driven to customer-focused. A metaphor commonly used by employees is related to two competitors, 3 and Telia, with 3 symbolizing the old way or 'gross cross', and Telia symbolizing something more noble; a

company that takes care of customers. In emphasizing that Telenor has moved away from the likes of 3, towards Telia, employees described their perspective of the transformation.

Conclusively, relating this to the organizational narrative described in the beginning of this chapter, only one out of eight interviewed employees would still not send friends and family into any given Telenor store, thus indicating a massive change of attitude among employees. The Head of Stores describes:

I asked the same question less than a year ago, 'How many would do it today?'... maybe 70-75% raised their hand. That was good news, pointing out that it should be 100% raising their hands next year. That was also important in another aspect; They were starting to get proud!

(Head of Stores, 2013)

Chapter 5 Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the case study and answer our research question, 'How are means of employee branding perceived by employees and subsequently processed into identification, commitment and loyalty to the brand promise, and which factors can influence the result?'

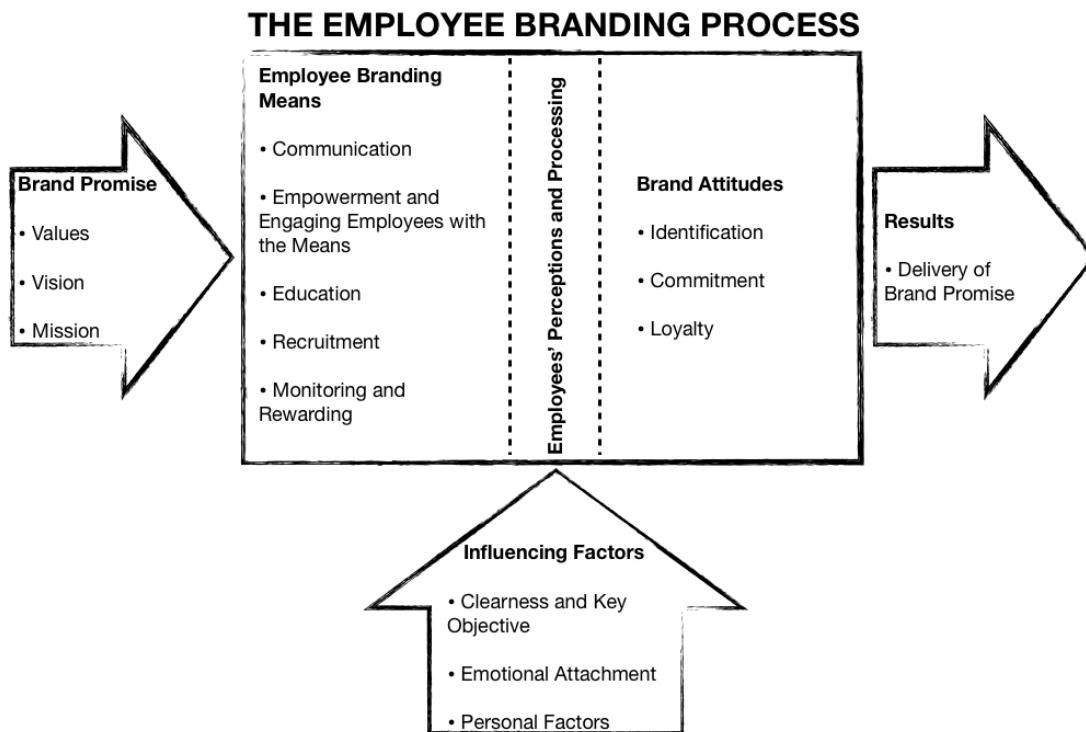


Fig. 9 The Employee Branding Process Model. (*Own model*)

The Employee Branding Process Model has been used as a guide when analyzing the empirical material. Throughout the research process, it was found that the employee branding means at Telenor are conducted simultaneously and interdependently as has been advocated in theory (e.g. Burmann et al. 2009; Sartain, 2005). This has contributed to that the means and influential factors are difficult to separate since they often are intertwined and cover many different dimensions in the model. One example can be found in Telenor's change in what should motivate employees; from high wages to personal development. This change

involved the means of communication, education and recruitment, and also contributed to employees' emotional attachment to the company.

Initially, employee branding's role in transforming Telenor will be discussed. The research question and the Employee Branding Process Model will thereafter guide the discussion. Thus, employees' *perceptions* of the means will first be discussed, followed by how employees *process the means into identification, commitment and loyalty*. *Influential factors* will be discussed separately as in the model, but also in accordance to where they are found to have influenced the employee branding process the most. Finally, there will be a concluding discussion with reflections on the transformation and employee branding.

TRANSFORMING TELENOR THROUGH EMPLOYEE BRANDING

Hatch and Schultz (2008:84) argue that large alignment gaps naturally occur when organizations face radical strategic changes. This happened with Telenor Stores three years ago, when management wanted to transform the business and the culture. A gap was created, with a new customer-centric and value-focused brand promise on one side, and a sales-driven organizational culture on the other. Thus *a gap was created* between the communicated brand promise and the prevailing culture, creating two contradictive identities in the organization. The challenge for the newly appointed Head of Stores was to *close the gap*, which became a transformation process containing a number of employee branding means.

Before conducting the study we were not aware of the scale of change Telenor had gone through during the last years. Thus surprisingly, we were faced with a massive opportunity not only to study the employee perspective of the employee branding process, but also the transformation of an organizational culture. Employee branding means at Telenor was found to be means to succeed with transforming the entire organization, besides being means to engage employees with an existing brand promise. This transformational context of the employee branding process at Telenor has had great impact on how employee branding is conducted by management, and perceived and processed by employees.

Conclusively, an alignment gap between the formulated brand promise and the organizational culture calls for a transformation of the organization to make the culture more aligned to the brand promise. In this study, employee branding has been found to be an effective way to transform an organization, thus linking the importance of employee branding theories to transformations of organizations. When conducting employee branding to transform an organization, there is however a need to understand the employee perspective. The prevailing organizational culture can be explored through the employee perspective, since employees attitudes and behaviors form the culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2008:11). Thus, to be able to ex-

amine the success of employee branding to transform the culture, the employee perspective of the employee branding means and of the transformation, has to be taken into account.

EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEE BRANDING MEANS

Empowerment and Engagement - *Feeling Involved and Empowered to Contribute*

Telenor has engaged in employee branding in a substantial number of ways. When studying the employee perspective of the employee branding process we have found that the employee branding means at Telenor generally have been perceived as positive. These positive perceptions of the employee branding means have increased during the transformation, for example as employees more and more have felt that they have had the chance to give input to the transformation. This supports Marshall and Mayer's (2012) emphasis to *engage* the employees with the employee branding means. Thus, letting employees *contribute* to the employee branding means have had a positive effect on their perceptions of the means and the transformation. This finding contradicts Boyd & Sutherland's (2006) implication that employee input to development and implementation of employee branding is unnecessary.

The different employee branding means, ranging from million crown projects such as YAMAT, to smaller ones, such as printing company values on back office walls, have all had the intention to communicate the change of direction from sales-driven to customer-focused and to try to get employees to deliver on the brand promise. The bigger employee branding means, in particular YAMAT, have made employees realize that Telenor really intended to transform the business. Evaluation tools such as the Closed Feedback Loop have given the employees the opportunity to monitor their own progress in contributing to this change of direction, and have thus made them more *involved* in the transformation. These means have *empowered* employees by giving them a comprehension of their *individual contribution to the transformation*, which we can see have had a positive impact on their perceptions of the means.

The transformation has consisted of a large number of both big and small initiatives contributing to employees' *understanding* of the transformation. Drawing on this, we believe that employees' positive perceptions of individual employee branding means has come as a result of the aggregated impact of all employee branding means. Thus, as argued in theory, employee branding means are most effective when used simultaneously and interdependently (e.g. Burmann et al. 2009). This is found particularly evident in Telenor employees' perception of 'the right direction': The fact that employees perceive moving from a sales-driven to a customer-focused organization, as moving in the right direction, indicates that Telenor has implemented employee branding successfully. The aggregated number of employee branding means has *provided employees with a shared perception of the new direction*, and this direction has become something that *employees unite around*. This is for example portrayed in the

narrative when employees describe Telenor as moving away from one competitor, 3, towards another, Telia. Thus, the feeling of a shared purpose among employees has facilitated the transformation at Telenor.

Education - *Personal Development through Organizational Education*

Another dimension we perceive as contributing to employees' positive perceptions of the employee branding means are the opportunities for personal development through organizational education. Employee branding practices should aim to develop human potential (e.g. Berry et al. 1976). This was found at Telenor, where management wants Telenor to be perceived as an employer that provides personal development through organizational education. We found several employees who both had started to work at Telenor and wanted to stay in the company due to opportunities for both personal and professional development, which shows success with this management goal. This implies that when employees have opportunities for both personal and professional development within the company, they can contribute to the success of the company while at the same time fulfilling their individual goals. This potential dual objective of employee branding practices to fulfill both individual and organizational goals is argued by Berry et al. (1976) to be of great importance. Conclusively, we perceive that the employees' perception of Telenor as a provider of personal growth have *strengthened their emotional attachment to Telenor*, and simultaneously made them more positive towards the employee branding means.

Communication - *Inconsistencies in Communication*

Employees generally emphasized that Telenor's vision and values have been well communicated. They also provided coherent perceptions of what Telenor stands for when talking about Telenor's values and vision. We however found that they first and foremost referred to professionalism before stating the four corporate values. This indicates that the essence of what the Head of Sales want the employees to portray, namely being professional, has been internalized to a larger degree than the corporate values. This could be a result of too many changes in the brand promise, the large stream of different initiatives being implemented during the last years, as well as the lack of follow-up to value-based initiatives such as YAMAT. This may not imply any direct problems, but if employees first and foremost relate to professionalism rather than to the communicated brand promise (i.e. vision and corporate values), there is a risk that the organizational culture over time heads in a different direction than the formulated brand promise. Thus, continuous reflection on brand values, follow-up on branding programs such as YAMAT, and communicating a coherent brand message are keys to make employees enabled to deliver the communicated brand promise over time. This reasoning highlights the importance of factors influencing the employee branding process such as *consistency in communication* (e.g. Mitchell, 2002), as well as *clarity in defining a simple brand promise* (e.g. Ind, 2007:175) that employees can easily comprehend.

Rewarding - Discrepancies in Perceptions of Rewarding

Even though the transformation is perceived as successful, the employee perspective provides a picture of some dimensions of the business that are not completely satisfying. Some employees described a misalignment between incentives and delivery of the brand promise as restraining them to deliver the change of direction and the brand promise. In the analysis we found that some employees perceive Telenor's commission model to still primarily benefit the employees who favor the old way of 'gross cross'-selling rather than those who want to deliver on the customer focused brand promise. Several employees emphasized the importance of commission as a motivating factor in their profession. However, when employees are not primarily rewarded for the right brand behavior, i.e. selling according to the brand promise, the incentives are counterproductive to delivery of the brand promise. Thus, Telenor on the one hand communicates their customer focused brand promise, but on the other hand are perceived to in some aspects reward the opposite behavior.

The management interviewees however provide a picture where Telenor have managed to reward the right behaviors and to give employees the right tools for delivery of the brand promise. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the management and employee perspective. This was also found evident in other aspects of employees' perceptions of the employee branding means. Management interviewees emphasized the importance of celebrating employees' delivery of the brand promise by giving them attention and encouragement, as for example at the Sales Academy. Employees however perceive the prize for selling the most as the most attractive prize at the Sales Academy. Some employees thus feel that Telenor communicates the importance of selling according to the brand promise, but mostly gives attention to those selling most in numbers. This was found to negatively affect employees' perceptions and processing of employee branding means. Thus concluding, in accordance with Berry et al.'s (1976) argument, that long-term brand statements will not be lived up to if rewarding programs still are built on short-term economic goals.

These perceived discrepancies between the management and employee perspective imply the importance of understanding the employee perspective, yet again to prevent the employees from heading in another direction than the communicated brand promise. Understanding the employee perspective of the employee branding process is therefore crucial to achieve the most successful results of employee branding means. This has to a large extent been accomplished at Telenor, but there are some dimensions that still negatively can affect employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to Telenor and the brand promise. If not fully emphasizing and acknowledging employees' needs and motivations to deliver on the brand promise, and primarily reward and celebrate brand related attitudes and behaviors, the alignment gap between the communicated brand promise and the organizational culture will be difficult to close.

Recruitment - *Recruiting According to the Brand Promise*

As emphasized by the Head of Stores, not everyone would enjoy the new direction of the company. Telenor therefore had to work with employee turnover as an employee branding means to create a workforce that could identify with the new direction. It was found that many employees not agreeing with the company's new direction have left during the transformation. Those who chose to stay express that the transformation has made Telenor stand for something, which is more aligned to their personal characteristics, *thus indicating personal factors as an influential factor to the employee branding process*. This was also found evident among the recently employed, thus indicating that Telenor has managed to *recruit according to the new brand promise*. These findings highlight the importance of employees' personal characteristics' alignment to corporate values to facilitate identification with the organization and the brand. Recruitment and working with employee turnover thus become essential tools when working with employee branding to transform an organizational culture.

EMPLOYEES' PROCESSING INTO IDENTIFICATION, COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY

Identification - *Identifying with the new Direction*

When asking employees about their identification with Telenor, two messages were evident in all interviewee accounts. First, it was clearly found that employees stressed that they could not identify with what Telenor used to be, as well as what Telenor used to stand for. Second, we found that several employees feel comfortable to express identification with the new customer focus and what Telenor has become today. Some employees also mention that they previously were more focused on financial incentives rather than satisfying customers. This indicates that employee branding have helped employees change their focus and that the means have facilitated their identification with Telenor. We also found that the entirety of employee branding means, engaging employees from several directions, has changed employees' perceptions of the company. In light of the above it can be concluded that the employee branding means and the new direction have increased employees' identification with Telenor and the brand promise.

Commitment - *Commitment through Customer Focus*

Although employees point to the importance of commission in their profession, we found that all interviewees indicated positive customer feedback as the most important motivator in their work. They often expressed satisfying customers as giving work a sense of purpose, which indirectly can be seen as commitment to deliver on the customer focused brand promise. This commitment is found to have increased since Telenor changed focus from sales-driven to customer focused. We could however also see that the employees' negative perceptions of some dimensions of Telenor's employee branding means negatively influenced their com-

mitment to deliver on the brand promise. For example, employees expressed that the commission model can work counterproductively and reduce commitment to deliver on the brand promise, particularly for employees who primarily are motivated by financial incentives. Thus, when studying the employee perspective, we have found that when employees see the brand promise as the prime motivator, and as giving work a sense of purpose, employees will be more likely to be committed to deliver on the brand promise.

Commitment and Loyalty - Building on Emotional Attachment

When studying the employee perspective, we found that the employees' emotional attachment to Telenor increased their commitment and loyalty to the company and to deliver on the brand promise. This since employees expressed that they want to give back what they have received from their employer. Receiving opportunities for both personal growth and achieving self-actualization, has provided some employees with an even deeper emotional attachment to Telenor, whereby some even describe Telenor as giving them security or providing a sense of family. These expressions of deep emotional attachment can further contribute to even stronger employee commitment and loyalty to Telenor. This could be exemplified by employees' expressions of wishes to stay in the company and their emphasis of the success of the company as their own personal success. The link between emotional attachment and brand commitment and loyalty was also found in Burmann and Zeplin's (2005) study.

We have however also found that some dimensions of the employee branding means have a weakening effect on employees' emotional attachment to Telenor. For example, inconsistencies in communication and discrepancies between the management and employee perspective, is found to negatively affect employees' emotional attachment to Telenor. Further, employees' explanations of when Telenor sometimes fail to live up to their expectations are found to negatively impact the psychological contract to their employer. This risks reducing the emotional attachment to Telenor and can subsequently decrease commitment and loyalty to the brand promise. Based on this reasoning, employees' emotional attachment to their employer has great influence on their commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand promise, thus indicating *emotional attachment as an important influential factor to the employee branding process*.

In light of this discussion, we have found the increased commitment and loyalty as a result of the customer-centric focus and the change from motivating employees with money to motivating them with opportunities for personal growth. We can thus conclude that employee branding means have played a great role in enhancing employees' commitment and loyalty to the brand promise.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Clarity and Key Objective - *Top Priority but a Somewhat Unclear Brand Promise*

Boyd and Sutherland (2006) argued for the need to make employee branding a key objective. Making employee branding a key objective is evident in the case of Telenor, as several parts of the company was involved in transforming the organizational culture. Thus, by using several means, such as recruitment, internal education, rewarding systems and more, Telenor has managed to create a shared understanding among of where the company wants to be in the future. Regarding clarity in communication, this was emphasized as extremely important by management. However, this was not found completely corresponding with the employee perspective. Although the essence of Telenor's brand promise has been communicated, too many different values and changes in vision statements during the transformation have made some employees confused regarding the definition of the brand promise. Perceptions of a confused brand promise can have a negative affect on employees' commitment to the brand promise since they do not know what to live up to. Thus, making employee branding a key objective and unclarity in communication has both positively and negatively influenced employees' perceptions of and processing if the means.

Emotional Attachment - *Emotional Attachment through Personal Growth*

Along with the transformation, Telenor changed the main focus for attracting and retaining employees from financial incentives to opportunities for personal growth and career development. We found this change acknowledged when studying the employee perspective. Employees feel that the company invests in their personal growth and gives them career opportunities, whereby they feel gratitude and a need to give something back to Telenor. This is found in their expressions of that they feel that their relationship with the company is more beneficial now than before, even though they on average receive lower wages than prior to the transformation. Relating this to the psychological contract (e.g. Miles & Mangold, 2004), we perceive that employees feel that the company fulfills their expectations to a very large extent. This we believe has had lead to increased emotional attachment to the employer, which subsequently has an affect on their commitment to the brand promise. Thus, Telenor has actively contributed to the increased emotional attachment and commitment by changing the main focus regarding employee incentives from high wages to personal growth.

Personal Factors - *Personal Factors Matter*

Personal factors are found to have an impact on employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand. Personal factors can be difficult for organizations to control, but Telenor has managed to recruit employees with identities overlapping the brand promise. Employees whose individual characteristics are aligned to the brand promise are further found to be more committed to deliver on the brand promise. Punjaisri et al. (2008) identify age and level of education as two personal factors and argue that younger employees

and employees with high levels of education are less likely to be committed to the organization. This was found to only be moderately true among the interviewees, and however difficult to assure due to the small sample size.

What however is found to be evident and mostly affect employees' identification, commitment and loyalty are how long they have worked in the company, their wish to stay, as well as if they enjoy selling. For example, employees who can see a future working at Telenor are found to be more committed to deliver on the brand promise. This might be a result of that they believe delivery of brand promise will gain them in the future.

The Importance of Store Managers - *An additional influential factor*

The importance of leadership dedication and authenticity in employee branding (e.g. Urde, 2009) has been emphasized in theory. The importance of lower managerial levels, such as store managers, have however not been stressed to a large extent in employee branding literature. We found that Telenor emphasizes store managers as important for making employees deliver the brand promise.

However, the store managers were found to have greater influence on employees' delivery of the brand promise than we expected. With the employee perspective, we found the store manager's coaching leadership style as one of the main drivers for changing focus from being sales-driven to being customer focused. The store manager's encouragements, attention and caring have a great impact in motivating and engaging employees to be committed to deliver on the brand promise. The relationship to the store manager was also found to affect the employee's emotional attachment to Telenor in a positive way, as well as affect the employee's feeling of proximity to top management.

The store manager is the only superior Telenor representative that employees meet in their everyday work, and thus has great importance in portraying the brand promise to employees and act as a role model. Therefore, brand-aligned communication and behavior from the store manager can facilitate employees' forming of brand supporting attitudes and behavior. This implies that close leadership can facilitate employees' delivery of the brand promise, *thus making leaders an additional factor influencing the employee branding process.*

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

A Successful Transformation

Telenor has during the last three years actively worked with employee branding to try to close the alignment gap that was created and get the organizational culture to reflect the communicated brand promise. The transformation has included several diverse means with the aim to engage employees with the brand promise. We perceive Telenor to have succeeded with employee branding and we also believe that the company has reached very far in transforming the organizational culture towards closing the alignment gap. We have found indications of that brand identification, commitment and loyalty has increased as a result of the employee branding efforts spreading the change of direction from sales-driven to customer focus. The change in incentive focus, from high wages to personal development, has increased employees' emotional attachment, which in turn has increased commitment and loyalty to the organization. We found factors influencing the employee branding process, such as emotional attachment, clarity in communication, and personal characteristics, to mostly have had a positive impact to Telenor's successful transformation. We further found great importance in the leadership closest to employees, the store managers, in enabling employees to adapt to the new direction and facilitate commitment and loyalty to the organization and the brand promise.

Critical Reflections

The discrepancy between the management and the employee perspective on some employee branding means may slow down further transformational progress towards completely closing the alignment gap. There is however reason to question whether an organizational culture completely aligned to the brand promise is the most preferable outcome. If everyone portrays equal values and identities and further strives in the same direction without anyone questioning circumstances, the organization might become more or less a sect. When taking it to the extreme, employee branding can thus become means of brainwashing employees instead of creating a shared organizational culture aligned to the brand promise. Totally aligned thinking could further be emphasized to have possible negative consequences for business. For example, there is the risk that the direction everyone strives in turns out to be the wrong direction, without anyone noticing. An organization where everyone has the same opinions may as well hamper innovation, as no one questions prevalent circumstances.

There is also reason to question whether Telenor really ought to strive for an organizational culture fully aligned to the brand promise. The specific context, in which Telenor operates in, that of mobile network operators, is characterized by a strong sales and revenue focused culture, undoubtedly contributing to the success of many organizations in this sector. When solely being driven by a customer focus the sales dimension risks being forgotten. Not to forget is also how employees, as in Telenor's case, often choose to work in this sector partly due to commission and financial incentives. Therefore, a balance between being sales and

customer focused can be preferable in this particular sector to maintain competitiveness and attractiveness as an employer.

Finally, it should be considered if complete employee commitment and loyalty is favorable in the long-term for any organization. The retail sector that Telenor operates in, is as well characterized by a fast pace of changes, not least technically. Thus, there might be a need to work with employee turnover and recruitment, to get new and different perspectives into the organization.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the general implications that can be drawn from this study will be presented. First, the main findings will be outlined. Second, the study's contribution to theory will be discussed. Third, implications for managers engaging in employee branding will be listed and finally, suggestions for further research will be given.

MAIN FINDINGS

Transforming through Employee Branding

In this study, it has been found that employee branding can be used to successfully transform an organization to make it more aligned to the brand promise. Employee branding can create a shared understanding among employees of where the company is heading, as well as give employees a sense of purpose in delivering the brand promise. To achieve these outcomes, employee branding means have to be plentiful and engage employees from multiple angles. The most appreciated means among employees are those that make them feel involved in transforming the organization, as well as those that enable employees to monitor their own contribution to the transformation.

The Employee Branding Process - from the Employee Perspective

To address the problems that many companies have brand promises but far from all deliver on them, and that many attempts to transform organizations fails, we wanted to study the employee perspective of the employee branding process as well as factors influencing the result. By doing this, we have confirmed the initial assumption that employee branding is more than *merely initiating* employee branding to a successful outcome. It is an extensive *process* with managers as *initiators* of employee branding means and employees as *receivers* of such. There are as well *factors influencing the success* of the employee branding means and employees' perception and processing of such. A *comprehensive picture* of employee branding can thus be obtained when seeing it as a process.

By studying the employee perspective of the employee branding process, we could explore how employees perceive employee branding means and process them into identification, commitment and loyalty. We could also explore how factors can influence both the employee branding means and employees' perceptions and processing of such. Thus, when taking the *entire process* into account, *understanding can be reached* on employees' perceptions and processing of the means, as well as which factors might influencing the result. We have found four dimensions related to the employee branding process to have great impact on em-

employees' perceptions of the employee branding means, and further their processing of such into identification, commitment and loyalty: I. Alignment between means and the brand promise, II. Employees' emotional attachment to the employer, III. The importance of the store manager, and IV. Fulfilling both individual and organizational goals.

I. Alignment between Means and the Brand Promise

For employee branding means to be successful, employees must experience coherence in the intention of the means. Otherwise, employees will experience mixed messages and become confused and less motivated to process the means into identification, commitment and loyalty to the company. Thus, a prerequisite for employees to deliver on the brand promise is to make all incentives aligned to the brand promise, as well as giving attention and encouraging the right brand attitudes and behaviors. When all employee branding means are aligned to the brand promise in a coherent and consistent way, employees can get a better comprehension of the brand promise and what to deliver on.

II. Emotionally Attached Employees Are More Committed and Loyal

Employees that feel an emotional attachment to the organization are more likely to be committed and loyal to the company and the brand promise. This because when employees feel an emotional attachment, due to a strong psychological contract, they see the employer-employee relationship as beneficial and want to give something back for all they receive from their employer.

III. Importance of the Store Manager - Facilitates Commitment and Loyalty

The store manager can substantially impact employee delivery of the brand promise. The store manager is the employees' closest leader and the only management representative employees meet on a daily basis. They, as leaders, therefore have a great responsibility in portraying the brand promise to employees and act as role models. By acting as role models, and by giving attention and encouraging the right brand attitudes and behavior, the store managers can facilitate employees' commitment and loyalty to the brand promise.

IV. Dual Objective: Benefit both Employees and the Organization

Several employee branding means have dual objectives of both benefiting employees and the organization. An example is when education gives opportunities for both personal and professional growth. Employees can then through education develop both personal and business related skills, thus fulfilling both individual and organizational goals. Another example is by recruiting employees with values corresponding to the organizational values. Thus, when employees deliver on their own values, they also deliver on the organizational values, i.e. brand promise. When employee branding means have the dual objective of benefiting both the individual and the organization, employees are more likely to engage in the means.

CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

In line with the purpose and the research question, this study have explored the employee perspective of the employee branding process, as well as the factors influencing this process, within a retail context. The study contributes with comprehensive understanding of the employee perspective and the influential factors as crucial to employee branding success. This study also contributes to theory with a thoroughly examined empirical example of employee branding in the shape of an organizational transformation within the retail sector. As far as possible, a rich picture of the employee branding process, and especially the employee perspective, has been given to facilitate the transferability of our findings to other studies.

This study was done in light of that employee branding theory mostly emphasize the management perspective's importance in affecting the outcomes of employee branding. This study on the contrary emphasizes employee branding as an *extensive process*, with an initiating part, management, and a receiving part, employees, as well as factors influencing the result of employee branding. The study of employee branding as an *entire process* is not found prominent in previous theory and is therefore a contribution to theory on employee branding. The employee branding process model is found to be a useful tool and gives a more comprehensible picture when studying or engaging in employee branding. The model was built on existing theories of employee branding. In the study we however also found the importance of the closest leaders to employees. The influential factor of *leadership* has therefore been added to the model.

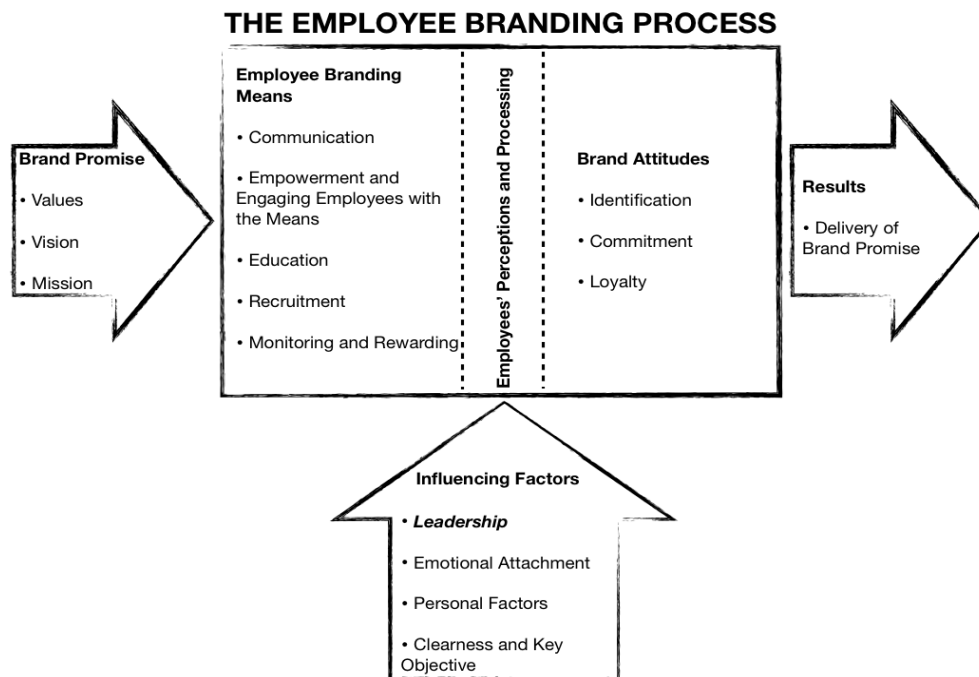


Fig. 10 The Employee Branding Process with leadership as an Influential Factor. (*Own model*)

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Ind (2007:105) argued that many companies do not live up to their brand values and statements. Kotter (2007) has further argued that several organizational transformations are unsuccessful, for example because management fails to act as role models for employees. We call for employee branding to address these problems. We have found that when taking the entire employee branding process into account, managers can get a more comprehensible picture of which means are most appreciated, how employees receive them and which influential factors that can affect the result. Five implications are important for managers to take into account when engaging in employee branding; *Understand the employee perspective; Be aware of incentive systems; Create emotional attachment, Ensure lower manager's delivery of the brand promise and Aim for Dual Objectives of Employee Branding*. By taking these implications into account, desired outcomes such as employee delivery of brand promise, and lowered employee turnover as a result of increased commitment and loyalty to the organization, can be achieved.

Understand The Employee Perspective

Employees' perceptions and processing of the employee branding means affect the extent to which they are committed to deliver on the brand promise. To study the employee perspective and to understand what *motivates* employees to deliver on the brand promise is thus crucial since employees' perceptions of employee branding means may differ from management's. Annual employee surveys may not be sufficient to gain a thorough understanding of the employee perspective, particularly without follow-up. Thus *managers are encouraged to conduct in-depth or focus group interviews with employees* to fully understand how employees perceive and process means of employee branding.

Be Aware of Incentive Systems

When encouraging employees to deliver on the brand promise *the organization must provide the right tools for employees to be able to deliver on this promise*. The diverse employee branding means must provide a consistent message of what the employees are expected to deliver and which brand supporting attitudes and behaviors are favored. *Employees are often aware of the organizational reality* and feel discouraged to deliver on the brand promise when encountering contradicting messages. It is thus of great importance that incentive systems are used so that delivery of brand promise, and not opposite behavior, is rewarded.

Create Emotional Attachment

Managers can facilitate employees' commitment and loyalty to the brand promise by enhancing employees' emotional attachment to the organization. By continuously fulfilling employees' expectations of their employer, management can contribute to a strong psychological

contract, where employees feel the need to give something back to the company, thus increasing their emotional attachment. Over time, this can result in a highly mutually beneficial relationship between the employer and the employees. By moving incentive focus from monetary to personal development and career opportunities, managers can contribute to employees' long-term emotional attachment to the company, since employees then will feel that the company can contribute to both their personal and professional growth.

Ensure Lower Managers' Delivery of the Brand Promise

In large organizations, there might be a long distance between top management and the employees that receive the employee branding means, creating difficulties to ensure delivery of the brand promise among the employees. For example in retail organizations, the store manager may be the only higher authority that employees meet on a daily basis. Thus there is great importance in assuring that the manager closest to employees act as a role model and portrayer of the brand promise. This manager also has to encourage and show appreciation for brand related attitudes and behaviors among employees, as employees are most likely to act as their closest manager encourages them. If the brand promise is not a key priority with this manager, it will thus be more difficult to engage in employee branding to successful outcomes. Therefore there is need to ensure lower managers' delivery of the brand promise if employees are to deliver on it.

Aim for Dual Objectives of Employee Branding Means

When employee branding means benefit employees personally, employees are more likely to be motivated to engage in the means. Therefore, managers are encouraged to create employee branding means that have the dual objective of benefitting both the organization and employees personally.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Context Bound Research

As the result of the employee branding process is emphasized as dependent on the initiating part, the receiving part, and influential factors, it could be assumed that the findings of this study are much related to the context of this specific case. We have therefore tried to provide a rich picture of the context to make the findings transferable to other circumstances. It would however be interesting to conduct a similar study in a completely different context, for example with the aim to identify additional factors that may influence the employee branding process.

Employee Branding in Less Successful Transformations

As previously mentioned, Ind (2007:105) argued that many companies do not live up to their brand values and statements. Kotter (2007) has further argued that several organizational transformations are unsuccessful, for example because management fails to act as role mod-

els for employees. We have found that employee branding can be used as a successful tool to transform organizations. We therefore suggest further research based on the employee branding process model on empirical examples of employee branding attempts and transformations that have failed.

Importance of the Closest Leader

Much to our surprise, we found that the closest leader, in this case the store manager, was emphasized as the most important motivator to employees' delivery of the brand promise. A suggestion for further research could be to compare employees' identification, commitment and loyalty to brand promise between different stores of the same retail company and examine if differences are dependent on the store managers or other factors. Taking this reasoning further, another suggestion for research could be a study of what characteristics and qualities employees deem most important with their leaders to motivate them to deliver the brand promise.

Practices of Employee Branding Gone Too Far

When drawing on a more critical stance, employee branding can be related to organizations exercising control over individuals through norms and identity regulation with the aim to control identities. Employee branding can also be related to organizations using means of employee branding as propaganda to shape their employees. A suggestion for further research is thus to examine examples where employee branding practices are perceived to have gone too far.

Outcomes of Employee Branding Gone Too Far

The success of employee branding is found to be dependent upon employee commitment and loyalty towards the organization. But is there a limit to where strong commitment and loyalty becomes unhealthy? Strong commitment and loyalty can be indicated, among other factors, in employees' willingness to exert effort towards the goal of the organization, willingness to stay and feeling the success of the company as their own. But when relating to the organization and the brand as a family, a religion or a sect, has employee branding then gone too far? A suggestion for further research is thus to examine examples where outcomes of employee branding have gone too far.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE MANAGEMENT

Denna intervjuguide har använts som underlag för våra intervjuer med personer från Telenors ledning. Då intervjuerna var öppna och semi-strukturerade har frågorna berörts i olika ordning, samt justerats något beroende på vem respondenten var. Intervjuguiden var formulerad på förhand innan intervjuerna genomfördes, vilket innebar att en del frågor tillkom under vägen. Vi började varje intervju med att presentera oss själva och studiens syfte, samt bad respondenten beskriva lite kort om sig själv, gällande deras bakgrund, ålder och hur länge de arbetat i företaget. Därefter berördes huvudsakligen nedanstående fem teman.

Tema 1 Värden

- Kan du beskriva innebörden i varumärket?
 - a. Vilka är ni? Vad gör ni?
- Hur är företaget som arbetsplats?
- Kan du beskriva en typisk anställd?
- Vad står företaget för?
 - a. Vad står era värden för?
 - b. Kan du ge något/några exempel? Hur appliceras era värden i det dagliga arbetet?
 - c. I era butiker, kan du ge typsituationer på hur anställda använder sig av/bör använda sig av/ dessa värden?
 - d. Vad är er vision?
 - e. Vilken del har de anställda för att nå er vision?

Tema 2 Spridning av värden

Hur har värdena kommunicerats till de anställda?

- Kan du ge exempel på hur dessa värden används i dagligt arbete bland de anställda?
- Beskriv hur en anställd inte bör bete sig?
 - a. Kan du ge något/några exempel?
- På vilket sätt arbetar ni för att få era anställda att leva upp till era förväntningar på dem?
 - a. Kan du ge något/några exempel?
- Vad finns det för svårigheter i att kommunicera värdena

Tema 3 Employee Branding

- Hur arbetar ni för att stärka medvetenheten om varumärket?
 - a. Hur arbetar ni för att stärka varumärket internt?
 - b. Vad finns det för svårigheter i detta arbete?
- Hur kommunicerar ni detta internt?
 - a. Kan du ge några exempel?
- Har ni någon internutbildning? Exempelvis utbildning för nyanställda, fortbildning?
- Vad finns det för svårigheter med utbildning till de anställda?

- Vad hoppas ni uppnå med att utbilda er personal?
 - a. Följer ni upp utbildningar för att se om de har någon effekt?
- Varför är det viktigt att alla era anställda känner till vad företaget står för?
- Vad finns det för svårigheter med att få de anställda att känna till värdena?
- Vad finns det för svårigheter med att få de anställda att leva upp till värdena?
- Vad hoppas ni uppnå med att alla era anställda är medvetna om vad företaget står för?
- När ni rekryterar butikspersonal, utvärderar ni ansökande utifrån era värden? Hurdå?
- Vilka hinder finns vid rekrytering för att anställa personal med önskvärda värderingar?

Tema 4 Personalens roll i 'Employee Branding'

- Vad är ert syfte med att fokusera på att stärka medvetenheten om varumärket? Hur gör ni detta?
 - a. Vilken roll har ledningen i detta arbete?
 - b. Vilken roll har de anställda i era butiker för att stärka varumärket?
 - c. Vad finns det för svårigheter för att nå detta mål?
- Ni vill öka tillväxt genom att kunder föredrar er framför era konkurrenter. Hur är detta relaterat till era anställda? Viken del har de i detta mål?
- Ett mål är att vinna nya och behålla existerande kunder. Hur gör ni för att nå detta mål?
 - a. Vilken roll har er ledningen för att nå detta mål?
 - b. Vilken roll har de anställda i era butiker för att nå detta mål?

Tema 5 Förutsättningar för att lyckas med 'Employee Branding'

- Hur kan ni bedöma att ni har lyckats med att få de anställda att identifiera sig med företaget? Kan du ge något/några exempel?
 - a. Vad finns det för hinder till att misslyckas med detta? /som kan motverka ett positivt resultat./
- Vad tror du förutsättningarna är för att era anställda ska identifiera sig med företaget?
- Vad motiverar ni era anställda att vilja leva upp till era värden?
- Vilka svårigheter finns i att motivera era anställda att vilja leva upp till värdena?

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW GUIDE EMPLOYEES

Denna intervjuguide har använts som underlag för våra intervjuer med Telenors butiksanställda. Då intervjuerna var öppna och semi-strukturerade har frågorna berörts i olika ordning, samt justerats något beroende på vem respondenten var. Intervjuguiden var formulerad på förhand innan intervjuerna genomfördes, vilket innebär att en del frågor tillkom under vägen. Vi började varje intervju med att presentera oss själva och studiens syfte, samt bad respondenten beskriva lite kort om sig själv gällande deras bakgrund, ålder, hur länge de arbetat i företaget och varför de valde att börja arbeta på just Telenor. Därefter berördes huvudsakligen nedanstående tre teman.

Tema 1 Värden

- Kan du beskriva en typisk anställd? Ex. personlighet, beteende, attityd.
 - a. Känner du dig som en typisk anställd?
 - b. Hur tror du företaget tycker att en anställd ska vara?
 - i. Exempelvis beteende i butik, bemötande mot kunder.
- Kan du beskriva företaget, vad står det för?
 - a. Vad innebär varumärket för dig?
- Vad är företagets affärsidé?
 - a. Vad har företaget för mål och ambitioner?
- Känner du till företagets värden? Kan du beskriva dem?
 - a. Vad innebär dessa för dig?
 - b. Kan du ge något exempel när du använder dig av dem?
 - c. Använder du dig av/Tänker du på att visa/ dessa i ditt dagliga arbete? Hur?
 - d. Tycker du att företaget lever upp till dessa värden?
 - e. Kan du ge exempel på *när* /hur/företaget lever upp till dessa värden?

Tema 2 Employee Branding

- Hur fick du reda på företagets värden?
 - a. När fick du reda på dem?
- När du började arbeta på företaget, vad visste du om företaget då?
- Hur gick det till när du rekryterades till företaget?
- Kommuniserades företagets värderingar under denna process?
- Fick du någon typ av utbildning när du började arbeta?
 - a. Vad fick ni göra? Vad lärde du dig?
- Har du fått några utbildningar sen du började?
 - a. Hur uppfattar du utbildningarna, tycker du att de var bra, lärorika?
- Beskriv informationen/kommunikationen du får från dina chefer och från högre kontor.
 - a. Berättar de exempelvis om vad som händer i företaget, företagets mål, företagets värderingar?
 - b. Hur får ni denna information? Kan du ge exempel?
 - c. Hur uppfattar du informationen?
 - i. Exempelvis är den viktig, relevant, tar du åt dig informationen?

- Skulle du säga att företaget via dessa kommunikationsmedel uppmanar dig att vara på ett visst sätt? Exempelvis att vara som en typisk anställd när du arbetar?
- Vad tycker du om denna information? På vilket sätt har det influerat ditt arbete?
- Finns det någon information som du skulle vilja ha som du inte får idag?

Tema 3 Identifiering, Hängivenhet och Lojalitet

- Hur är företaget som arbetsplats?
- Skulle du säga att du och företaget står för samma sak?
- Kan du säga att du identifierar dig med företaget? Hur i så fall? På vilket sätt?
- Vad krävs för att du ska känna dig engagerad i ditt arbete?
- Vad krävs för att du ska känna dig motiverad i ditt arbete?
- Känner du dig som en del i företaget?
 - a. Kan du förklara?
- Känner du dig viktig i företaget?
 - a. Varför/Varför inte?
- Vad har du för känslor gentemot företaget?
 - a. Hur känner du när du säger att du arbetar för företaget?
- Ser du dig själv som en typisk anställd?
 - a. På vilket sätt?
 - b. Kan du utveckla?
- Om du går på en fest och någon frågar dig vad du arbetar med, vad svarar du då?
- Om du är i en gruppkonversation och någon börjar prata om företaget, hur brukar du reagera?
 - a. Exempelvis om de pratar illa/bra om företaget?
- Hur ser en typisk säljsituation ut?
 - a. Hur beter du dig?
- När känner du dig stolt i ditt arbete? / Att du arbetar för företaget?
- Ser du företagets framgångar som dina framgångar?
- Kan du berätta om en riktigt jobbig situation i butiken?
 - a. Hur löste du situationen?
 - b. Hur tänkte du?
- Om din chef ber dig leva upp till företagets värden, hur tänker du då? Vad innebär det för dig?
- Beskriv en arbetsplats där du verkligen trivs.
 - a. Vilka faktorer driver din trivsel?
- Ser du en framtid på företaget?
- Var ser du dig själv om ett år/fem år/tio år? Kommer du stanna inom företaget?

APPENDIX 3 – ARTICLE

Artikeln nedan publiceras förslagsvis i Dagens Industri, DiY eller SvD Näringsliv.

“Jag älskar mitt jobb”

Företag måste lyssna på sina anställda om de vill att de ska leverera vad företaget står för

Många företag lägger stora summor på att få företagskulturen att spegla företagets värderingar och visioner.

För att lyckas med detta krävs dock att ledningen förstår sina anställda, visar en ny studie.

Med förebilder i praktexempel som Apple och Google arbetar många företag idag aktivt med att få en företagskultur som speglar den önskade varumärkesimagen. Detta fenomen, att influera sina anställda att leva efter företagets värderingar på en daglig basis, kallas i marknadsföringsvärlden bland annat för Employee Branding.

Caroline och Daniel, två nyexaminerade civilekonomer från Lunds Universitet, valde i sitt examensarbete att studera medarbetarnas perspektiv på Employee Branding.

- Vi utgick ifrån att medarbetarnas perspektiv måste förstås för att nå framgång med Employee Branding. Även om ledningen initierar varumärkesutbildningar och liknande, så är det ju i slutändan medarbetarna som ska ta in budskapet och leverera det gentemot kunden. Detta gäller speciellt i branscher där medarbetarna möter kunden på daglig basis, till exempel i detaljhandeln, säger Caroline.

Employee Branding på Telenor

Telenor, som arbetat med Employee Branding i tre år, var fallföretag i studien.

- Telenor har velat differentiera sig från sina konkurrenter som något av en premiumoperatör, och där är service och kundbemötande extremt viktigt. För medarbetarna i butikerna har det betydelse att de ska agera professionellt och inte leva upp till den negativa stereotypa bilden många har av abonnemangsförsäljare, säger Daniel.

I studien, som huvudsakligen bestod av intervjuer med butiksmedarbetare, undersöktes hur Employee Branding uppfattats och om det sedermera lett till identifiering, hängivenhet och lojalitet till företaget och varumärket.

- Vår uppfattning är att Telenor genom Employee Branding har lyckats skapa en stark företagskultur med en gemensam nämnare i hur man ska bemöta kunden. Vi fick bland annat höra kommentarer som “Jag älskar mitt jobb”, och från en annan fick vi ju se tatueringen, säger Caroline. (se bild)

Även om dessa är de två mest lysande exemplen, så visar studien att de anställda som intervjuats anser att företaget har förbättrats sedan Telenor påbörjade sitt förändringsarbete, vilket pekar på att employee branding framgångsrikt kan användas för att förändra en företagskultur. I



HÄNGIVENHET. På frågan vad hon tyckte om sin arbetsgivare, svarade hon lättamt genom att visa tatueringen bakom hennes öra föreställande en Telenor-logga.

studien har vidare fyra dimensioner identifierats som företagsledningar bör beakta. Dessa kan underlätta för medarbetarna att ta in det som kommuniceras genom employee branding; ett enhetligt budskap, emotionell tillgivenhet, den närmaste chefen samt personlig utveckling.

Ett enhetligt budskap

Om ledningen vill att medarbetarna ska leva upp till företagets värderingar så måste de vara enhetligt kommunicerade i företagets alla aktiviteter. Annars riskerar employee branding att tas emot med cynism.

- De anställda är ofta mer uppmärksamma på otydliga budskap än vad företagsledningar vill tro. Värderingarna måste därför enhetligt genomsyra alla aktiviteter; vare sig det är rekrytering, utbildning, incitamentssystem eller kommunikation, säger Daniel.

Emotionell tillgivenhet

- Anställdas eventuella hängivenhet till varumärket och värderingarna beror till stor utsträckning på vilken relation de har till

företaget i övrigt. Om de inte känner tillit till ledningen kommer de heller inte vara positivt inställda till ledningens försök att ändra företagskulturen, säger Caroline.

Studien visar att anställda som upplever att företaget överträffar deras förväntningar på hur en arbetsgivare ska vara har lättare att känna hängivenhet och lojalitet till varumärket.

Den närmaste chefen

Ofta är den närmaste chefen, eller mellanchefen, den enda högre auktoriteten som medarbetarna träffar på en daglig basis. Detta gäller till exempel i detaljhandeln där butikschefen måste uppmuntra, och själv uppvisa, ett beteende i enlighet med företagets värderingar.

- Företag måste lägga krut på att få cheferna närmast medarbetarna att agera som ambassadörer för företagets värderingar. Initiativ uppifrån som dessa chefer inte tror på, kommer i mindre utsträckning rinna igenom till medarbetarna. Chefen närmast medarbetaren måste därför vara en förebild samt uppmuntra och belöna rätt

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beteenden. Anställda mår bra av uppmärksamhet, det gäller bara att rätt saker uppmärksammas, säger Daniel.

Personlig utveckling

- Om anställdas personliga utveckling gynnas genom Employee Branding så blir de mer angelägna att ta in ledningens budskap, säger Caroline. Det kan till exempel handla om utbildningar som både kommunicerar företagets värderingar och höjer de anställdas kompetens simultant.

Studien påvisade även att personlig utveckling och karriärmöjligheter är mer effektiva än monetära incitament för att öka hängivenhet och lojalitet till företaget.

- Alla människor har ett behov av att växa, och där bidrar inte pengar. Efter en viss nivå kan lönerna till och med bli ett hinder då anställda inte vill utvecklas eftersom ett steg uppåt i hierarkin kan sänka deras löner på grund av utelämnad provision från försäljning, säger Daniel.

Involvera dina anställda

På frågan om Caroline och Daniel har några övriga uppmaningar till företagsledningarna som planerar att förändra sina företagskulturer, svarar de med uppmaningen att involvera medarbetarna redan i planeringsfasen.

- Det är lättare för de anställda att ta in något som de själva varit med och skapat. Vi uppmanar företagsledningarna att engagera sina anställda i skapandet av förändringsåtgärder. På så sätt kan man redan från början förankra förändringsarbetet längst ned i organisationen. Genom att involvera medarbetare är det större sannolikhet att de förstår syftet med förändringen. På så sätt kan företag undvika att spendera resurser i onödan på Employee Branding som innehåller ett budskap som medarbetarna ändå avfärdar, säger Caroline.

Måste lyssna på medarbetarna

Avslutningsvis betonar Caroline och Daniel vikten av lyssna på och ta input från medarbetarna genom hela förändringsprocessen. Detta eftersom deras perspektiv på olika employee branding-initiativ kan skilja sig betydligt från ledningens.

- Medarbetarundersökningar är ofta inte tillräckliga, speciellt inte utan tydlig uppföljning där de anställda får se resultatet av dem. Vi uppmanar att kontinuerligt ha djupintervjuer alternativt fokusgrupper med medarbetarna under förändringsprocessen. Detta är ett bra sätt att säkra att företagskulturen inte drar åt ett annat håll än önskat. Att vara lyhörd gentemot medarbetarna är A och O när man vill förändra företagskulturen, säger Daniel.



LYHÖRDA. "Att lyssna på sina anställda är A och O när man ämnar förändra företagskulturen", säger Daniel Isaksson och Caroline Isaksson, två glada nyexaminerade civilekonomer.

FYRA AKTIVITETER SOM BÖR GENOMSYRAS AV FÖRETAGETS VÄRDERINGAR OCH VISIONER

1.

KOMMUNIKATION

Ett enhetligt budskap bör återfinnas i alla kommunikationskanaler

2.

REKRYTERING

Använd värderingarna som stöttepelare redan under rekryteringen för att anställa individer som passar in i den önskade företagskulturen.

3.

UTBILDNING

Alla internutbildningar bör spegla värderingarna och visionerna.

4.

UPPFÖLJNING OCH BELÖNING

Företag bör bygga belöningskriterier på värderingarna och visionerna. Om inte 'rätt' prestationer uppmuntras och belönas kommer medarbetarna att uppleva dubbla budskap.

SÅ GJODES STUDIEN

För att ta reda på hur Telenor har arbetat med Employee Branding intervjuades ett antal personer med övergripande ansvar för detta arbete. Därefter intervjuades anställda från ett antal butiker i södra Sverige om hur de uppfattat och påverkats av de olika initiativen med syfte att förändra företagskulturen.

Studien finns att läsa i sin helhet på Lunds Universitets uppsatsdatabas: www.lu.se/studera/examen-och-karriar/examensarbete-och-uppsats