LOST IN TRANSLATION

The Multinational Corporation's Corporate Branding Struggle

Author

Jennifer Annvik

Erika Fredriksson

Supervisor

Annette Cerne

FOREWORD

This thesis grew forth from a series of discussions, conversations, long emails and sleepless nights. We, the authors, would like to take this opportunity to formally thank all the people who helped us throughout this thesis writing process.

Firstly, we would like to thank our supervisor Annette Cerne, for your guidance and feedback. We would also like to direct thanks to Mats Urde, for helping us get in touch with Intrum Justitia and for inviting us along whenever you could.

Furthermore, we would like to thank Jean-Luc Ferraton for your help, support and enthusiasm towards our thesis, and at the same time apologize for the ridiculously long emails and questions. We would also like to thank all the wonderful managers that we had the privilege of interviewing, though we cannot give out your names here, we would like to thank you for all your help and time you took to speak to us.
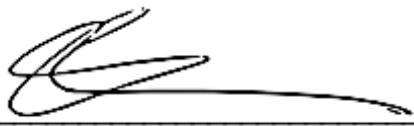
Finally, we want to thank our friends, family and fellow students for helping us throughout this process. We are both certain that this thesis would not exist without your support. We promise that there will be no more intricate late-night calls, texts or emails concerning the complexities of corporate branding. For now.

Thank you,

Lund, May 18th 2015

_____   _____
     Jennifer Annvik   Erika Fredrikson

ABSTRACT

Title	Lost In Translation: The Multinational Corporation's Corporate Branding Struggle
Seminar date	2015-05-26
Course	FEKN90: Examensarbete på Civilekonomprogrammet, 30HP
Authors	Jennifer Annvik and Erika Fredrikson
Supervisor	Annette Cerne
Key Words	Corporate Brand, Multinational Corporation, National Culture, Intrum Justitia and The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix
Purpose	The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what impact a multinational corporation's diverse national cultures has on the corporate branding process, in order to further develop practices and theories pertaining to the management of corporate brands.
Methodology	A qualitative approach with an explorative nature, applied to a single case study with embedded units using pattern matching in the analysis of secondary data, and cross-case synthesis in the analysis of primary data.
Theoretical Perspective	The literature used has foundation in marketing theory pertaining to corporate branding and corporate brand management. These theories are complemented by organizational theory pertaining to human resource management and theory on national cultural characteristics.
Empirical Data	The empirical data consists of a pilot study put together from empirical observation, internal documents which were used as secondary data as well as transcribed semi-structured interviews.
Conclusions	The alignment of a corporate brand identity is crucial in implementing a consistent corporate brand throughout a MNC. Corporate brand identity alignment may be facilitated by examining the national cultural tendencies of the corporate brand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter provides a summary of the literature and theory that has been used to write this thesis, as well as a background to the case company that has been studied.

We live in an increasingly globalized world, where multinational corporations (MNCs) thrive. Europe in particular sees several companies that have a stronghold in multiple countries and areas. This global change has been the result of a multitude of new management, branding and marketing research (Khojastehpour, Ferdou & Polonsky, 2015). Perhaps it is this birth of the 'MNC age' that has fortified the marketing research world's fascination of the topic of corporate brand management, a phenomenon which is steadily "becoming one of "today's most fashionable management fashions"" (Morsing, 2006 in De Roeck, Maon & Lejeune, 2013: 137) and has lead to the creation of the multinational corporate brand (MCB) (Khojastehpour et al., 2015).

Over the past twenty years, there has been a significant amount of research into the topic of harnessing a corporate brand as a way of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in diverse markets (Balmer & Gray, 2003; De Roeck et al., 2013). Nonetheless, despite this extensive research into the origins and *raison d'être* of the so called corporate brand, there is still a significant amount of research that has to be done from a practical and managerial perspective especially when it comes to corporate branding of MNCs (Balmer, 2011; Roper & Fill, 2012).

It is well established that in order to efficiently manage a corporate brand, all stakeholders must be taken into account. This differs from product branding, where primary focus is that of a company's customers and consumers (Hatch & Schultz,

2003; Urde 2009; Balmer 2011; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013; De Roeck et al., 2013, Khojastehpour et al., 2015). The employees of a company are especially important to a corporate brand, as they reflect the corporate brand's identity to the outside world (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; De Roeck et al., 2013). It is the employees who adopt and portray the company culture, live the company mission and vision as well as portray the company's core values. It is the company's corporate identity and organizational culture that essentially builds the foundation for the corporate brand that is directed outwards (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Balmer & Gray 2003; Balmer, 2011). In short, corporate brand theory, and marketing theory overall, is focused on the corporation's relation with its external environment (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Nonetheless, for a MNC the external environment is different between subsidiaries located in different countries. Many studies show that different countries have different national cultures that influence the inhabitants in a way that provides them with a set of norms and traditions on how to behave, think and feel (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars, 1997) and that management practice should be adapted between countries in order to function efficiently (Ferner, 1997; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998; Khojastehpour et al., 2015). These theories, stemming from organizational and management literature, has created a basis for research within corporate branding of MNCs. However, there is still a need for more research into how to address these complexities from a managerial perspective: How does a MNC actually manage a corporate brand? What complexities arise? What tools are needed?

In this thesis we will present a case study that exemplifies the challenges that multinational corporations face in implementing a corporate brand and corporate

brand identity. These challenges are mostly noticeable between offices located in different countries, making it debatable if national culture as a variable could improve the outcome of corporate brand management processes in multinational corporations.

1.1. Background

It is well accepted that multinational corporations (MNCs) often turn to corporate branding in order to establish a sustainable competitive advantage in the markets they act in, as well as build a reputation (Khojastehpour et al., 2015). MNCs use the corporate brand as a way to represent their international foundation, as well as demonstrate the synergy of global operations in order to meet the requirements of diverse local markets (ibid). However, when it comes to the practical application and management of a corporate brand in a MNC, there are several difficulties that arise. A corporate brand for a MNC does not just have to address multiple stakeholders, but has to also address complexities such as the situation and industry in different national markets, the relations between subsidiaries and headquarters and the varying cultural business environments (Khojastehpour et al., 2015). Though these complexities have been touched on and identified by researchers, there still needs to be a significant amount of research into how these complexities can be and are addressed in practice (ibid).

1.1.1. *The Case: A Multinational Service-Company's Corporate Branding Struggle*

Corporate branding is particularly interesting for *service-based* corporations, due to their rich and complex relations with external and internal stakeholder groups (Aaker, 2004). In fact, many parallels have been drawn between service branding and corporate branding, seeing as both these areas address the employees' and customers loyalty to the organization as a whole, not just to the service or product (Aaker, 2004;

Balmer & Gray, 2003), which makes Intrum Justitia, a service-based multinational third-party credit management company, an interesting case to examine.

Intrum Justitia was founded in 1923 by Swedish Bo Göransson, and is the market leader within credit management and financial services in most of the 19 European markets they are present in[1]. According to 2013's financial overview (Intrum.com, 2015), the company had revenues of approximately 4.6 MSEK, and boasted circa 3,800 employees. In 2007, Intrum Justitia underwent a strategic reorganization and a corporate rebranding, with the aim of transforming the corporate brand in order to reposition the image of Intrum Justitia in the minds of both customers and employees. (Ferraton, 2014)

Before the reorganization, Intrum Justitia consisted of 24 differing subsidiaries acting under individual names as well as missions, visions and values. The company classified itself as a traditional third-party debt collection agency, and had an overbearingly aggressive culture that was primarily problem solving and product focused. The first step in the rebranding and restructuring process was to consolidate the subsidiaries under one brand name: Intrum Justitia. The 24 subsidiaries were consolidated to build a one-brand or 'multinational corporate brand' strategy, in order to make Intrum Justitia more efficient and to create a unique positioning on the third-party debt collector market. (Ibid)

The subsidiaries were all surveyed in order to establish a new and uniting mission and vision: "To fully transform our company into a true people focused company providing high value added credit management and financial services", in order to "be

---

[1] Intrum Justitia is currently present in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands (Intrum Justitia, 2015)

a catalyst for a sound economy" (Ferraton, 2014). The company focused its corporate core values around "'Understanding People', 'Committing to Challenge', 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation' and 'Making a Difference'" in order create a "Better Business for All" (ibid). Intrum Justitia also moved to change its corporate culture and communication. Intrum Justitia went from providing traditional debt collecting services, to being a "service provider" (ibid). The focus was shifted from a service-based view, to a client and customer orientated service. The overall transformation was to ensure that the employees were proud of their role within the company, rather than defensive and aggressive. (Ibid)

The aim of the strategic rebranding went beyond appealing to customers, but also aimed at ensuring that current employees and new recruits saw Intrum Justitia as an attractive company to work for. Its aim was also to ensure that the company gained a competitive advantage in the otherwise undifferentiated debt collection industry. Third party debt collector agencies or credit management service companies; have two levels of clients or customers that need to be addressed. On the one hand, there are the corporate clients. These are the corporations that hire companies such as Intrum Justitia to collect outstanding payments. Then there are the debtors, who are the people that Intrum Justitia collects debt from on behalf of the corporate clients.

This two-tier customer relation means that Intrum Justitia stands at an interesting position, both corporate branding and reputation wise. By building a more sympathetic and less aggressive brand image, especially towards the debtors, Intrum Justitia could attract a client base of corporate clients whose own corporate values align with those of Intrum Justitia's. Furthermore, a company's reputation is closely related, and may well be affected by those that the company associates itself with

(Greyser, 2009; Roper & Fill, 2012). This means that the debtors who have outstanding payments would associate their treatment by the debt collection company with the corporate clients. Therefore it becomes beneficial for corporate clients to choose a third-party debt collector company that has less aggressive and more understanding approach than other debt collectors on the market. In order to consolidate the new corporate brand, Intrum Justitia focused heavily on internal communication, and made sure that all the subsidiaries knew that the brand was a product of their internal perception of the company. (Ferraton, 2014; 2015)

Whilst this strategic rebranding and restructuring has worked to some extent, Intrum Justitia still has difficulties implementing and consolidating the new multinational corporate brand and corporate identity. Intrum Justitia is still at large viewed as traditional debt collectors with the appurtenant negative connotations, and the employees still refer to themselves as such rather than embracing the new identity of being 'catalysts of a sound economy' and a 'credit management company'. Upper management at Intrum Justitia's Headquarters in Stockholm saw this as problematic, and started conducting 'Internal Education Seminars' with the purpose of informing managers from Intrum Justitia's different offices on the importance of a corporate identity, what a corporate brand entailed and what benefits could be reaped from having a consolidated corporate brand identity.

1.2. Problem Specification: The Case of the Multinational

We, the authors, were given the opportunity of attending one of the Internal Education Seminars in order to conduct a pilot study (See *8*. PILOT STUDY). What we noted was first of all that many of the managers had different opinions on what Intrum Justitia's corporate brand was, and how it should be implemented throughout

the organization. Secondly, many of the managers located in the same country had similar opinions to each other, and that managers from different geographical locations tended to have different takes on the situation. Phrases like "That's not how we see it in our country" or "This is the kind of reasoning that *we* in [country] use for this kind of issue" were frequented in the manager's various arguments.

From these observations, the idea grew forth that perhaps differences in national culture could have a significant effect when it comes to building and implementing a corporate brand in a multinational corporation as Intrum Justitia. From a theoretical perspective, national culture has a large impact on how individuals perceive situations, how they feel and how they act. This being the case, national culture should have an impact on how employees in a multinational corporation perceive, feel and act towards a corporate brand that is being implemented by upper management. This suggests that every individual subsidiary's own national culture affects the perception of the corporate brand, potentially complicating the implementation of the corporate brand throughout the MNC.

1.3. Purpose and Research Question

1.3.1. Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what impact a multinational corporation's diverse national cultures has on the corporate branding process, in order to further develop practices and theories pertaining to the management of corporate brands.

1.3.2. Research Question

How is a MNC's corporate brand management influenced by its diverse national cultures?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

We begin our literature review by examining the 'what, why, and how' of corporate branding. By drawing from organizational theory and demonstrating frameworks used within marketing, we connect these aspects to how a corporate brand can be managed in a multinational corporation. These components provide us with a foundation for how corporate branding can be managed throughout a MNCs many national cultures. In order to facilitate the reading of this paper and some of the terms used, we have included a Glossary in Appendix 1: Glossary, which the reader can refer to throughout the reading.

2.1. The Background of Corporate Brand Management

Since the 1990s, the topic of corporate brands and corporate brand management has exploded within the marketing research world (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Urde 2013; Urde 2009; De Roeck et al., 2013). The idea that a corporation can use the brand of its company as a whole as a sustainable competitive advantage, and not just the brand of its product (Balmer, 2011), is something that researchers and practitioners have been investigating for the past two decades (Balmer & Gray 2003; Urde 2009; 2013). In fact, many financial analysts prefer working with organizations with strong brands, as strong brands may help hedge damage and therefore risk to aspects such as organization's reputation (Kapferer, 2008).

Corporate brands have become especially important to the increasingly globalized multinational corporation (MNC). MNCs use corporate brands both as a way to symbolize their international capabilities in the minds of the consumers, and as a way to unify the company internally (Mizzo & Yamin, 2012 in Khojastehpour et al., 2015). Nonetheless, there is still a significant need for research into the topic of how to facilitate the implementation and management of corporate brands in a practical context (Balmer & Gray, 2003), especially in MNCs. In this section, we will be

investigating the foundations of what a brand is, what a corporate brand is, and why it is so important to manage or leverage a corporate brand.

2.1.1. *What is a Brand?*

Nowadays, brands can be found everywhere. Whether it is the brightly color wrapped chocolate at your local supermarket, or the more discretely swoosh-marked shoes at the gym; brands have become fully integrated part of our everyday existence (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Kapferer, 2008; Roper & Fill, 2012). The term 'branding' or 'to brand something', is historically referred to marking in order to defend ones property from theft (Kapferer, 2008). Cattle, for example, were branded with hot irons to indicate who was the true owner if the animals were stolen (Kapferer, 2008). Since its origin, the term brand has developed a somewhat more complex meaning that a mere marking of property. In fact, despite extensive research on the topic, the specific definition of what a brand is has, ironically enough, been one of the hottest topics of discussion in marketing literature (Kapferer, 2008; Roper & Fill, 2012).

Balmer and Gray (2003) explain that there are several different schools that explain and define what a brand is. They write that brands can be seen as the more traditional definition of "marks denoting ownership, image-building devices, symbols associated with key values, means by which to construct individual identities and a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed" (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 973). Notwithstanding, a fairly common definition of a brand is that a brand can be thought of as 'signs' or 'symbols' that represent or communicate a meaning, attributes or ideas (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Urde, 2013 drawing from Levy, 1959; Guiraud, 1971; Mick, 1986). Essentially, a brand provides a summary of meanings or ideas when the name of the brand is mentioned, or the logo of the brand is seen (Roper & Fill, 2012).

Following this definition, one could say that that if one were to manage a brand, one can essentially be thought of as 'managing signs and symbols' (Urde, 2013). From a product branding perspective, the brand can be described as the "manufacturers way of adding value and giving its product or service an individuality that sets it apart from the rest" (Roper & Fill, 2012: 1089). This essentially means that a company is, to some extent, personifying their products or services in a way that makes them more attractive to the consumer beyond the actual function the service or product holds (Roper & Fill, 2012).

In a corporate brand, the brand goes beyond representing merely the product or service. Instead, a corporate brand represents the organization as a whole (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Urde 2009; Balmer 2011; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013; De Roeck et al., 2013). In other words, following the definition given above for a brand, the 'sign' for a corporate brand can be thought of as the various stakeholders associated with an organization, as well as the logo and the company name. In other words, it is the 'perception' that various stakeholders hold of a company that fundamentally creates the image or meaning of the corporation, which is communicated outwards (Urde, 2013). Urde (2013) explains this 'perception' as the phenomenon that corporate brand management literature calls a company's 'corporate brand identity' or the 'brand promise', two key terms that arises when discussing corporate brands and corporate brand management and which will be discussed later on.

2.1.2. *What is a Corporate Brand?*

In order to truly understand what a corporate brand is; we have to look at the essence of a corporate brand: Where did it come from? What characterizes it? The concept of

corporate branding or corporate marketing grew forth from researchers general realization that a company's identity, culture and organization could be used for strategic benefits (Balmer, 2001). This realization brought forth a sort of cross-pollination of marketing and organizational studies, which lead to the birth of the practice of corporate branding (Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer, 2011).

The corporate brand became the symbol of the organization as a whole and, unlike product branding, gave companies the opportunity to truly address and identify the brand with all of their stakeholders, be it employees, shareholders, investors or consumers (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012). In short, when corporate branding works by creating a sense of belonging for the various stakeholders to the organization, as the stakeholder's personal values align with those of the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Nonetheless, the concept of a corporate brand is somewhat ambiguous.

Many studies argue that the corporate brand concept is derived from a corporation's 'corporate identity' (Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Urde, 2013). A corporate identity is a somewhat ubiquitous term, that essentially answers the questions "'what are we?' and 'who are we'" about an organization (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 979). A corporate identity is constantly changing and adapting with the organization (Balmer, Stuart & Greyser 2009), which suggest that the same principle of thought must be kept when looking at a corporate brand (Balmer et al, 2009, Urde, 2013). That is, a corporate brand is constantly evolving and must be continuously managed (Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013).

However, it is important to note that even though corporate brands stem from an organization's corporate identity, a corporate brand should not be confused with being synonymous to corporate identity. In fact, Balmer & Gray (2003) stress that these two terms have a series of critical differences between them in their article *Corporate brands: What are they? What of them?*. First of all, corporate identities exist in every entity or organization, whilst the same does not have to be said about corporate brands - that is, "a corporate identity is a necessary concept, whereas a corporate brand is contingent" (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 980).

Typically, having and leveraging a corporate brand is especially interesting for organizations dealing with service products (Aaker, 2004; Balmer & Gray, 2003), such as financial services like CitiGroup or Chase (Aaker, 2004), or even a credit management service such as Intrum Justitia. In fact, a lot of service branding literature is similar to that of corporate branding literature, in the sense that service branding also takes into context the employees and customers loyalty to the organization as a whole, not just the product (Aaker, 2004; Balmer & Gray, 2003).

So what exactly characterizes a corporate brand? Balmer (2001 in Balmer & Gray, 2003) created the mnemonic C^2ITE in order to organize and distinguish the various characteristics a corporate brand has (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 976). C^2ITE stands for Cultural, Commitment, Intricate, Tangible and Ethereal (Balmer & Gray, 2003). First of all, corporate brands are often argued to have strong *cultural* roots, whether this relates to the corporate, professional or national culture, a corporation's uniqueness is often found in the various subcultures that exist in an organization (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013).

Secondly, a corporate brand should be *intricate.* In short, corporate brands are characterized to be incredibly complex yet pervasive. A corporate brand tends to be multidisciplinary and dimensional, as it impacts an organization's many stakeholder groups and procedures, and is ultimately communicated throughout the organization using various channels of communication (Urde, 1999; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Urde, 2009; Balmer & Greyser, 2006).

The *tangible* aspect of a corporate brand comes down to the product or service that the organization actually provides, and elements such as its quality. The *tangible* aspects also relate the organization's actual geographical coverage, internal measurements of performance, profit margins, pay scales etc. It can also mean the company logos, office architecture etc. (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Urde 2013).

A corporate brand also has characteristics of being *ethereal*, meaning that it is delicate and that it often evokes emotional responses to elements such as the country-of-origin or the industry in which the brand acts (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Ethereal also means including elements such as "'lifestyle' and 'style of delivery'" (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 977) that can be associated or found in a corporate brand.

Finally, a corporate brand requires *commitment* from all stakeholders that it is associated with (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2003). A solid corporate brand should elicit commitment from all personnel in the organization. This makes it incredibly important that the senior management dedicate

time and resources, especially financial and those related to communication, to the corporate brand (Urde, 1999; Balmer & Gray, 2003).

The characteristics explained in the *C²ITE* mnemonic are recurring concepts in several more recent studies on the topic of corporate branding. Hatch and Schultz (2001; 2003), for example, consolidates some of the features mentioned in the *C²ITE* framework, into their framework *The Corporate Branding Tool Kit* (revisited, 2003) that explains the necessity of the imperative interrelation between an organization's strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image. A company's strategic vision is "the central idea behind the company that expresses top management's aspirations for what the company will achieve in the future" (Hatch & Schultz, 2003: 1047).

The organizational culture can be thought of as "the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982 in Roper & Fill, 2012: 56). It is the "internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embody the heritage of the company and communicate its meaning to its members" (Hatch & Schultz, 2003: 1047). If a corporate brand does not integrate the organization's culture into its foundation, it is very likely that the corporate brand will be perceived as non-authentic and will not function as a successful strategic tool (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Urde, 2009). Finally, corporate image refers to the outside world's overall impression of the company including the views of the customers, shareholders, the media, the general public and so on" (Hatch & Schultz, 2003: 1048). Nowadays, company websites and other forms of online media can be seen as a way for companies to communicate their desired corporate image (Roper & Fill, 2012). Similarly, the public opinion and outside world's overall

impression of the company can easily be deduced by looking at social media sites, such as Facebook (ibid). Hatch and Schultz (2003) use British Airlines and their failed '*world's* favorite airline' rebranding as a case company to demonstrate how unless these three crucial elements need to be aligned in order to create a successful corporate brand (See *9.2* Appendix 2: British Airways Branding Initiative).

What Hatch and Schultz (2003) stress, which is not as apparent in the *C²ITE* framework, that it is the actual *relationship* between these three elements that is crucial, not the independent elements themselves. Hatch and Schultz (2003) also highlight the importance of a manager's awareness of an organization's subcultures, and the alignment of these into the strategic vision and corporate image. Ultimately, what Hatch & Schultz's (2003) study demonstrates is a way for managers to think and act when building or managing a corporate brand. They argue that "(v)alues imposed and sustained by autocratic authority will not have the same credibility in the marketplace as expressions of genuine value and belief" (Hatch & Schultz, 2003: 1058) grounded in the culture of the organization. Essentially, it becomes crucial that the corporate brand comes from within the organization and from the crucial stakeholders, otherwise the corporate brand is most likely to be perceived as not trustworthy and will be met with resistance (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). It is this alignment between the organization's strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image that creates a strong corporate brand (ibid).

2.2. Why Should a Corporate Brand be managed?

Corporate brands are seen as useful tools for a variety of reasons, and have a somewhat miscellaneous purpose. Corporate brands are often argued to be a device for enhancing stakeholder's esteem and loyalty to the organization, as well as a way

to facilitate employment and recruitment processes (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; De Roeck et al. 2013). Corporate brands are also crucial to a company's reputation and general brand image (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; Khojastehpour et al., 2015). Finally, a corporate brand is an efficient tool to use for a company who wished to differentiate themselves from the other actors in their industry (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012)

2.2.1. *Corporate brand as a tool for employee retention*

Moreover, a strong corporate brand creates value from an employer-employee perspective. By giving the employees a reason to identify and work in a company beside the monetary aspect, the company has the opportunity to work on employee retention and development its employees (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; De Roeck et al., 2013). From an employer branding perspective, a company that has a clear corporate brand and therefore a clear core value, mission, vision and culture, can more easily recruit employees that fit easily into the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). That is, by positioning itself using the corporate brand identity and image, a company will attract stakeholders and employees who identify and appreciate the company for aspect such as its culture, core value, mission and vision.

2.2.2. *Reputation and the Corporate Brand*

A strong corporate brand can especially be crucial when managing a corporation's reputation, as this loyalty and association with the brand, gives the customers an ethereal connection to the company beyond products and services (Roper & Fill, 2012; Khojastehpour, 2015). A corporation's reputation refers to "the opinions that are generally held about someone or something" (Roper & Fill, 2012: 5) or "the estimation in which a person is held, repute, known or reported character, general

credit, fame, renown" (ibid). Maintaining reputation is key for a company, especially in the technologically fast moving world we find ourselves in today (Roper & Fill, 2012). The growing availability and distribution of information about companies and employees through various media channels such as online blogs, websites, newspapers and social media sites, means that attempting to control or manage reputation has become somewhat of an unattainable task (ibid). One of the difficulties with controlling reputation is that nowadays, any employee, customer or stakeholder in general can take to, for example, the Internet and post detriment or reputation damaging information about a company. By building a strong corporate brand, a company can hedge itself against such attacks - if all of the employees are living the brand, and the corporate brand is a true representation of the company, it might become more difficult to criticize a company (Greyser, 2009; Roper & Fill, 2012).

Another scale effect reputation-wise of a corporate brand is the so-called reputational association. A company's reputation can be affected by the external stakeholder relationships to the company has (Greyser, 2009; Urde, 2013). This can create both beneficial and detrimental reputation effects (Greyser, 2009; Roper & Fill, 2012). If a company build a corporate brand that holds a 'good' reputation, then other companies may well chose to work with this company over others in order to take part of the scale effects of its good reputation. Similarly, a company with a 'bad' corporate brand reputation might result in other companies steering clear of cooperating with this company to avoid negative shell effects (Greyser, 2009; Roper & Fill, 2013).

2.2.3. Corporate Brand Management as a method of Differentiation and Competitive

  Advantage

The managing of a corporate brand is often motivated as being a tool for companies to differentiate themselves in order to and gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Balmer, 2011; Roper & Fill, 2012; De Roeck et al., 2013). Due to the nature of a corporate brand being a theoretically obtained through a corporate culture and corporate identity, each corporate brand is rare and unique and no two corporate brands are quite the same, which means that using a corporate brand could be a way of effectively differentiating a company on a market (Balmer and Gray, 2003). In other words, as a corporate brand stems from traditions, people's beliefs and culture, it is difficult for one company to appropriate another company's corporate brand, which makes each strong corporate brand relatively unique (ibid). Furthermore, as a corporate brand addresses all of the company's stakeholders, corporate brands create value beyond a purely customer or company relationship (Balmer, 2011; Roper & Fill, 2012; De Roeck, 2013; Urde, 2013). It acts as a tool to manage the perceived image and symbolization of a company, causing the customer to associate him-/herself with the actual company, rather than merely with the products a company sells (Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2009). This means that a company with a strong corporate brand could attract and maintain various stakeholders by for example building traditions, meaning and values, creating a relationship with the consumers and building loyalty (Roper & Fill, 2012).

2.3. How is a Corporate Brand Managed?

In order to make use of the various benefits a corporate brand holds, a company needs to know how to build and manage a corporate brand. There are several theories on how to go about managing a corporate brand. One of the key concepts in the

corporate brand management literature is the imperative nature of a company's core values and the corporate brand's core values (Roper & Fill, 2012). A company's core values are very much linked back to a corporation's identity and culture (Roper & Fill, 2012), and can essentially explained as being "the rules of life" (Gad, 2001 in Urde, 2003). The corporate brand's core values can be described as the brand essence, and are often "three to five word phrases that capture the irrefutable essence or spirit of the brand positioning" (Keller, 1999 in Urde, 2003).

Many authors, such as Urde (2003; 2013) and de Chernatony (2001) as well as Kapferer (2008), put forth the suggestion that in order to manage a corporate brand, it becomes imperative to align the corporate brand's core values with the core values of the corporation and, in turn the core values of various stakeholders. This responsibility falls largely one the managers in an organization (de Chernatony, 2001), and is the manager's responsibility to first "define a brand's values, and then ensure that the employees values and behaviors are consistent with them" (de Chernatony, 2001: 442). It is important to note though, that staff plays an incredibly important role in the core values, and that they should be included in the internal debate concerning these values (de Chernatony, 2001). Externally, it is the brands responsibility to ensure that the core values are communicated efficiently through the employees and the general appearance of the organization (ibid). A truly well managed corporate brand allows the corporation "to bring its values to the forefront of its activities in a way that cannot be achieved by merely concentrating on the product offering" (Roper & Fill, 2012: 116). However, in order to ensure that a corporation's core values are aligned with the corporate brand, you need to identify what the core

values of the organization actually are. In order to do this, authors have turned to the concept of a corporate brand identity (de Chernatony, 2001).

The corporate brand identity refers to "the promise and expectations associated with a corporate brand name" (Balmer, 2001: 1336). Considering that the corporate brand identity is in some ways the essence of the brand, and that the corporate brand stems from the corporate identity (Balmer, 2001), the corporate brand identity can be thought of as a distillation of a company's corporate identity (Balmer, 2010 in Urde, 2013). Considering this, and the nature of corporate brands, it becomes somewhat imperative to identify the corporate brand identity and align it with the corporate identity in order to be able to manage and build a corporate brand (de Chernatony, 2001; Roper & Fill, 2012; Balmer et al., 2009; Urde, 2009; Urde 2013).

There have been several studies aiming to identify frameworks or models that bridge the gap between theory and practice, to facilitate the identifying and consolidating of a company's corporate brand identity, to be used in order to manage the corporate brand (see de Chernatony, 2001; Kapferer, 2008; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013). Urde (2013) for example, draws upon a multitude of relevant literature in the construction of his framework, the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* (*CBIM*). The literature includes popular branding frameworks, such as Kapferer's *Brand Identity Prism* (2008), which outlines the six crucial elements that help outline and define a product brand's identity (Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013). These six elements are a product brand's physical appearance and qualities, the brand's personality, the culture, the relationship associated with the brand, the customer reflection of the brand and how the brand speaks to our self-image (Kapferer, 2008; Urde 2013), and

should be presented in a hexagon figure (Kapferer, 2008) (See *9.3* Appendix 3: Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism*)* The theory is widely accepted and is often used and cited in the brand research and strategy world (Urde, 2013), and helps provide a basis for Urde's (2013) *CBIM*. The *CBIM* also draws upon other theories such as Balmer, Stuart and Greyser's (2009) *AC³ID* test, which explains that a corporation has to align the various identities in order be able to use them in a strategic manner, as well as Hatch and Schultz's (2001) *Corporate Branding Tool Kit,* which focuses on the aligning of vision, culture and image (explained in detail earlier in this chapter).

A key theory that provides the basic structure of the *CBIM,* is the principle developed by several researches that there are two different key perspective one must take when defining a brand: the 'inside-out' view and the 'outside-in' view (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Baumgarth et al, 2011; Urde et al, 2011 in Urde, 2013). The 'inside-out' view refers to the view of the brand that the inside of an organization holds, whilst the 'outside-in' view refers to the customers and external stakeholders view of the organization. These views are synergetic, and together form the brand's core and promise (Urde, 2009; Urde, 2013), and it is this way of thinking becomes the basis for how the *CBIM* is to be used and perceived. Building on these and other theories, the *CBIM* addresses the various elements that make up a corporate brand identity, and aims at offering "academics and managers a theoretical and practical guide to the describing, defining and aligning of corporate brand identity" (Urde, 2013: 742).

Internally, the *CBIM* identifies a company's mission and vision, the established culture a company has and the company's unique competences. The corporate mission on the can be described as the reason behind why an organization "exists and what engages and motivates it, beyond the aim of making money" (Collin and Porras,

1998 in Urde 2013: 751). The corporate vision can be thought of as the strategic vision put forth by Hatch and Schultz (2003), and is in short an extension of the corporate mission "by formalizing its view of where it is heading and what inspires it to move forward" (de Chernatony, 2001 in Urde, 2013: 751). These two concepts are fairly similar though not synonymous, and are kept together as one entity in the *CBIM* for precisely this reason: to facilitate the use of the model and minimize the confusion between these very similar terms (Urde, 2013). The culture can be related to the organizational culture that is predominant in all organizations, and the company's unique competences can be thought of as the company's capabilities and processes (Urde, 2013).

Externally, the *CBIM* looks at a company's value proposition to consumers and customers, relationships between stakeholders and the company's current positioning in the market. The value proposition can be thought of as "combinations of appealing arguments directed to customers and non-customer stakeholders" (Frow & Payne, 2011; Rintamaki et al., 2007 in Urde, 2013: 753). The *CBIM* draws special attention to the combinations of appealing arguments, and demonstrates how these can be linked back to the image and perception that the customers hold of a company and its brand (Urde, 2013). The relationships refer to *all* of the relationships that the company has: its suppliers, external stakeholders, primary customers, its clients and any other there might be. The relationships that a company has are crucial as they are an external reflection of elements within the company (Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013). Relationships can also be key to a company's reputation, as association with various stakeholders can cause a brand's reputation to become dependent on that of the associated stakeholder. This can be both beneficial and detrimental for a brand - take

for example the popular clothing line Nike and its relationship to its sweatshop suppliers, which caused an incredibly negative reputational association for Nike. (Greyser, 2009; Roper & Fill, 2012). Finally, the CBIM refers to the current positioning of the company. This can be both the position in the market, and the position of the company and brand in the minds of the consumers and stakeholders (Urde, 2013).

The CBIM also handles the elements, which are both external and internal such as a company's personality, expressions and the core values. The company's personality can be thought of as a direct personification of the company, and is easiest explained as the answer to the question "What combination of human characteristics or qualities forms our corporate character?" (Urde, 2013: 754). The expression refers to the logos, words, colors or other variables that the company uses to identify itself. These expressions can take place both internally in the company and towards external stakeholders, and can be thought of as the visual or spoken representation of the company in the minds of the various stakeholders (Urde, 2013). The 'core' of the *CBIM* is the brand promise and the company's core values (ibid), which are closely linked to the corporate identity as explained earlier in this text (de Chernatony, 2001; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013). It is the core of the *CBIM* that helps decide what exactly the brand identity of a corporate brand is, and that can help identify conflicting elements or elements that do not correlate to the identity of the brand.

For the full *CBIM* framework, see Figure 1.
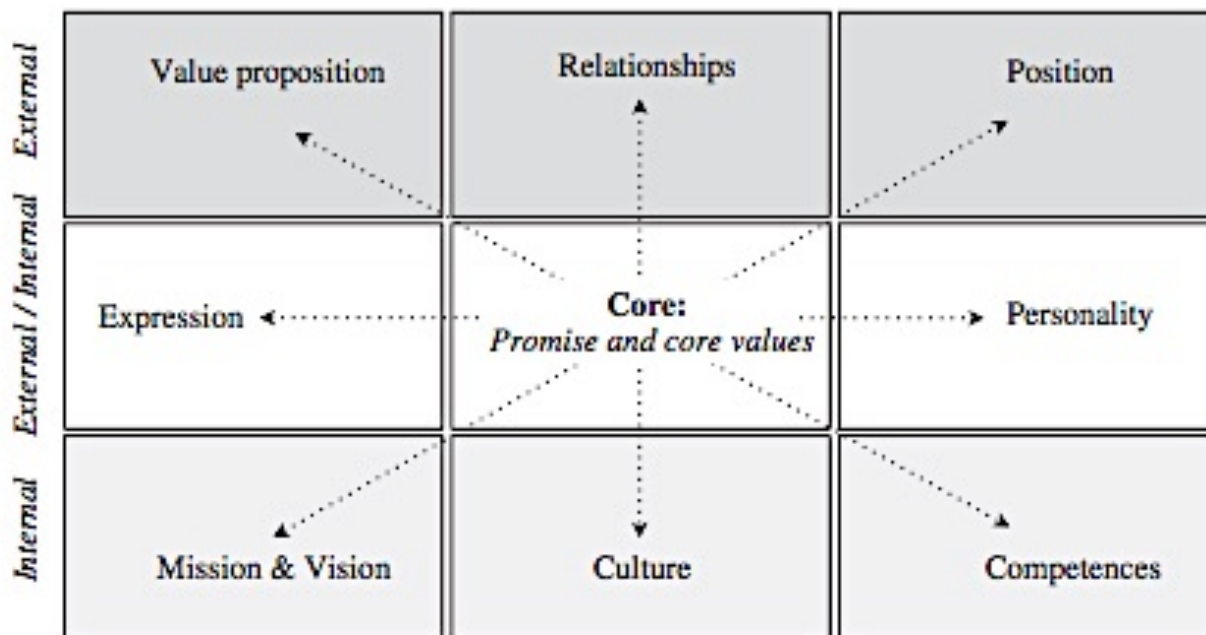
Figure 1. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013)

Urde (2013) explains that these nine elements are key when trying to identify a corporate brand identity. Urde (2013) also explains that a company can solidify its corporate brand identity by aligning the various elements in the *CBIM* in horizontals, verticals and diagonals that cross through the core. For example, a company's mission and vision should correlate with its core value and brand promise in order to achieve a market position compliant to the corporate brand identity (Urde, 2014). Similarly, a company's value proposition should be in line with the core values and brand promise to the same extent as the company's competences in order for both value proposition and competences to be truly connected.

However, the *CBIM* should be used more as a general tool to identify how different subsidiaries in for example a MNC, perceive and identify the corporate brand, and use this analysis to align this corporate brand identity between subsidiaries (Urde, 2013).

2.4. Corporate Brand Management in MNCs

2.4.1. Development of the Multinational Brand

As the previous chapter shows, there are possibilities to identify and manage a corporate brand and a corporate brand identity in a corporation. However, these theories, models and frameworks do not discuss the heightened complexity that arises when trying to implement these in a multinational corporation. Even though a multinational corporation (also called transnational corporation) has its headquarters (HQ) in one country, it also operates through subsidiaries in many other countries at a time (Khojastehpour et al, 2015). This means that a MNC attempting to develop a corporate brand often faces different, if not more, complexities than corporations that are based in one market.

In order to investigate why MNCs see benefits in developing corporate brands, we need to look into the origins of what a multinational corporate brand (MCB). A MCB is essentially a corporate brand applied on a MNC with the aim of unifying the MNC's corporate brand in the various subsidiaries under one, single international corporate brand (Khojastehpour et al., 2015). The idea of a having a MCB can be linked back to MNC management's realization of the benefits of having a global product brand. Global product brands are attractive to firms as they are thought to "enhance economies of scale and scope in manufacturing and research-and-development activities (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010: 64). It is also seen as a way for MNCs to gain value from positioning themselves as 'global' (Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2004; Steenkamp, Batra & Alden, 2003 in Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010). However, the idea of a global brand has been highly criticized by various literature, as managers must consider the cultural differences that can arise when targeting consumers from

various countries (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999; Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010). This led to multiple studies concerning how global brands need to be adapted locally in order to create true customer commitment. In fact, authors like Aaker & Joachimsthaler (1999) argue that a true global brand does not exist and that a global brand needs to constantly be adapted to match the perceptions of the customers in various markets. Instead, they propose the notion of a 'global brand leadership', which essentially means "using organizational structures, processes and cultures to allocate brand-building resources globally" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999: 136) This means targeting the organizations themselves rather than just the global product brand - in other words, building a multinational corporate brand.

Despite the notion of a multinational corporate brand being thought of as a successful way to create a more globally established brand (Khojastehpour et al., 2015), the act of actually building one of these brands can be thought of as "one of the greatest challenges a MNC faces" (Khojastehpour et al., 2015: 50). In order to fully understand the complexities that arise around this challenge, we need to describe the various factors that make up the nature of the multinational corporation.

2.4.2. *Managing a Multinational Corporation (MNC)*

There have been several studies on what complexities can arise when managing a MNC and how a MNC can go about managing its corporate brand. One of the major challenges that a MNC faces is that its subsidiaries are located in different countries. Not only does this provide challenges pertaining to geographical distance or language barriers, but also pertaining to culture, more specifically national culture and how to manage the differences between them (Newman & Nollen, 1996; Gupta & Govindarajan, 1991 in Khojastehpour et al., 2015).

National culture is a relatively stable component of countries as it is fairly resistant to change and is defined as early learned beliefs, values and assumptions that differentiate one group from another (Beck & Moore, 1985; Hofstede, 1991; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Sparrow, 1995; Adler, 1997; Hofstede, 1993 in Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998) "National culture implies that one way of acting or one set of outcomes is preferable to another" (Newman & Nollen, 1996: 755), meaning that there is a unique behavior and result requirement in every subsidiary within a MNC. Furthermore, "national culture is a central organizing principle of employees' understanding of work, their approach to it, and the way in which they expect to be treated" (Newman & Nollen, 1996: 755), making it crucial for managers to fully grasp the national culture they are met with in a MNC subsidiary and to use management techniques compliant with this particular national culture. Unfortunately, managing this cross-cultural dilemma is often neglected (Ferner & Varul, 2000).

National culture is a well-researched field of study where focus has been on being able to develop national cultural frameworks that can facilitate managerial practice between different countries. The most frequently used reference to national culture is the one by Hofstede (1991), which outlines four cultural dimensions that national culture has its foundation in. Hofstede's (1991) four cultural dimensions are 'power distance', 'individualism versus collectivism', 'masculinity versus femininity' and 'uncertainty avoidance'. This research has been reviewed and developed since its first publication, resulting in adding two more cultural dimensions, namely 'long-term orientation versus short term orientation' and 'indulgence versus restraint' (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). These six dimensions are briefly explained below.

'Power Distance Index' (PDI) refers to the degree that members of a society accept unequally distributed power. This can be applied within an organization as the degree to which employees accept a strict hierarchical structure and are content with following orders without great need for an explanation or justification on why these orders are necessary to follow. A country with a high score in PDI accepts this unequally distributed power, whilst countries with low scores in PDI, people strive for a more equal distribution of power where an unequal distribution requires an explanation.

'Individualism versus Collectivism' (IDV) pertains to whether people refer to themselves by using the term "I" or "we". In a country with a high score of individualism, people are expected to care for only themselves and their immediate families, in contrast to countries considered having more of a collectivist culture where this network is expanded to including relatives or members of particular groups. Members of collectivist societies are more prone to rely on each other, whilst individualistic societies advocate every member to be able to care for him or herself.

'Masculinity versus Femininity' (MAS) refers to the degree of which the society values achievement and assertiveness over modesty and cooperation. A society with a high score in masculinity is said to be very competitive and used material compensation to reward success. The contrasting society, with a low score in masculinity, values cooperation, quality of life and is more oriented toward reaching consensus.

'Uncertainty Avoidance Index' (UAI) pertains to how comfortable the members in the society feel about uncertainty and ambiguity, and how they choose to deal with the future being unknown. Societies with a high score in UAI have strict protocols of beliefs and behaviors which make them able to cope with the unknown future, whilst societies with a low score in UAI take the day as it comes and maintain a more relaxed attitude regarding not knowing what the next day might bring.

'Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Orientation' (LTO) describes a society's relation to change over time. Societies with a high score in LTO tend to be pragmatic, encouraging modern education as a way to prepare for the future. A low score in LTO on the other hand, indicates that the society does not appreciate societal change and that the members aim to maintain traditions and norms as they have been in the past.

'Indulgence versus Restraint' (IND) refers to how much the members in the society gratify themselves by suspecting to basic human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. The contrasting society's members, applies restraint to this kind of behavior and regulates these needs to comply with strict social norms.

These concepts mapping out national cultural extremities are used to compare countries' national cultures to one another, in order to observe whether management practices can be applied similarly in multiple countries and still communicate the same message (Hofstede, 1991). There has been much discussion pertaining to the validity and relevance of Hofstede's (1991) research, mainly concerning the possibility of being able to map out national cultural for an entire country in this general sense by using one organization as the representative population (Ailon, 2008;

McSweeney, 2002). This critique has been met with the statement that these types of comparative frameworks are not meant to provide a general stereotype of how people of a certain nationality behave, but rather to facilitate the understanding of how people from different countries may feel, act and perceive very differently toward the same stimuli (Hofstede, 2002; Trompenaars, 1997).

Including national culture in management practice should be natural to an organization, a MNC especially, as managers will face a considerably less amount of resistance if their management practices allows employees to behave 'as usual' (Fleming & Spicer, 2007), in other words, as is consistent with their national culture (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Correctly adapted management practices, inspiring employees through their individual identities by understanding their national culture can lead to a competitive advantage (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Newman & Nollen, 1996). This competitive advantage can only be achieved if there exists an "alignment between key characteristics of the external environment (national culture in this case) and internal strategy, structure, systems and practices" (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Powell 1992; Prescott, 1986 in Newman & Nollen, 1996: 755). This essentially means, that each subsidiary will to some extent have their own 'way of working', in order for a MNC to function correctly, and can be linked back to everything from the way the organization is structured in various subsidiaries, to the sharing of knowledge and the desired position in the nationally divers external markets.

Corporate culture has been believed to have the capacity to moderate or even erase the impact that national culture has on a MNC and its employees (Luthans & Doh, 2012), and is often thought of as a way to unify a MNC. However, there are more and

more studies suggesting that the opposite may actually be closer to the truth. That is, that national culture's beliefs and values *cannot* that easily be changed by a corporate culture (Luthans & Doh, 2012, own emphasis) as much of the managerial literature implies. Not only does the national culture pertain to the employees in the MNC, but it also pertains to the various management teams. Managerial attitudes, values, beliefs and behavior naturally also vary across national culture, suggesting that there can be no standardized way to manage employees across a MNC since every manager may have a unique opinion on how he/she sees this is done best (Newman & Nollen, 1996). However, even though complete standardization in management practice is not applicable in a MNC that does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to still unite the subsidiaries with the MNC Headquarters through a "standard" corporate culture.

Linking this back to the idea of a multinational corporate brand (MCB), the corporate or organizational culture can be thought of as a strategic tool, particularly when it comes to corporate brand management. An organization's culture plays an important role in the identifying of a corporate brand's identity as well as in the construction of what a brand is (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013). This however becomes largely problematic in a MNC, as the management practices, organizational structures and organizational cultures are constantly influenced by the different subsidiaries and their hard-to-change national cultures.

2.5. Summary of Literature Review

Through this literature review we have outlined what a brand is, what a corporate brand is, why corporate brands are beneficial and what tools to use when managing a corporate brand. We have seen that within an organization, it is largely the managers'

responsibility to ensure that the brand is being communicated efficiently throughout the organization. Furthermore, theory explains that in order to reap the benefits connected to having a strong corporate brand, the corporate core values have to be identified and aligned with those pertaining to the corporation. It is also largely the managers' responsibility to identify and communicate these core values of the brand, and ensure that they truly are aligned with those of the employees. One way to do this is to see if the various elements of the corporate brand identity align, and whether these align with the corporate brand identities that are being communicated throughout the organization.

We have also looked at how the use of a corporate brand is complicated when done in a multinational corporation (MNC). The MNC is faced with the complexity of having subsidiaries located in different countries, where different national cultures affect the individuals working within these subsidiaries, in turn affecting the subsidiaries local corporate identity. The national culture also affects how people receive and judge information, as well as people individual values and beliefs. The different national cultural influences disrupt the possibility to apply standardized management practice to implement procedures in the MNC, and suggestively the same logic could be applied when implementing concepts as the corporate brand throughout the MNC.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the road map of how this thesis was constructed. We explain in detail which methods we have used to collect and analyze data, as well as justify why we have chosen to use these methods.

3.1. Research Approach

3.1.1. Qualitative Approach with an Explorative Nature

When studying subjective fields such as identity, culture and managerial practice, it is common to do so with a qualitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The qualitative approach allows us as researchers to conduct interviews where the questions can be answered in any way the respondent feels is his/her opinion, providing us with a rich base of information (Backman, 2010). A quantitative approach would have provided us with more solid figures and facts (Bryman & Bell, 2011), however quantifying the responses that we have gained from our interviews would reduce our study's validity as we would have to use a very structured interview leaving very little room for the respondents own interpretations and opinions.

We have chosen to conduct our research with an explorative nature, meaning that we will include a substantial part of both theoretical and empirical data and only remove parts of them when we are completely certain that they are not needed to increase the value of our study (Armstrong, Kotler, Cunningham & Cunningham, 2005). Unfortunately this method causes somewhat of a 'structured chaos' when gathering information, as researchers do not know from the start what was valuable information and what was not. This 'chaos' puts a substantial amount of weight on conducting a structured analysis with a strict coding and categorizing process (See *3.7.1 Data Reduction*). Nonetheless, it is our opinion that this was the correct method to use, as it

was the only way we could ensure that we collected as much relevant information as possible.

3.1.2. *Hermeneutics*

Hermeneutics is defined as the study of written texts and their meaning (Cambridge Dictionary, 2015), and within this field there exists a concept called 'the hermeneutic circle' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). This concept refers to the idea that one cannot understand a whole text without understanding the components that together create this 'whole', at the same time as one cannot understand the different components without regarding the 'whole' in itself (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008), creating a circle. 'The hermeneutic circle' is a concept that we have included throughout both the analysis of the primary and secondary data since our field of study is largely formed around the perceptions, emotions and opinions from individuals. As we have conducted this study with 'the hermeneutic circle' in mind, we also recommend the readers to apply the same logic and not take the information presented out of its context, but review the study in its entirety.

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. *A Cross-Cultural Comparative Case Study*

We have chosen to look closely into one organization and use it as a representative case of MNCs trying to implement a corporate brand. A representative case is studied to "exemplify an everyday situation, or a form of organization" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 62). As we aim to study perceptions, feelings and behavior that occur in everyday situations, as well as multinational corporations as a form of organization, Intrum Justitia fulfills the criteria of being a representative case study.

Even though the organization in itself could be viewed as one case, we have chosen to further dissect it and view its different offices as separate subunits, which we have compared against each other (see Figure 2) - making this a comparative case study. Yin (2003) calls this type of case study a 'single case with embedded units' and explains that the analysis can be made *within* the subunits separately, *between* the different subunits or *across* all of the subunits (Yin, 2003 in Baxter & Jack, 2008). This is considered as a valuable methodical contribution to our research as it allows us to analyze how Intrum Justitia's corporate branding process is affected by the national culture within different offices, to compare the impact from local national culture between offices, as well as analyze the impact that these diverse national cultures in each office have on Intrum Justitia's corporate branding process.

Furthermore, since our analysis has its foundation in the differences in the MNC's offices national cultures, it was suitable to apply a cross-cultural focus on this research design in order to be able to examine the national culture's socio-cultural implications (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Culture is best studied in comparison to each other (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars, 1997), which is why we found it important to perform the comparative case study.
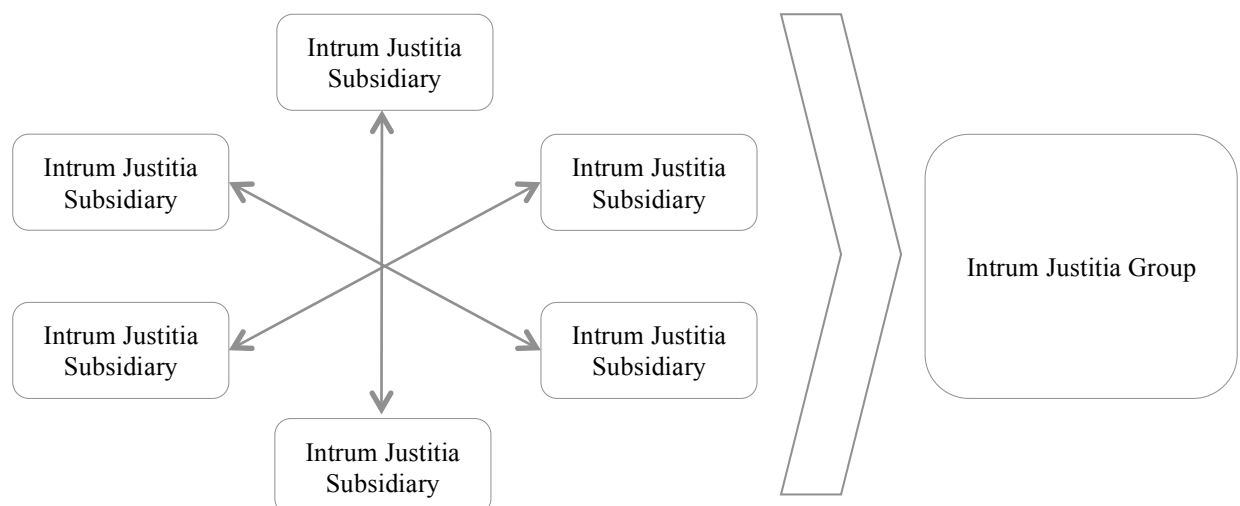
Figure 2. Demonstration of a cross-case synthesis approach in the case of Intrum Justitia

Our intention with calling this case study representative of other multinational corporations (MNCs) is not to generalize our findings and claim that all other MNCs function the same way as our case study. One organization's situation can hardly be the general situation for that many other organizations in differing industries, sizes and geographical locations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our aspiration is instead to raise awareness of a commonly occurring situation in multinational corporations and demonstrate that the gap between theory and practice needs to be filled by an increase in empirical studies on the subject. In hope that this study could be used as a reference point for future research, we have described with full transparency how the study was conducted (See *3.8.2* External and Internal Reliability).

According to Yin (2003), it is important to note than no one source of data is considered as complete, meaning that it is necessary to include multiple sources of data in order to be able to complete a balanced analysis to in turn come to valid conclusions. As previously mentioned, we have conducted a pilot study where the data source consisted of own observations of Intrum Justitia managers discussing the corporate brand. Furthermore we have collected secondary data in the form of archival records, in our case being the Employee Satisfaction Survey Report that Intrum Justitia had conducted prior to our research's commencement. Lastly, we have conducted semi-structured interviews with managers throughout Intrum Justitia subsidiaries as our primary data. The process of this data collection as well as its analysis is described in detail in *3.6* Primary Data Collection.

3.2.2. Choice of Case Study: Intrum Justitia

We have chosen to look at one case company that in our eyes gives us an opportunity to learn, and fulfills the criteria for the scope of this study: a multinational corporation

having managerial difficulties establishing a corporate brand, despite following a theoretical framework. In order to identify whether Intrum Justitia was an interesting case to use in this research, we conducted a pilot study. The pilot study consisted of first-hand observations from an Internal Education Seminar conducted by Intrum Justitia's upper management with the purpose of educating managers from different national offices on corporate branding theory, as well as a secondary data analysis of an Employee Satisfaction Survey Report which consisted of compiled data from all Intrum Justitia offices on employees' opinions of the corporate brand. The results of this pilot study justified our problem specification and confirmed that the diverse national cultures could have an impact on the corporate branding process throughout Intrum Justitia.

As researchers we realize that national culture is probably not the only issue in Intrum Justitia's rebranding difficulties, as our literature review demonstrates, however since our pilot study indicated that it might be a *contributing factor* we deem it an interesting area to conduct further research in. The pilot study itself is not considered to be of value in further detail in this study, however it can be found in *8. PILOT STUDY* for transparency reasons.

3.3. Literature Selection

3.3.1. The Best of Both Worlds

The spark that ignited our idea for this study was our mixed interest within the field of Business Administration. Collectively we have advanced knowledge within both the field of marketing, more specifically within branding, corporate branding and corporate brand management, and also the field of organizational theory, where the focus mainly lies within strategic human resource management. The combination of

these two fields is what has lead us to the idea of applying the more managerially established organizational theory on the less practically tried theory of corporate branding.

We have used literature from various academic journals, books, research papers and lectures, covering the themes of brands, corporate brands and corporate brand management, employer branding, strategic management, change management, corporate culture, corporate identity, national culture, human resource management and organizational theory. By combining as many different sources as possible we hope to present a literature review and theoretical grounds that is solid and well researched. We have also used Intrum Justitia's webpage to look up certain terminology and organizational structures, but this information has only been used to further build our understanding of the case company so that we interpret what has been said in the interviews correctly and is therefore not seen as part of the literature review.

3.4. Secondary Data Collection

Prior to our study, Intrum Justitia had conducted an extensive Employee Satisfaction Survey that aimed to gather information from all employees throughout the organization regarding their opinions of the new corporate brand and Intrum Justitia's operations in general. These surveys were compiled in a report, which we have used as our secondary data. Due to a confidentiality agreement with Intrum Justitia, we cannot release the specific questions asked and their specific purpose in the survey, as this might warp the company's results in future surveys similar to this one. Nonetheless, we were still able to collect the data relevant to our study and make our

own analysis of the results from the survey. The limitations associated with us not having conducted this data collection ourselves are addressed in this chapter.

3.4.1. *The Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR)*

The Employee Satisfaction Survey was compiled into an Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR), which included the questions that were asked, the responses to these questions, the response rates, the amount of current employees in each office, the location of each office and each office's contact person responsible for distributing and collecting the surveys. Countries divided the respondents up in 'employees' and 'managers', as well as. The results from the Intrum Justitia headquarters, located in Sweden, were divided separately from the other Swedish offices. The survey saw a 92% response rate, and the sample consisted of the entire population of employees at Intrum Justitia, meaning that there is a reduced risk of sampling error (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The 92% response rate to the survey is excellent, and suggests that the survey has a relatively low bias level (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The surveys were of a quantitative nature, and the questions and answers were given on basis of ennova's European Employee Index. The responses were given on a scale of 0-100, where 100 was the highest grade the employee could give, and 0 was the lowest. These answers where then consolidated in an excel file and color coded with green as an indicator of positive ratings, and red as an indicator for the negative ratings. The answers from the surveys were organized by geographical region in the report (See Table 1) with every separate country as a first-level subcategory and every division within the office as a second-level subcategory.

The survey contained direct questions concerning Intrum Justitia's core value, the immediate management, and the general management, the local management and team spirit. Indirectly, the survey asked the employees about their loyalty to Intrum Justitia, their perception of Intrum Justitia's reputation, what position Intrum has in the market, Intrum Justitia's competences as a Credit Management Service, Intrum Justitia's corporate culture, the internal and general communication and the brand promise in general. There were several 'control' questions, in particular pertaining to Intrum Justitia's core values. Control questions refer to questions that ask the same thing, but are phrased differently (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For example, asking a direct questions about Intrum Justitia's core values in general can be checked by asking another question about, for example, whether the respondent finds Intrum Justitia is 'Seeking insight to feed innovation', which is one of Intrum Justitia's core values (See *1.1.1 The Case*).

REGIONS	INTRUM JUSTITIA GROUP	REGION WESTERN	REGION NORTHERN	REGION CENTRAL
COUNTRIES	Head Office, Sweden	Belgium	Denmark	Austria
		France	Estonia	Czech Republic
		Ireland	Finland	Germany
		Italy	Norway	Hungary
		Portugal	Poland	Slovakia
		Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
		-	The Netherlands	-

Table 1. Intrum Justitia's Office by Region

3.4.2. Limitations and Bias to Secondary Data

As frequently happens when using secondary data, we were faced with a few limitations and validity challenges when analyzing the data. First of all, though we had access to the questions asked, we did not partake in the construction of the surveys meaning we did not have all the necessary background information regarding the intent of the survey questions and the responses (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, we were unable to control what questions were asked, which limits us greatly when it comes to choosing relevant information.

Seeing as the survey was created to evaluate employee satisfaction and not Intrum Justitia's corporate brand or brand promise, we had to be extremely selective in the information we chose to use. We also had to make our own interpretations of what the question asked and the responses received. Furthermore, although the Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR) provided some information about how the survey was conducted, we have no concrete way of knowing the validity of the survey (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Nevertheless, the survey's has a 92% response rate combined with the fact that the survey was conducted on the entire population and not just a sample study, minimizes some of the natural error that are usually associated with using a smaller sample size (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

However, though the survey's intent was not to examine Intrum Justitia's corporate brand and brand promise, it still covered several areas that are directly related to corporate branding, such as Intrum Justitia's core values and Intrum Justitia's reputation. This meant that despite our limitations, the survey was an interesting empirical material for us to observe.

3.5. Method in Analysis of Secondary Data

Bryman and Bell (2011) explain that secondary data can be used successfully in a cross-cultural analysis process where the purpose is to compare countries against each other, and not establish a general truth about a certain country's or nationality's culture. Furthermore, to be able to compare countries against each other, there must be coordination between them regarding what kind of study has been conducted and that the questions that have been asked (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All offices in the Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR) have answered the same questions, making these internal documents a valid data source for analyzing national culture's impact on implementing or managing a corporate brand.

3.5.1. *Applying Pattern Matching*

In our analysis of the secondary data we used the method of pattern matching. Pattern matching is a research strategy where the researcher attempts to identify the correlation between an anticipated pattern and the actually existing pattern (Yin, 2007), where our anticipated pattern was that countries with similar national cultures had achieved similar ratings in the Employee Satisfaction Survey regarding the corporate brand.

The first step of the analysis was thus selecting the questions in the ESSR pertaining to Intrum Justitia's corporate brand. These included questions that were related to the brand promise, the mission and vision, the culture, the core values, as well as perceptions, expressions, company reputation - which, according to our literature review, are all elements that pertain to building a corporate brand.

The second step was to examine each country's national culture and the correlation of these cultural patterns between countries with similar response rates. We used the *Five Cultural Dimensions Database* developed by Hofstede (1991) to in an objective way be able to compare the national cultural patterns to each other. Limitations to Hofstede's (1991) study include it being completed in one organization, where variables as corporate culture and identity may have an impact, and not all researchers on the subject are convinced that the five dimensions Hofstede (1991) presents are in fact the correct ones to determine national culture (Trompenaars, 1997; Laurent, 1983; 1986). Furthermore, there is critique as to the level of impact Hofstede (1991) claims that national culture has, and that this impact would be homogeneously spread across a nation (McSweeney, 2002). However, the researchers do agree that analyses of differences in cultures are to be done in comparison to one another, and by using a consistently developed framework.

3.5.2. *Presentation of Secondary Data Analysis*

As the purpose of this analysis is not to distinguish certain characteristics of different countries' alleged national cultural patterns, or to use these patterns as a general truth regarding their national cultures, but to use them as a reference point in a comparison, we deem Hofstede's (1991) collected data to be an appropriate data source. The existing pattern and the pattern matching analysis is described in *4.1* Secondary Data Analysis.

The data in the ESSR is quantitative in nature, however the confidentiality agreement with Intrum Justitia restricts us from publishing detailed figures in our analysis. We have therefore opted to present our analysis with narrative synthesis, allowing us to combine quantitative data with qualitative reasoning (Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Jones,

Young & Sutton, 2005). Narrative synthesis has been critiqued by not being transparent (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005), which is unfortunately a limitation we must accept as we do not have the option of providing the data underlying this analysis. Nonetheless we will provide as much information as possible as to our reasoning and interpretation concerning the secondary data.

3.6. Primary Data Collection

3.6.1. *Choice of Primary Data Collection Method*

In this thesis, our primary data collection was done through the use of semi-structured interviews. Though other research methods, such as ethnography, have proven valuable in studies regarding organizations and cultures, as they provide the researcher with the possibility to observe the day-to-day operations in an organization during a long period of time which allows for the examination of the organization's processes, cultures and language (Bryman & Bell, 2011), this kind of method takes a substantial amount of time to carry out an ethnographic study correctly, which unfortunately did not fit the time frame we had for this study. Micro-ethnography, a concept that derives from ethnography, might also have been appropriate as it does not require such a substantial amount of time to be completed, and is therefore often argued as data collection method for a Master's thesis (Wolcott, 1995 in Bryman & Bell, 2011). If our case study was limited to one geographical location this would have been a fitting method for our observations, however since we are focused on differences in national culture and its impact on implementing a corporate brand identity, we would not have enough time at each location to make proper observations. We have therefore opted for using semi-structured interviews when collecting our primary data.

Due to the nature of national culture being so ambiguous and personally connected, it is important that our interview subjects are able to speak freely and have the opportunity to "ramble on" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 466). Although it is important for us as researchers to "gain a genuine understanding of the world views of members of a social setting or of people sharing common attributes" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 472), which is something that often predicates using an unstructured interviewing approach, due to the nature of our research having a clear focus and explorative nature, the use of semi-structured interview was more relevant. Semi-structured interviews give us the freedom to address particular issues in relation to national culture and corporate branding, which an unstructured interview might not. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview would allow us the freedom of structuring the interview in a way that allows us to analyze the data using theoretical frameworks, such as the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* (Urde, 2013). Finally, as we have conducted a single case study with embedded units, we have applied the same logic as to our level of structure in our interviews as if it were a multiple case study. A multiple case study research requires structure in the interviews, which is why we have developed an interview guide that has been followed (See *3.6.3* Interview Guide).

3.6.2. Sampling

According to authors on the topic, the primary responsibility for the communication of a company's corporate brand internally lies in the hands of a company's managers (de Chernatony, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2011; Roper and Fill, 2012). Therefore, should the management not be on board with the company's corporate brand then, theoretically, that same corporate brand would not be truly established throughout a company (Roper & Fill, 2012). With this in mind, combined with the time limitation to this study, we chose to only conduct interviews with managers. This could be seen

as a sort of purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011) as the managers have a specific role to play in the corporate branding process. This sampling method stands in accordance with theory concerning corporate brand management, as it predicates that the corporate brand is essentially a construct of *all* employees and stakeholders in a company (Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde, 2013). In other words, managers participating in the interviews should be able to identify with Intrum Justitia's corporate brand identity, regardless of their background or how they were selected for the interview.

In order to get in contact with the chosen respondents within Intrum Justitia we have chosen to apply a snowball sampling method. This kind of sampling entails the initial contact of a small group of people relevant to the research who in turn can provide referrals to other people relevant to the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our initial contact with Intrum Justitia was made with the Human Resource Manager in Headquarters, who we consider to be very relevant to our research as he has insight in the entire corporate branding process' progression and has a widespread network within the organization for us to utilize. Through this network within the HR branch we were able to attain contact with HR managers active within Intrum Justitia offices in Sweden, The Netherlands, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Finland who in turn referred us to managers in other divisions within the office.

A common limitation associated with snowball sampling is the extent to which the sample is reflective of the entire population, as the sample is selected through the subjective decisions of others than the researchers themselves (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, to contradict this limitation, Bryman and Bell (2011) also point out that samples selected from a company or organization tend to be very homogenous. In other words, the subjective referrals through the snowball sampling are not

necessarily an issue to us as we are focusing our research to one organization. Furthermore, the size of the samples selected from a company do not have to be as large as if the population consisted of a heterogeneous group of independent, unrelated individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This suggests that the size of the sample could theoretically still be kept small, as the population *within the offices* is most likely homogenous.

However, there is a risk that the referral system of the snowball sampling method could provide us with an unrepresentative sample of the population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For instance, as we are studying the implementation and perception of the corporate brand identity, there is a risk that the HR managers in each country have chosen interview subjects that will speak well of their progress in this matter without necessarily being entirely truthful. To minimize this risk we have therefore not provided specific information beforehand as to what the interviews pertains to and also provided the interview subjects with the option of being anonymous.

3.6.3. *Interview Guide*

We created our interview guide with the following two questions in mind: "'Just what about this thing is puzzling me?'" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 474) and "'What do (we) need to know in order to answer each one of the research questions (we are) interested in?" (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 475). In order to be able to fully answer these questions, we organized our questions in accordance to the theory and frameworks presented in the literature review. The interview guide was used in order to ensure that the semi-structured interviews covered the same topics, necessarily asking the interview subjects the same exact questions. The interview guide can be reviewed in its entirety in Appendix 4: Interview Guide.

3.6.4. Respondents

As previously mentioned, the interview subjects were chosen were purposively only in management positions, and were contacted using a snowball sample method. The interview subjects' names and titles were not included in the analysis, as we have promised the interview subjects anonymity in order increase openness and honesty in their answers. What we can divulge however is that we have interviewed Managing Directors, Human Resource Managers, Finance Directors, Purchase Debt Directors and Communication Managers in Intrum Justitia subsidiaries in Sweden, The Netherlands, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Finland, thus representing two of the three geographical regions that Intrum Justitia is structured by.

3.6.5. Roles During Interviews

When conducting interviews it is recommended that the interviewers assume different roles in order to ensure that as much data as possible can be collected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One of us acted as the active interviewer, posing questions and leading the discussion, whilst the other acted as a more passive interviewer; focusing on taking field notes and observing the behavior of the interview subject, giving the occasional nods of encouragement. This set up is done for several reasons. First of all, by having one person being more active meant that the person being interviewed found him/herself in more of a 'conversation' than in an interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Theoretically, this would set the interview subject more at ease as it allow for more casual conversation rather than pre-established answers. A second reason was that this format minimized the confusion for the person being interviewed, in the sense of who was asking questions and whom the interviewee 'should be speaking to' (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Finally, this structure was to ensure that the interviewers took note of any physical signs of discomfort, such as fidgeting, or signs of excitement that

the interview subject might be displaying, adding to the validity of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Though the more active interviewer would notice these characteristics, having a more passive person focusing solely on these signs allows for the active member to be solely focused on keeping the conversation/interview going and asking the right questions.

Naturally, this structure has some limitation for the study. Having one person sitting in and actively taking notes during the interview might make the candidate being interviewed nervous and distracted (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We aimed to minimize this by ensuring that the passive interviewer is sitting slightly off camera, and uses encouraging body language such as nods and supportive grunts to emulate a listening aura to the interviewer, compliant with theory on how to successfully conduct an interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.6.6. Video Conference and Phone Interviews

Bryman and Bell (2011) discuss the pros and cons regarding face-to-face interviews versus interviews done over the phone. Firstly, face-to-face interviews can be sustained for a longer time. Secondly, it is possible to observe body language and facial expressions of the interview subject which is very helpful when the subject is as connected to feelings, opinions and personal values. As corporate brand and national culture as subjects are very connected to these aspects, face-to-face interviews are therefore the most fitting option for our data collection. However, even though phone interviews lack these aspects, they are significantly cheaper and much easier to administrate (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As our interview subjects are located in many different countries, we originally opted for the modern mix between these two alternatives: video conference calls. This would allow us to gain all the positive

aspects from a face-to-face interview without actually having to be on location. A common problematic with video conference calls is the occasional technical failures, but we saw this risk as low since the interview subject would be stationed at work where the technology and Internet connection should be of good quality.

Unfortunately however, it transpired not all interview subjects had access to programs allowing video calls on their office computers, forcing us to conduct a majority of the interviews over the phone. Not being able to review body language could be seen as a weakness to the study, however we deem that the most significant information was collected from what was said, and not from what could be read from body language. In this situation we found it more valuable to conduct interviews over the phone in contrast to not conducting them at all. In order to reduce this weakness we transcribed the interviews with much detail, including pauses, hesitations and other signs of emotion connected to the questions.

3.6.7. *Recording and Transcribing the Interviews*

To be able to perform an as detailed analysis as possible, we recorded all interviews. This was done in order to ensure that the interview subjects' answers were kept to the fullest extent possible in their true nature (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We used two tape recorders in case one of the recorders should fail during the interview. To not have our recordings compromised we also chose quiet and secluded locations to conduct our interviews. We also transcribed our interviews in order to be able to refer to the material as data, and to facilitate our analysis process by being able to refer to this transcribed material instead of being reliant on recordings. The conducted interviews resulted in 75 pages of transcribed text, which we have used as our basis for our primary analysis.

3.6.8. Ethical Considerations

The point of using interviews as a means to collect our primary data was to ensure that we had as honest and subjective information as possible from different parts of the organization. However, as our interview samples were small in each office, and since we used a snowball sampling method stemming from the HR manager in each office to get in touch with the interview subjects, it is difficult to keep the results completely anonymous. This becomes problematic as it creates a risk of the interview subjects not being completely truthful to us. We attempted to reduce this risk by interviewing multiple people from each office, by printing neither names nor titles in this study and by informing the interview subjects of this prior to starting the interview.

3.7. Method of Analysis of Primary Data

Cross-case synthesis is a common method for analyzing evidence, where findings from at least two cases are analyzed against each other (Yin, 2003). As our case study consists of a single case with embedded units, we have chosen to analyze these units internally, between each other and also to combine these findings and apply them to the case study as a whole. We have therefore constructed our Primary Data Analysis (See *3.7* Method of Analysis of Primary Data) by using this structure.

Cross-case synthesis requires the use of a uniform framework from which the researchers display the data from the individual cases (Yin, 2003), analyze similarities and differences between them and construct interpretations and a chain of reasoning concerning the relations between them (Miles & Huberman, 1984 in Cruzes, Dybå, Runeson & Höst, 2014). Miles and Huberman's (1984) process of cross-case synthesis consists of three steps: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

We will in this chapter explain how we have applied these three steps when conducting our case study.

3.7.1. *Data Reduction: Selecting the Relevant Information*

In order to explore the impact that national culture has on the implementation of Intrum Justitia's corporate brand, we must investigate the corporate brand identity behind the corporate brand. As identity in itself is not a fixed concept, the corporate brand identity may not be either, even though upper management sets the corporate brand itself. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, we formulated an Interview Guide from which we conducted our semi-structured interviews, where the questions and topics to a large extent were formulated around the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* (Urde, 2013), a framework that can be used to identify a corporation's corporate brand identity and analyze its coherency throughout the organization. However, as the interviews were of a semi-structured nature, and that the concepts of identity, culture and perceptions are highly subjective, we were not able to strictly follow the variables presented to us in the *CBIM*. The results of our interviews were 75 pages of transcribed material on Intrum Justitia's corporate brand and the interview subjects feelings and perceptions pertaining to it, which is why we applied the method of data reduction in order to produce a clear analysis.

As the analysis in itself was to be focused around the corporate brand identity, and how national culture may have an impact on it between different countries in Intrum Justitia, we chose to use the *CBIM* as our tool to reduce the data by. According to Miles and Huberman (1984), the data reduction process is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the results from the study. In correspondence to the structuring of our Primary Data Analysis this process was done

on the level of each embedded unit in the case study, in other words each on of Intrum Justitia's country offices.

However, on this level of analysis, within the embedded units of the case study, we saw to the limitation of not having conducted multiple interview subjects within every office that we contacted. Even though the opinions of those interview subjects who were the only people interviewed from their office could be representative of the office in its entirety, there was no way of controlling this. We therefore deemed it more valuable to exclude these interviews from the analysis, as they did not meet the criteria of being analyzed on the embedded unit level, and not representative enough to be analyzed between embedded units.

In accordance to this process we selected information from our transcribed material that pertained to the corporate identity, the corporate brand and general opinions regarding the core of Intrum Justitia. We then focused this material to the corporate brand identity and simplified it by discussing the core meanings of the chosen statements, and how these were applicable within the *CBIM*. From our discussions, we abstracted the key information that could be used in the *CBIM*. This process lastly resulted in transcribed interview material having been transformed into multiple *CBIMs* filled out from each country office's perspective.

3.7.2. *Data Display: Applying the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix*

The analysis within the embedded units of the case study resulted in four different *Corporate Brand Identity Matrices (CBIMs)*, one for each country office where we conducted interviews. These *CBIMs* display our data in a way that is consistent to the focus of our study, the corporate brand identity, and is a clear way of demonstrating the similarities and dissimilarities between nationalities. Analyzing the *CBIMs*

between themselves would provide us with an analysis on the offices' views on Intrum Justitia's corporate brand identity, but would not efficiently integrate the alleged problem regarding impact of diverse national cultures. It would not either provide us with the relationship that the four subsidiaries' corporate brand identities have to that of the Intrum Justitia Group. We have therefore chosen to display the national cultural patterns of Sweden, Finland, Germany and Hungary according to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov's (1991) six cultural dimensions, as well as the *CBIM* produced for the pilot study.

3.7.3. Drawing Conclusions: Comparing the CBIM to Cultural Dimensions

The *CBIMs* were compared against each other with the aim of identifying similarities and dissimilarities between the corporate brand identities of the different subsidiaries. These identifications were then benchmarked against the *CBIM* of the Intrum Justitia Group to analyze whether the differences occurring between the subsidiaries were not all in fact differences from the corporate brand identity of the Intrum Justitia Group, providing us with an indication of which subsidiaries had aligned their corporate brand identity to the one of the Group more successfully than others.

When having identified the level of corporate brand identity alignment between the subsidiaries and Intrum Justitia Group, we could analyze the national cultural patterns against their perception of the corporate brand. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov's (2010) six cultural dimensions were analyzed separately, and used to compare behavioral patterns between the four Intrum Justitia subsidiaries. In order to not draw preconstructed conclusions, this process was made in the method of attempting to prove these conclusions false rather than true, for us to remain unbiased and heighten the credibility of our study.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

3.8.1. External and Internal Validity

External validity is described as the degree to which the findings in a study can be generalized in a larger scope (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The results of a single organization case study do not give much room for generalizability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, we have not conducted this study in order to create a general theory or rule that can be directly adapted by another organization, but to raise awareness of the fact that national culture can have an impact on implementing a corporate brand in a multinational corporation (MNC). This statement is general, and not specific to one organization, but should be tested in a larger scale before these findings are truly generalizable. Additionally we emphasize that a qualitative study does not have generalizable results as its main contribution, but is rather performed to generate theory on the subject.

Internal validity refers to the degree of which the researchers' observations and their theoretical idea development coincide. In other words, internal validity refers to the strength of the congruence between developed concepts and the observations that led to them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to increase our level of internal validity we have been very detail oriented in our data reduction and applied the concept of hermeneutics (See *3.1.2* Hermeneutics) on the interview transcripts to ensure that our predetermined opinions would not disrupt our analysis. Furthermore, we have chosen to base our research in a pilot study, as well an analysis of secondary data, which have provided us with an more objective relation to the gathered material when commencing the primary data analysis.

3.8.2.   External and Internal Reliability

External reliability addresses the degree to which a study can be replicated (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As we have previously mentioned, our aim has never been to come to specific conclusions from this single case study, but to reach a result that claims that there is a gap in theory that can be filled through further research. With this in mind, we believe that our study can be replicated, and should be replicated using another case study. However, without the internal documents we have received and the high interest from Intrum Justitia on us completing this study we may not have been able to conduct this research at all. We have thoroughly described our process transparently in order to make it possible for another team to follow our steps, and to learn from our findings. If another research team were to find an organization willing to support and cooperate in the research process, this team could follow our instructions and thus conduct a very similar study to ours. We therefore approximate our external reliability to be high, as long as a supportive organization can be used as a case study.

Bryman and Bell (2011) explain internal reliability as the degree to which the researchers have similar observations and agree on what they have heard and seen during the study's progression. To strengthen this study's internal reliability, we have discussed the findings of each interview after having completed them, and also transcribed each interview individually in order to not be influenced by each others' opinions before coming to our own conclusions. Furthermore, we have had a protocol stating that whenever one of us would disagree with any aspect of the study, this person had the obligation to raise awareness to this in order for us to produce a study that represents both of us as researchers equally.

3.9. Limitations of Study

3.9.1.   Amount of Interview Respondents

First of all, there is a clear limitation to our study in that we have achieved a relatively low amount of respondents to our interviews. We conducted 13 interviews with managers from Intrum Justitia offices located in seven different countries. As mentioned in our practical background, Intrum Justitia has offices in 19 countries, meaning that our sample of the population could be considered as too small to achieve general results applicable to the entire organization. However, we have achieved a foundation of our primary data analysis consisting of 75 pages of transcribed material, and have chosen to analyze the findings from those offices where we have interviewed at least two managers, somewhat reducing the impact of this limitation.

Another limitation linked to the limited amount of interviews, was the fact that we were unable to Interview managers from all the different regions in Intrum Justitia. As demonstrated in Table 1, Intrum Justitia is structured by geographical region. In the course of this study we were able to interview managers from both Region Central and Region Northern, but not Region Western, despite having contacted all of the national offices. However, we have been able to identify a pattern in which country offices responded to our interview requests. The pattern we detected was that Region Western was in fact the region that had the lowest ratings in the Employee Satisfaction Survey. This could suggest that this region held the lowest belief and understanding of the new corporate branding initiative. Should this be the case, potentially the managers in Region Western did not have an as significant interest in the corporate branding process as the managers in the other regions, and were therefore not interested in being part of this study.

This could have been a severe limitation to our study if the purpose were to identify the opinions of the Intrum Justitia corporate brand throughout the entire organization. However, since the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of different national cultures, we see our sample as sufficient as it represents seven different nationalities. Furthermore, as the sample is taken from those geographical regions where the corporate brand seems to be implemented most successfully (as their ratings are considered high in the Employee Satisfaction Survey), the differences we may find in their interview responses could provide us with more specific and detailed information regarding issues in implementing the corporate brand. In short, the answers provided from the different managers should still be regarded as important, as they do genuinely express the opinions of a selection of the employees at Intrum Justitia.

3.9.2. *Limitations to Sampling Method*

As explained in our methodology (See *3.6.2* Sampling), we have chosen to use a snowball sampling method to get in contact with our interview subjects. Using the local HR Managers' networks has proven very valuable as they had means to connect us with various managers in their local office. However, using the HR Managers as our only source of contact with the different Intrum Justitia offices also proved to be a limitation. If the HR Manager in an office did not want to comply to our request for contact with managers in that office, there was little possibility for us to reach these managers. Furthermore, the snowball sampling method only provided us with the connections that the HR Manager deemed fitting for our study, which may in fact not be compliant with the sample we would have chosen ourselves had we been given the chance.

However, as our snowball sample originated from the HR Manager in the Intrum Justitia Headquarters who was familiar with the purpose of our study, the HR Managers that s/he in turn contacted had the incentive to comply to his/her request and provide us with an objective sample of managers in varying divisions in that office. When using a snowball sample, researchers may never be completely certain that the sample is in fact representative of the population, which is why we do not perceive this limitation greater than those limitations that coincide with the snowball sampling method in general.

3.9.3. *National Culture May Differ Within Countries*

We have treated national culture as being the same independent of where in a country the Intrum Justitia office is located. Regarding national culture as homogenous within a country simplified our analysis of comparing the national cultural characteristics to each other, which could be regarded as a limitation as national culture may vary in a country depending on which region of the country is reviewed. However, as we have not used the characteristics of national culture to establish truths about the different countries' behavioral patterns, but only used them to examine if different cultural patterns may have different perception and acceptance of a corporate brand, we see this as a small limitation. In other words, we could have chosen any combination of countries' national cultural pattern and still be able to analyze the same aspects.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter demonstrates firstly how the secondary data collected has been analyzed by pattern matching, and secondly how the primary data collected has been analyzed by cross-case synthesis. Lastly, this chapter summarizes our research findings.

4.1. Secondary Data Analysis

As mentioned in *3.4.1* The Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR) we have chosen to conduct the analysis of our secondary data, the Employee Satisfaction Survey Report (ESSR), by the method of pattern matching, presented using narrative synthesis. The pattern matching pertains to measuring if there are consistencies between the Intrum Justitia office ratings of the corporate brand in the ESSR, and the national cultural patterns. In order to compare national culture, we have extracted the national cultural scores of all 19 countries where Intrum Justitia is active, and compiled these in line charts to provide a clear overview over the patterns that exist.

4.1.1. Anticipated pattern: ESSR Ratings are Consistent Between Similar National Cultures

Organizing the different countries' national cultures according to their ratings in the ESSR resulted in three groups: those countries who rated highest in the ESSR, those who rated second highest, and those who rated lowest. In order to make this distinction, we calculated the difference between the highest and lowest rating, and divided the difference into three. We then identified the intervals in the ratings and divided the countries according to their ratings, presented in Table 2.

(1) $X_{high} - X_{low} = X_{diff}$

(2) $X_{diff}/3 = Y$

(3) $X_{high} - Y = Y_1, \quad Y_1 - Y = Y_2, \quad Y_2 - Y = X_{low}$

(4) Highest: [X_{high} ←→ Y_1] Second Highest: [Y_1 ←→ Y_2] Lowest: [Y_2 ←→ X_{low}]

Intrum Justitia Offices by ESSR Ratings
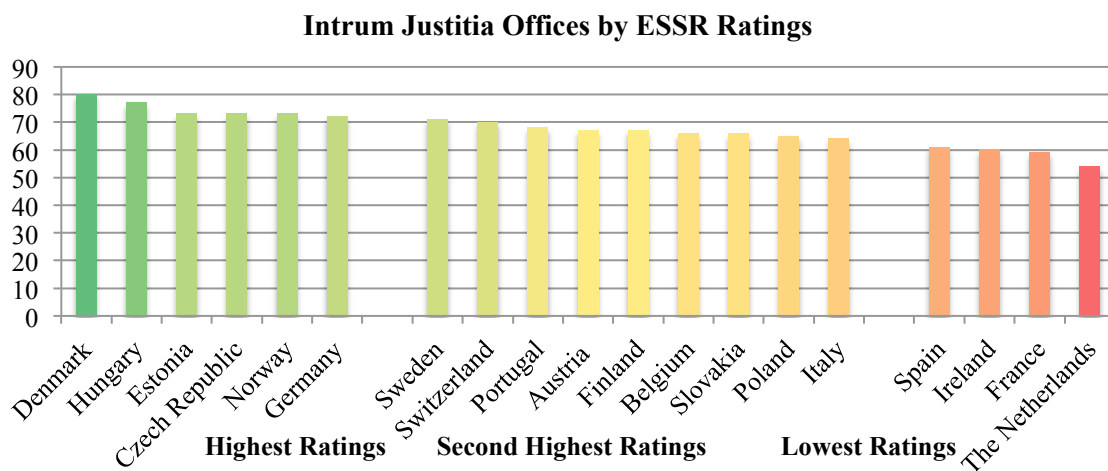
Chart 1. Intrum Justitia Offices by ESSR Ratings

Countries Organized by Rating in the Employee Satisfaction Survey	
Highest Ratings	Denmark, Hungary, Estonia, Czech Republic, Norway and Germany
Second Highest Ratings	Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Austria, Finland, Belgium, Slovakia, Poland and Italy
Lowest Ratings	Spain, Ireland, France and The Netherlands

Table 2. Countries Organized by Ratings in ESSR

National Cultural Patterns of Highest Rating Countries
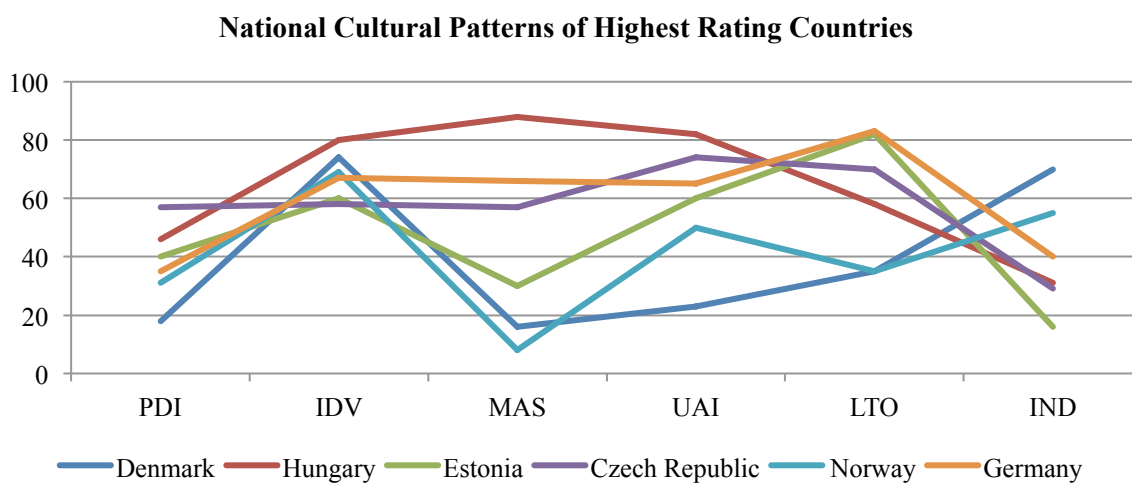
Chart 2. National Cultural Pattern of Highest Rating Countries

National Cultural Patterns of Second Highest Rating Countries
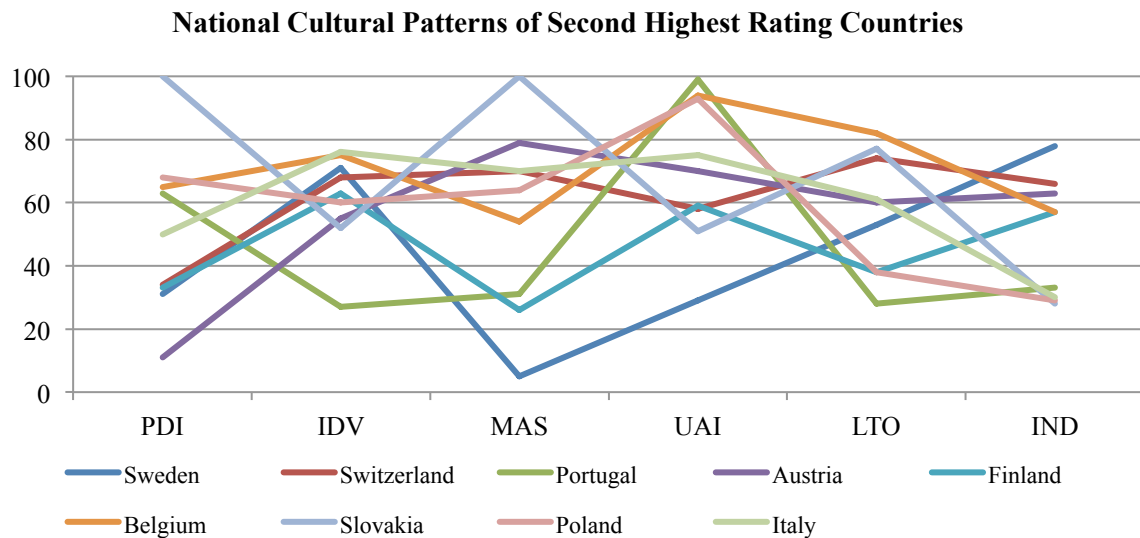
Chart 3. National Cultural Patterns of Second Highest Rating Countries

National Cultural Patterns of Lowest Rating Countries
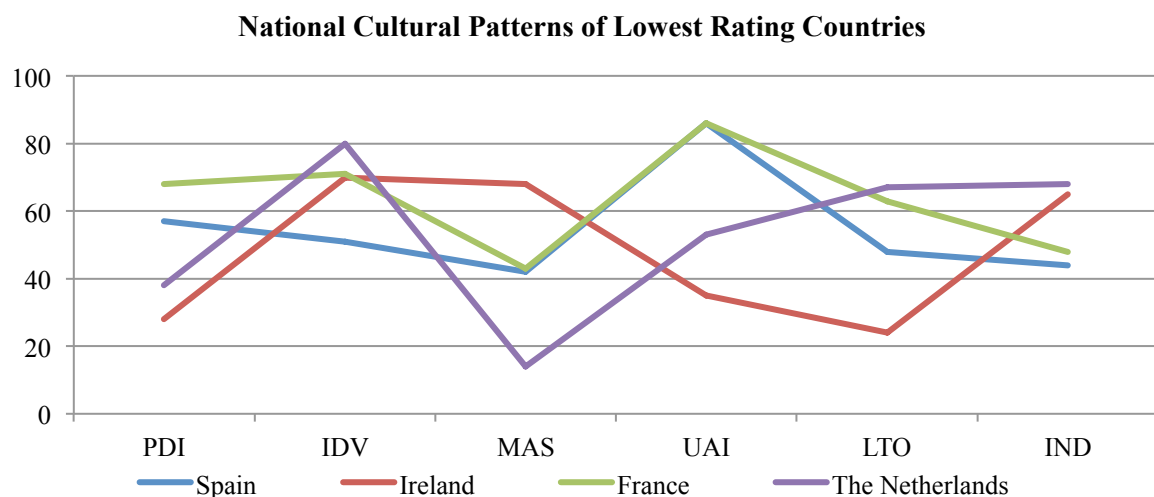
Chart 4. National Cultural Patterns of Lowest Rating Countries

Our anticipated pattern was that the offices who had similar ratings in the ESSR would also have similar national cultural patterns, and that the national cultural similarities could be an explanation to why the corporate brand was implemented and understood relatively successfully in some countries, and less successfully in others. However, as is very clearly shown in the three graphs presented below, this was not the case. The national cultural patterns vary a great deal between countries that have similar understandings and ratings of the corporate brand processes, indicating that

national culture is not the main variable determining the success rate of the corporate brand implementation in Intrum Justitia.

This failed attempt in pattern matching indicated that national culture was not the main variable that provided differences in how successfully the corporate brand had been understood within different offices of Intrum Justitia. Nonetheless, national culture may still be a variable to take into consideration when implementing a corporate brand.

4.1.2. Anticipated Pattern: ESSR Ratings and National Cultural Patterns are Consistent Within Regions,

With this in mind, we went back to the information provided to us in the ESSR. The second time around we noticed that there were similarities in ratings between the three regions in which Intrum Justitia is structured by. We formulated a second attempt at a pattern matching, where our anticipated pattern was that countries from the same geographical regions both have similar ratings and similar national cultural patterns. A successful pattern matching would imply that national cultural similarities provide similar basis to understand the new corporate brand - thus explaining why countries in the same regions have similar opinions to the corporate brand.

ESSR Ratings by Intrum Justitia Office and Region
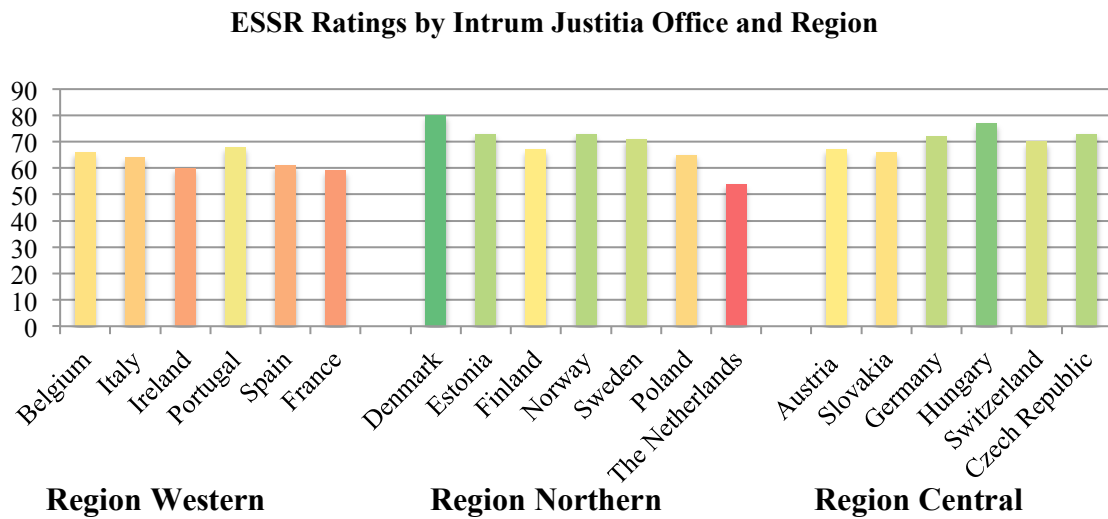
Chart 5. ESSR Ratings by Intrum Justitia Office and Region

Countries Organized by Region and by Rating in the Employee Satisfaction Survey	
Highest Ratings	Region Central Austria, Slovakia, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland and Czech Republic
Second Highest Ratings	Region Northern Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Poland and The Netherlands
Lowest Ratings	Region Western Belgium, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and France

Table 3. Countries Organized by Region and by Rating in ESSR

National Cultural Patterns: Region Central
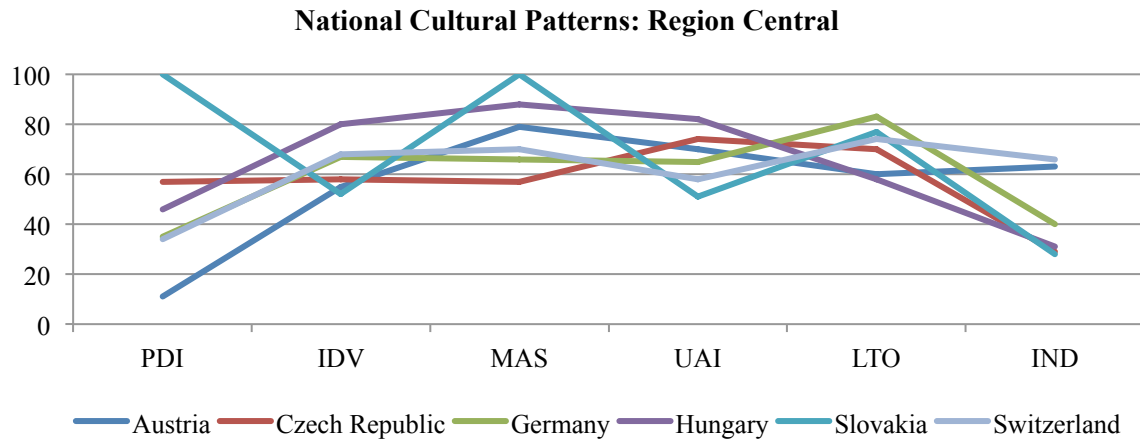
Chart 6. National Cultural Patterns: Region Central

National Cultural Patterns: Region Western
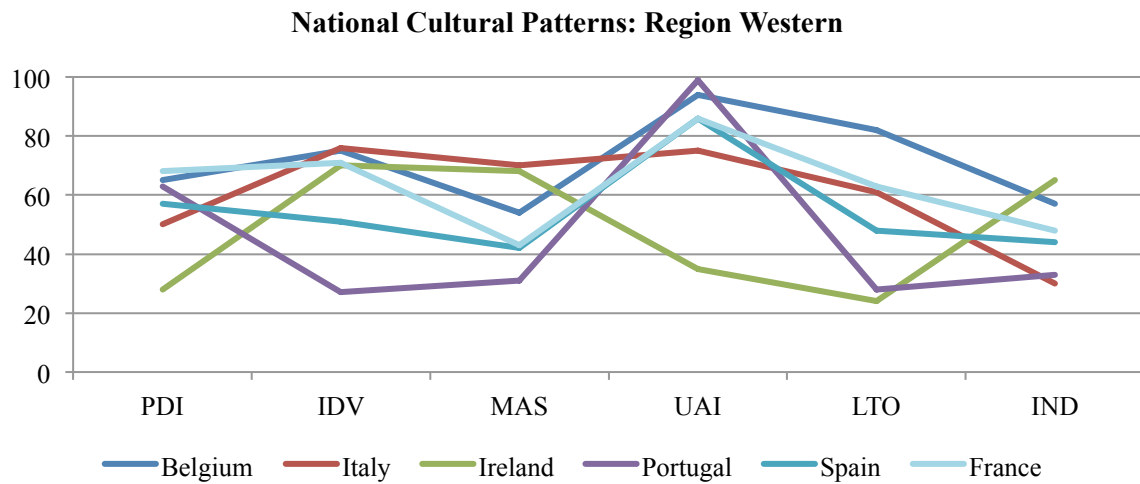
Chart 7. National Cultural Patterns: Region Western

National Cultural Patterns: Region Northern
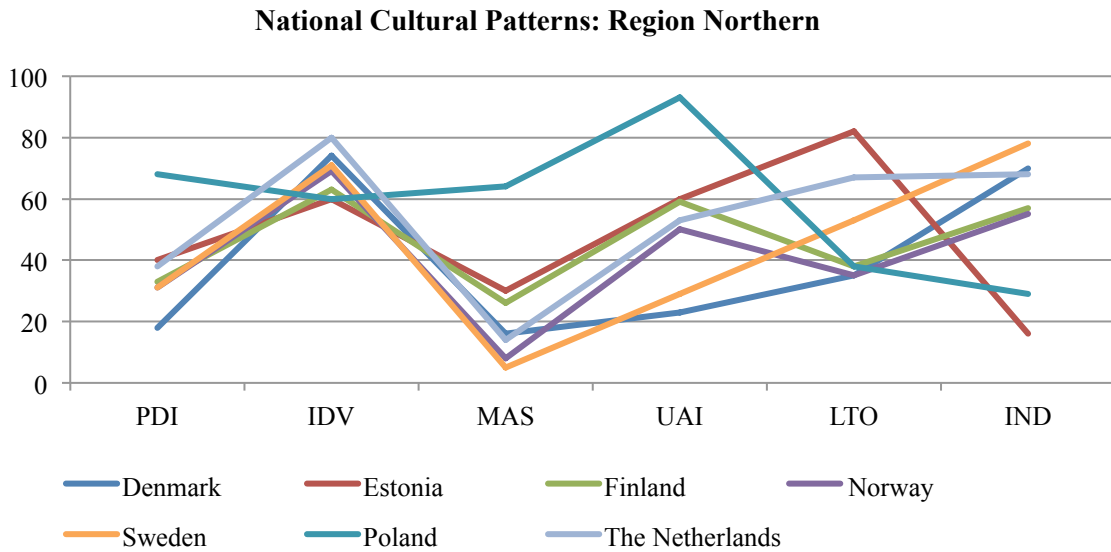
Chart 8. National Cultural Patterns: Region Northern

From these national cultural patterns between the different regions of Intrum Justitia, we can see that there is a more coherent pattern between countries within these geographical regions than between countries grouped from being in the same rating interval from the ESSR. There is a clear coherence in how the countries have rated the corporate brand within the geographical regions, and there are only two countries that have drastically differing ratings of the corporate brand than the rest of their geographical region.

These results do not prove that national culture is the main variable to consider when implementing a new corporate brand. However, it does not either prove that national culture does not have any impact on the corporate branding process. Similarities in national culture within a geographical region does not say much about the corporate branding process, however, the similar ratings in the ESSR within these geographical regions in combination with the similar national cultural patterns implies that the similar national cultural patterns may have had effect on the corporate branding process.

With this in mind, there could be aspects of the corporate branding process, or of the corporate brand in itself, that offices influenced by certain national cultures have been able to understand or accept to a greater extent than other offices influenced by other national cultures.

4.1.3. Conclusions from Analysis of Secondary Data

Through this analysis of the secondary data we can conclude that the differences in national culture between offices are not the main variable to consider when implementing a corporate brand in a MNC. However, this analysis also concludes that offices with similar national cultures tend to have similar opinions regarding the corporate brand. Even though national culture is not the main variable that decides whether a corporate brand will be successfully implemented or understood within an office, there is no evidence to national culture as a variable being irrelevant to the success of the corporate brand implementation either.

These conclusions correspond to those we could draw from the pilot study, that national culture may have an impact on the implementation of a corporate brand in a MNC as Intrum Justitia. We therefore conducted our primary data collection and primary data analysis with these conclusions as a justification to the relevance of national culture.

4.2. Primary Data Analysis

4.2.1. Structure of Primary Data Analysis

As is explained in our methodology (See *3.7* Method of Analysis of Primary Data), we have chosen to structure the primary data analysis by first displaying the data which has been collected by using a unanimous framework. This data display is the

result of a vigorous data reduction process and analysis within the case study's embedded units. Following the data display is the data analysis on the level between the case study's embedded units, where we have dissected Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov's (2010) national cultural dimensions and used them to analyze each subsidiary's corporate brand identity and its alignment with the country's national cultural characteristics. Lastly, we present our research findings for the case study in its entirety, which is also to be considered as our basis for our conclusions.

4.2.2. Identifying Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand Identities

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Group		
Value Proposition	**Relationships**	**Position**
Intrum Justitia has a strong track record in debt collection, and holds high ethical standards with a friendly approach.	Intrum Justitia is constructed as a Business-to-Business (B2B) and a Business-to-Consumer (B2C) company.	Intrum Justitia is a market leader and a first mover. It is a helping hand that drives the consumers in the industry.
Intrum Justitia offers full financial solutions	Stakeholders should see Intrum Justitia as someone trustful and responsible. Intrum Justitia should also be someone that the clients can trust.	Intrum Justitia are the good guys.
Expression	**Core**	**Personality**
Intrum Justitia is recognized for its green color, which is considered fresh and friendly.	Intrum Justitia's core values are 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation', 'Making a Difference', 'Committing to Challenge' and 'Understanding People'.	Intrum Justitia is a friendly and open person, but is also someone who is smart and professional.
The logo is also an important part of the expression, as is shows a person and the world.		
Mission & Vision	**Culture**	**Competences**
To stabilize the economy from a people-focused perspective by being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy'.	Intrum Justitia is a well working, individual experts and individual dependency Open and friendly, but still a competitive environment.	Intrum Justitia has passionate and great people who have a lot of knowledge and great market insight.
The vision is to create 'Better Business for All'	Separate entities are clashing	There is an analytical intelligence in the company, and an international knowledge base.

Table 4. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix for Intrum Justitia Group

The Intrum Justitia Group's *CBIM* was assimilated by upper management and presented to us during the Internal Education Seminar which is described in *8. Pilot Study*. Intrum Justitia aims to be a helping hand for people in debt and produce financial solutions for these people to be able to pay back the money owed, which differentiates them from a traditional debt collecting company. Intrum Justitia's vision is to create 'Better Business for All' through the mission to be 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy'.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Germany		
Value Proposition	**Relationships**	**Position**
Intrum Justitia Germany is an international brand that can purchase debt anywhere in the world, which differentiates them from their competitors.	Intrum Justitia Germany's most important relationship is with their clients, without which the company would not receive any revenue. The employees form Intrum Justitia Germany's brand from the inside, and is responsible for portraying it externally, making this relationship a bridge towards the relationship with the clients.	Intrum Justitia Germany intends to differentiate themselves from these negative associations in the German debt collection industry by investing in campaigns 'doing good for society' to be able to associate with these actions rather than the non-sexy industry. Intrum Justitia Germany would also like to further build on their international nature.
Expression	**Core**	**Personality**
Intrum Justitia Germany is very attached to the logo and the green color scheme, both incorporated as often as possible. There are often posters with the core values written on them and the logo and Intrum Justitia green, throughout the offices.	Intrum Justitia is a leading professional credit management company that has 'mastered the debt business'. They work close with people. The core values are 'Understanding People', 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation', 'Committing to Challenge' and 'Making a Difference'.	Intrum Justitia Germany is reliable, fair, creative and innovative.
Mission & Vision	**Culture**	**Competences**
Intrum Justitia Germany's mission is to improve the European economy through the campaign 'Boosting Europe'.	Intrum Justitia Germany has a very open-minded culture where employees are united in a common spirit by to a great extent working in teams. The primary language between the teams is German, however there are international teams who work in English. Intrum Justitia Germany has a defined office culture that is coherent with the well-known four core values. They work by incorporate daily operations, uniting the employees toward the same goals and creating a special atmosphere.	Intrum Justitia Germany sees their main competence in their international nature. Competitors are not international in this sense.

Table 5. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix for Intrum Justitia Germany

Intrum Justitia Germany sees Intrum Justitia as one international entity, and that this international nature is what will make the organizational units thrive. With this in mind, Intrum Justitia Germany is very compliant toward accepting processes that HQ wants to implement, where the same goes for the corporate brand. Germany seem to have adopted the HQ's core values, however, when the German managers defined what the core values meant to them, it transpired that they had more or less applied the core values to the existing operations and values of their office instead of actually adjusting their existing values to align with the new core values. What has been changed are the ways in which they talk about Intrum Justitia and the kinds of activities the company has been sponsoring, which indicates that they have accepted the corporate brand change not only because HQ has said so, but more so because they can see the competitive benefits and positive association that this corporate brand provides.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Hungary		
Value Proposition	**Relationships**	**Position**
Intrum Justitia Hungary is firstly a company that offers solutions to its customers by using transparent and reliable methods, and secondly a financial consulting company.	The most important relationship is with the debtors, however, it is difficult for a company like Intrum Justitia Hungary to maintain good relationships with the debtors, and at the same time take money from them.	Intrum Justitia Hungary wishes to be seen as a multinational, transparent and reliable company, which is how it is seen from a Group perspective. On the local Hungarian market, Intrum Justitia is seen as a professional, albeit traditional debt collector company by the debtors.
Expression	**Core**	**Personality**
Intrum Justitia Hungary uses television advertisements to express their point of view on debt collecting, that it is about helping debtors finding solutions to pay their debts.	Intrum Justitia Hungary applies a Hungarian adaptation of the core values 'Making a Difference', 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation', 'Understanding People' and 'Committing to Challenge'. Intrum Justitia Hungary takes care of society by taking care of their clients, the debtors and their employees. The Swedish origin is important as it provides Intrum Justitia Hungary with reliability and transparency.	Intrum Justitia Hungary is very dynamic, and has tendencies to be too self-confident.
Mission & Vision	**Culture**	**Competences**
The employees in Intrum Justitia Hungary work toward the mission of improving the economy by being a 'Catalyst for a Sound Economy'. The vision is that by collecting the debts owed to their clients, the economy at large can improve, as the clients can use the returned finances to create job opportunities.	The culture in Intrum Justitia Hungary is built on trust between the employees and the management team, and is strengthened by the opportunities for local adaptation of centralized regulations and processes. There exists a strive to learn from others success, but to adapt these learnings to the Hungarian office's norms and ways so that they are accessible to the employees. The official language is Hungarian.	Intrum Justitia Hungary's main competence has its foundation in the people in the company, as well as their knowledge base. These competences have allowed Intrum Justitia Hungary to be innovative pioneers within debt collecting compared to competitors.

Table 6. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix for Intrum Justitia Hungary

Intrum Justitia Hungary accepts the corporate brand as long as they can make adaptations to it so that it fits the Hungarian way of doing things. Intrum Justitia Hungary is also very driven to excel in their industry, and is not afraid to learn things from other offices that are doing well, and apply these learnings to their own organization in the hopes of improving their own operations. In Hungary there is a very clear local focus, and this may help them in seeing the benefit in having the mission of being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy'. The HQ's core values are implemented in the organization, even though they are adapted to local preferences in order to make the employees in Hungary truly understand their role in the organization, and in turn the organization's role in the European economy.

Furthermore, Intrum Justitia Hungary is characterized as being innovative and dynamic compared to the Intrum Justitia Group.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Sweden		
Value Proposition Intrum Justitia Sweden is strong brand, with great market recognition. They have a great track record, and better knowledge of the industry than any other company in Sweden. Intrum Justitia exceeds the expectations of the debtors and clients by taking a helpful approach.	**Relationships** Intrum Justitia Sweden is a helping hand. The relationship to the customers is serious, professional and stable in delivering results and services.	**Position** Intrum Justitia Sweden is thought of as a benefactor for society, both from a business and people perspective.
Expression Intrum Justitia Sweden is unique in that they approach their end customers with a helpful, open voice. The greeting "Welcome to Intrum Justitia, my name is XXX, how may I help you today?" is the typical Intrum Justitia Sweden expression. Intrum Justitia Sweden is also recognizable for their Boosting Europe initiative.	**Core** Intrum Justitia Sweden continuously commits to the challenge of being a catalyst for a sound economy. They are a helping hand, and their values are built around this. Intrum Justitia as a whole is a Swedish, family-owned and built company. Intrum is truly a value-based company, and they work from their values.	**Personality** Intrum Justitia Sweden is described as friendly, down to earth and in close contact to the Swedish heritage. Intrum Justitia Sweden was also compared to a middle- aged woman who is trying to 'renew' herself, but she's not quite able to.
Mission & Vision What engages us, beyond the simple aim of making money (mission)? What is our direction and inspiration (Vision)? Intrum Justitia Sweden's mission and vision is to be a true catalyst for a sound economy. This means keeping a socially constructive approach to companies and consumers in Sweden.	**Culture** The Intrum Justitia Swedish culture overrules the Intrum Group's. The official language is always Swedish. The employees work constantly by committing to challenge. The culture and the company is very friendly and family orientated. There is also an innovative streak in the organization, however this is mostly seen in the higher management levels.	**Competences** Intrum Justitia Sweden is particularly good at handling the end customer, or the debtor. Intrum Justitia Sweden also has an incredibly large amount of knowledge and databases.

Table 7. Corporate Brand Identity for Intrum Justitia Sweden

Intrum Justitia Sweden has to a large extent accepted the corporate brand and shows a relatively close corporate brand identity alignment. Sweden sees how for example the core brand promise of creating a 'Better Business for All' is a good representation of what Intrum Justitia does. This notion is included in everything they do, from the friendly and family-oriented culture to the way they approach and handle clients and debtors. The Swedish managers see Intrum Justitia Sweden as a value-based company, in terms of the employees 'living' the Intrum Justitia values everyday. It seems as though the Swedish office incorporates the values in their operations to a greater extent than they talk about them, in other words walking the walk and barely talking the talk. Intrum Justitia Sweden has a fairly unique position in the Swedish

market, as they are one of the few companies that truly address all of their stakeholders with a core mission of being a helping hand. Interestingly enough, the Swedish managers are still adamant in that the Swedish office is the Swedish office, and not the Intrum Justitia Group. They feel a sense of separation from the group, and explain that the Swedish culture and way of doing things precede.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Finland		
Value Proposition Intrum Justitia Finland is the leading company in the industry in Finland, has a financial strength and an incredibly good image in the market. It is a very well known brand, with a long history of being credible and holding market data and knowledge.	**Relationships** Intrum Justitia Finland's relationship with their corporate clients tends to be trustworthy, credible and professional. Debtors tend to think of the relationship as tough and harsh, however this is something that Intrum Justitia Finland are trying to change. Intrum Justitia Finland also has a great and professional relationship with the authorities.	**Position** Intrum Justitia Finland is much more than a debt collection company. It is a financial company, and a company who is centered around helping society in general
Expression Intrum Justitia Finland uses the fresh, green color scheme and the logo as means to express themselves. Furthermore, Intrum Justitia Finland uses 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy' as their slogan.	**Core** Intrum Justitia Finland is an actor in the financial sector. They promises reliability and trustworthiness, and feel a constant responsibility towards all their stakeholder groups. They also hold strongly roots in tradition.	**Personality** Intrum Justitia Finland is described as a middle-aged person who is fair, strong, solution-oriented, accurate and wearing glasses.
Mission & Vision Intrum Justitia Finland would like to think that the mission is being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy', however this is not truly understood or agreed upon throughout the organization.	**Culture** The Intrum Justitia Finland culture is unique to the countries office. The employees see the Finnish office as a highly independent office, whose culture and way of working and behaving is very much decided locally and not by the group as a whole. The spoken language is Finnish. The way of working is very relaxed, open and friendly. However, there is a conflict between the newer hires and the people who have been in the company for a long time.	**Competences** One of Intrum Justitia Finland's core competences that truly make them better than the competition is their employees. Finally, their service offering (which differs from other companies) is incredibly important.

Table 8. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix for Intrum Justitia Finland

Intrum Justitia Finland's corporate brand identity is the least aligned with that of the Intrum Justitia Group. However, even though Finland is aware of the core values and the corporate brand that HQ wants to implement, they do not see the value in using these in their day-to-day work. Being more than "an actor in the financial sector" is something Finland says that they want to be, and they see the mission of being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy' as something worth striving for. However, they do not seem to be making any large effort in trying to implement this even though it,

according to HQ, can lead to advantages in the market. Intrum Justitia Finland is in other words content with operating in the way that has made them market leaders in the industry.

Intrum Justitia's Offices' National Cultural Ratings
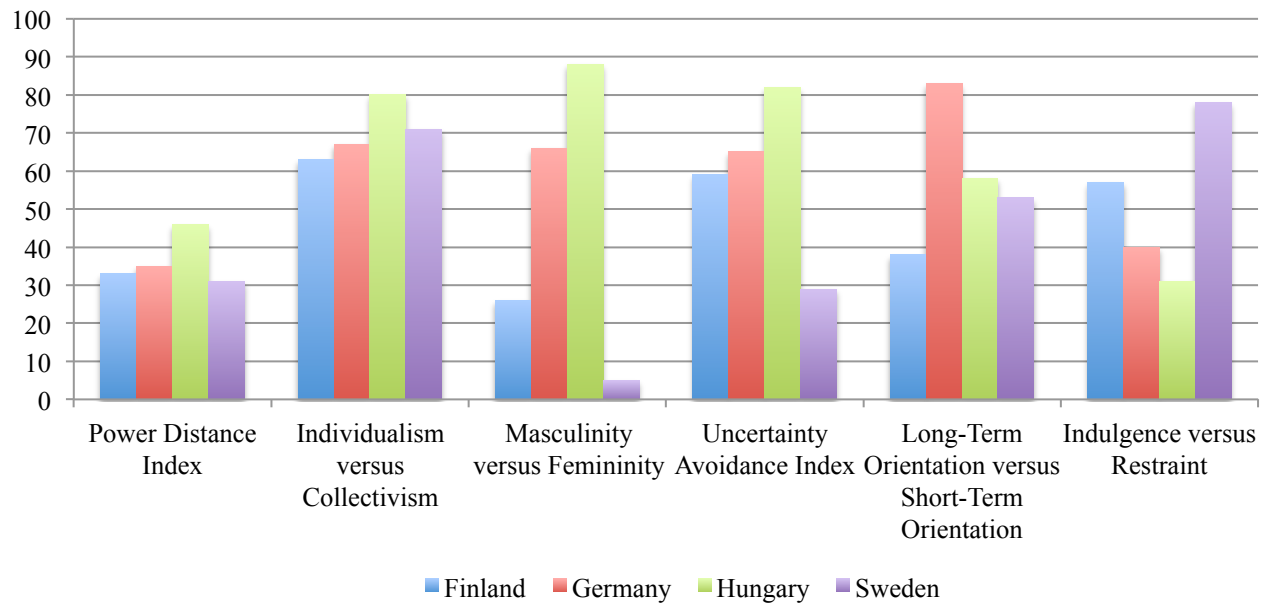
Table 9. Intrum Justitia's Office's National Cultural Ratings

4.2.3. *The Impact of 'Power Distance' (PDI) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand*

All four countries have low scores within PDI, meaning that they are all relatively alike when it comes to striving to be independent, only applying hierarchy when it is necessary and distributing power in a decentralized manner. Management's role in countries with low PDI is to facilitate practices and the employees are generally expected to be consulted regarding decision-making. Individuals with low PDI want to be 'part of the discussion' (Hofstede et al., 2010)

In the case of Intrum Justitia, these factors indicate that managers in Sweden, Finland, Hungary and Germany do not take orders from Headquarters (HQ) without understanding why these orders are given and how these will affect their local offices. Furthermore, managers in these countries are expected to question a process that HQ aims to implement if this process is not aligned with what the managers themselves feel is the 'right way to go'. In terms of the corporate brand implementation, these countries would not likely accept the corporate brand if they did not feel that they understood why it would be beneficial to implement it in their office, or if they felt that their opinions regarding the corporate brand had not been taken into consideration.

Looking at the what the managers of the different offices identified as their corporate brand identities, it becomes clear that Intrum Justitia Hungary for example accepted the corporate brand communicated by the HQ, but felt that it needed to be adapted to fit the Hungarian way of doing things. Intrum Justitia Sweden on the other hand, seemed to be more open to accepting the Intrum Justitia Group corporate brand as it was. However, they were fairly decisive in the fact that, for example, the cultural aspects of the brand are unique to the Swedish office, and could not be changed by the HQ. Intrum Justitia Germany also seems to accept the corporate brand fairly well, and they put a heavy emphasis on the open communication of for example the core values and brand promise.

Intrum Justitia Finland is the office that seems to have implemented the corporate brand to the least extent when examining their corporate brand identity and their perception of the brand promise compared to the three other countries and the HQ's corporate brand identity. However, Finland's low score of PDI does not seem to be a

determining factor in why the corporate brand identity has been perceived differently than in the other countries, since all four countries have very similar scores.

PDI could be an influential factor when implementing a corporate brand if it is the level of sense-making that determines whether the local offices accept the corporate brand or not. For instance, Intrum Justitia Sweden, who has the lowest score of PDI, has implemented the corporate brand on a deeper level than Intrum Justitia Finland. This could be because Intrum Justitia Sweden is able to identify with the Intrum Justitia Group's corporate brand to a greater extent than Intrum Justitia Finland, and that the managers in HQ have been successful in demonstrating this alignment to the Swedish managers. The heightened level of sense-making could be influenced by HQ being located in Sweden, which would have simplified communication between Intrum Justitia Sweden and HQ.

Following this logic, Intrum Justitia Hungary, having the highest score in PDI of the four countries, should require the least amount of sense-making from HQ to accept to implementing the corporate brand. Intrum Justitia Hungary have implemented the corporate brand, however, the Hungarian managers are still very clear in stating that they have done so by slightly adapting it to make the corporate culture aligned with Hungarian national culture. They have thus not required the same amount of sense-making from HQ, but instead followed instructions and implemented the corporate brand and made sense of the new core values and brand promise themselves.

In conclusion, the lower the score of PDI that a national cultures has, the greater the amount of sense-making is required from HQ in order for the office in question to feel the need to implement the corporate brand.

4.2.4. The Impact of 'Individualism' (IDV) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand

According to our cross analysis of the countries we investigated, all the countries have a relatively high score in IDV, making them more prone to individualism than collectivism. From a national cultural perspective, this essentially means that inhabitants of these countries to a large extent have preference for loosely-knit networks, where individuals take care of themselves (Hofstede et al., 2010). In a highly individualistic society people take care of their immediate family, rather than a large group. Management happens on a people-to-people basis (Ibid)

From a brand management perspective, this means that Intrum Justitia Finland, Intrum Justitia Germany, Intrum Justitia Hungary and Intrum Justitia Sweden might have difficulties of thinking of Intrum Justitia as a group, and rather prefer to think of their own individual countries. When HQ then communicates a group brand with the aim of unifying all the subsidiaries, they would be met by the notion that each one of these countries would want to handle the brand in their own way, and tailor it to fit their own individual needs, which is what seems to have happened in the case of Intrum Justitia.

Intrum Justitia Hungary for example has a relatively high score in IDV compared to the other offices. Intrum Justitia Hungary was also found to be the office most adamant in the fact that all the elements of the corporate brand, including the core, had to be adapted to the Hungarian way in order for the brand to be useful. The Hungarian managers were also the ones who were most clear about the fact that they perceived there to be a difference between the Intrum Justitia Group and Intrum Justitia Hungary.

Similarly, Intrum Justitia Sweden whose score also qualified them as highly individualistic, would theoretically also find it difficult to accept the idea of Intrum Justitia being a group. This is somewhat shown in the Intrum Justitia Sweden's culture as well as in the brand core, as the Swedish managers explain that Intrum Justitia Sweden is more important to the employees than the Intrum Justitia Group as a whole. However, Intrum Justitia Sweden is also one of the offices that identified the most similar corporate brand identity to the one that the HQ communicated.

Intrum Justitia Finland had the relatively lowest score in IDV compared to the other countries, though is still characterized as being highly individualistic, reflected greatly in the Finnish perception of the brand communicated from the HQ. They do not see Intrum Justitia as a group, and openly admit that they are very independent and they are proud of this fact. They put the Finnish office first, and seem to have an overall disregard towards the group.

Intrum Justitia Germany on the other hand, being characterized as strongly individualistic, often referred to the Intrum Justitia Group as a whole, and explained that Intrum Justitia Germany was a part of this entity. This suggests that despite Intrum Justitia Germany having national cultural traits that should make them more individually orientated, this national cultural aspect did not affect how they accepted the concept of a unified, corporate brand. This suggests that the individualistic dimension might not be something that warped the German Intrum Justitia's understanding of the corporate brand identity and the HQ corporate brand management.

In summary, the level of IDV when implementing a corporate brand could possibly be put into consideration when examining the subsidiaries' managers' opinions of their office's relation to the Intrum Justitia Group and HQ. However, this pattern did not prove to be compliant to all the countries' IDV scores, meaning that either IDV plays a relatively small part in on how the national culture of a country impacts the implementation of the corporate brand *or* that high score in IDV can be overcome.

4.2.5. The Impact of 'Masculinity' (MAS) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand

According to our analysis of the different countries national cultures, we can see that Hungary and Germany have a relatively high masculinity score. Hungary especially, has the highest score when compared to the other countries. This means that Hungary and Germany theoretically pertain to societies driven by competition, performance and success. People are motivated by the desire to be the 'best' and success is defined by being the winner, which reflects in the management technique and mission and vision. (Hofstede et al. 2010)

Finland and Sweden on the other hand, have a relatively low score and are instead considered more feminine societies than Hungary and Germany. Sweden especially, scores an incredibly low score in MAS relative to the other countries. This means that Sweden and Finland should theoretically be societies whose core values are based around caring for others and for the general quality of life. This is a society where success and being a 'show-off' or standing out in a crowd is not admirable. (Hofstede et al. 2010)

The managers from Intrum Justitia Hungary explain that the benefit of having the Intrum Justitia Group is that it provides them with an opportunity to learn from other

countries in order to make their local operations better. The Hungarian managers also explain that the Hungarian office is incredibly innovative, and is constantly coming up with new, pioneering ways to compete on the market.

As far as the corporate brand goes, Intrum Justitia Hungary adopts it in a strategically advantageous way. For example, the managers from Hungary see the benefit of the Swedish origin of Intrum Justitia as it conjures up an image of reliability, which is something that is beneficial in the Hungarian market. Furthermore, the fact that the Hungarian managers perceive Intrum Justitia Hungary's personality as being self-confident shows that they have somewhat of a winning personality. In short, Intrum Justitia Hungary's acceptance and perception of the corporate brand seems to largely be a product of the fact that they are driven by a desire for success and being the best. The corporate brand identity is a construct of the elements of the corporate brand that the HQ are communicating that give Intrum Justitia Hungary the greatest strategic advantage.

Intrum Justitia Germany, much like Intrum Justitia Hungary, chooses the elements of the corporate brand that makes them strategically the best. Intrum Justitia Germany is adamant in defining Intrum Justitia as one international entity, which is also the way that the German managers explain how Intrum Justitia Germany differs from the other competitors in the market. Applying the same logic as with Intrum Justitia Hungary, Intrum Justitia Germany seems to adapt the corporate brand in order to gain a strategical advantage in the market, thus satisfying their national cultural need to be successful and leading in the industry. They do not, however, push the core of the Intrum Justitia Group brand of being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy' or building a

'Better Business for All'. Though they acknowledge some of these initiatives, such as the 'Boosting Europe' campaign, they see it more from a strategic perspective rather than a core promise of the brand. Instead, their core brand promise and values are oriented around mastering the debt business. They see the fact of debtors not paying their debts as a problem, rather than an opportunity to help, contrasting from Intrum Justitia Sweden. This could be due to the fact that the core value of the brand is somewhat more feminine, whilst German national culture is more masculine.

Intrum Justitia Sweden on the contrary is not at all driven by competition to this extent. The Swedish managers expressed repeatedly that their operations were truly based around the corporate brand's core values, and by being "A Catalyst for a Sound Economy". A low score in MAS indicates that Intrum Justitia Sweden should be focused on taking care of not only their clients whose debts they collect, but also of the debtors who are required to pay back the money they owe. The low scores in MAS in combination with the perceived alignment with the core values of the Intrum Justitia Group indicates that this implementation of the corporate brand is a product of a 'true' belief in the importance of the corporate core values.

Intrum Justitia Finland also scores relatively low in MAS and demonstrates the importance of enjoying what you do in your professional life - the Finnish managers state that they enjoy coming to work. Intrum Justitia Finland has not achieved a focus on the debtors' well-being to the same extent as Intrum Justitia Sweden, but state that they are working to change the debtor's negative perception of them. The low score in MAS is demonstrated more internally within Intrum Justitia Finland than in their

external relationships, a difference to Intrum Justitia Sweden, which could be explained by Intrum Justitia Finland's relatively higher score in MAS.

In summary, MAS seems to be a strongly determining factor in the implementation of the Intrum Justitia corporate brand. However, it does not seem to mainly be shown by some countries being more driven by competition than others, and thus wanting to implement the corporate brand in order to gain market share against the competitors. The score in MAS shows to be more influential when it comes to examining the actual nature of the corporate brand. Though Intrum Justitia's corporate brand was created by an assimilation of all the various subsidiaries perception of the brand (Ferraton, 2014), the fact that the core of the brand is centered around taking care of the society, provides the brand with feminine influences. This could explain why some of the Intrum Justitia offices have an easier approach in implementing it and aligning their corporate brand identity to the one of HQ.

4.2.6. The Impact of 'Uncertainty Avoidance' (UAI) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate

        Brand

Germany, Finland and Hungary score high in UAI, thus making the inhabitants more prone towards avoiding uncertainty than those in Sweden who have low UAI scores. This indicates that people in Sweden value practice over principal to a greater extent than people in the other three countries, and that deviation from norm is more tolerable. Furthermore, security is an important element within countries with a high score in UAI, and innovation may be met with resistance (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Applying these national cultural characteristics to the case of Intrum Justitia, we find that a high score in UAI could explain a resistance toward the innovational core value

that HQ has been trying to implement. Nonetheless, Intrum Justitia Hungary, Intrum Justitia Germany and Intrum Justitia Sweden have all described themselves as innovative to some extent, though the Swedish managers assert that this is something seen mostly in the upper management. This indicated that these three countries seem to have accepted this core value and identify themselves with it, despite the fact that the Hungarian and German office's national culture indicate an aversion to this kind of core value. This could be an indication of the fact that the core values that the Intrum Justitia Group identified as fitting for the group, was a good representation of the corporate identity in parts of the Intrum Justitia Group, as the core values of the brand need to be align with the core values of the corporate identity (de Chernatony, 2001; Urde, 2013).

Intrum Justitia Finland did not state that they were innovative, they explained that their core values were more along the lines of being trustworthy and reliable. They did not however explicitly say that they were *against* the core value of 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation', which is something that the relatively high score in UAI would argue for (Hofstede et al., 2010). This shows that this dimension of national culture could potentially play into the creation of the local core values, however it is most likely not the main or most important element to take into consideration, compliant to what theory states. Nevertheless, there are other implications of this cultural dimensions that should be investigated when it comes to the actual building process and management of the brand.

As earlier mentioned, Intrum Justitia Finland has not made attempts to even give the perception of having implemented the corporate brand identity. The Finnish managers state that they know the core values and brand promise, but also that they do not

really work with them in practice. This indicates that Intrum Justitia Finland does not perceive that the implementation of the corporate brand would provide them with any less uncertainty than if they were to not implement it, indicating that they could have chosen to reduce their uncertainty by keeping to rules, behaviors and processes that they know work for them.

Intrum Justitia Hungary on the other hand, has perceived that implementing the new corporate brand would provide them with a level of certainty that exceeds the one they would have had had they not implemented the corporate brand. Since Intrum Justitia Hungary percepts the Intrum Justitia Group as reliable and transparent, they may experience trust in that HQ's management team's decision on implementing the corporate brand will provide Intrum Justitia Hungary with security, making the corporate brand beneficial for them to accept.

Contrasting these two countries, Sweden scores relatively low in the UAI, meaning that Intrum Justitia Sweden is more characterized by valuing what they actually do, than what they are supposed to be doing, or what they say that they do (Hofstede et al., 2010). In comparison to the other three country offices, Intrum Justitia Sweden is more prone to not comply with accepting the corporate brand due to the sole indication that it may provide them with a heightened level of certainty, but rather because they believe that the corporate brand is compliant with the practices they already find most efficient to work by.

Intrum Justitia Sweden stated in their corporate brand identity that they are a value-based office, but that they at the same time are not actively working with the Intrum Justitia Group's core values in mind. Intrum Justitia Sweden's behavior is thus

compliant with a low score in UAI, where their actions speak louder than their words. Intrum Justitia Sweden seems to have incorporated the core values of the corporate brand into their daily operations on a deeper level than they perceive it, which could explain why they see themselves as a value based company despite claiming to not really be working with the core values from the corporate brand, but still has an aligned corporate brand identity to the Intrum Justitia Group.

Intrum Justitia Germany and Intrum Justitia Hungary on the other hand were much more verbal in having applied the core values to their operations, thus compliant with a high score in UAI. Intrum Justitia Finland's resistance toward truly accepting the corporate brand could be explained by the high score in UAI in that they do not trust that the Intrum Justitia Group's decision to implement the corporate brand will provide them with less uncertainty than if they were to not implement it.

In summary, this analysis suggests that the cultural dimension of UAI should be taken into consideration regarding the managerial process of implementation of the corporate brand. In the case of Intrum Justitia, the offices with a high score in UAI seem to be more prone to implement the corporate brand if this process were considered as a way to reduce uncertainty towards the future to a greater extent than the option of not implementing the corporate brand. The perception of the level of reduced uncertainty is considered to greatly be depend on the country managers' trust in the Intrum Justitia Group and HQ's decisions. Within offices scoring low in UAI, the corporate brand will not be implemented on accord of reducing uncertainty, but rather on the basis that the corporate brand actually fits into the operations of the office.

4.2.7. The Impact of 'Long-Term Orientation' (LTO) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand

Germany and Hungary's scores in LTO are both classified as high, indicating that the inhabitants in these countries are of a pragmatic nature. This means that they have an ability to adapt their traditions fairly easily when conditions surrounding these traditions are changed, and they show perseverance in achieving results. However, Hungary's score of LTO is closer to Sweden's score, which is only classified as intermediate (thus considered relatively indifferent in this category), meaning that Germany is considered pragmatic to a greater extent than Hungary. Finland is classified by a low score in LTO, meaning that the inhabitants in Finland are of normative nature. In contrast to Germany and Hungary, the Finns have great respect for tradition and focuses on achieving quick results. (Hofstede et al., 2010)

Applying these national cultural dimensions to the case of Intrum Justitia provides us with the assumption that those country offices with a high LTO should be rather flexible to adapting their processes and ways of working to implement the new corporate brand, if these practices may prove beneficial to them in the future. In contrast, country offices with a low score in LTO would feel bothered in having to alter their ways of working in order to implement the corporate brand, and would rather work in a way that they know will deliver results in the short-term.

Both Intrum Justitia Germany and Intrum Justitia Hungary have stated that they have been open to changing the way that they work in order to reap the benefits that the new corporate brand has been said to provide them with. Furthermore, both Intrum Justitia Germany and Intrum Justitia Hungary are driven by wanting to achieve results. Intrum Justitia Germany's relatively seen higher score in LTO is compliant

with the extent to which the German managers have completely adapted to the new corporate brand and being a part of the Intrum Justitia Group, whilst Intrum Justitia Hungary has adopted the new corporate brand to the extent that they emphasize the importance in making local adjustments.

Intrum Justitia Finland on the other hand is very influenced by not wanting to change their traditions and instead focusing on achieving results short-term by working as they know currently gives them results. This reluctance to societal change within Intrum Justitia Finland could be considered as a large obstacle in them seeing the benefit in the time-consuming and norm-altering implementation of the new corporate brand.

In summary, offices with a high score in LTO are more prone to changing their traditions and ways in order to implement the corporate brand than those offices with a low score in LTO. Offices with a low score in LTO will restrain from changing their ways, suggesting that these offices will demand more effort from HQ in the implementation process.

4.2.8. *The Impact of 'Indulgence' (IND) on Intrum Justitia's Corporate Brand*

Finland and Sweden both score high in terms of IND, meaning that their national cultures are more acceptant to the country's inhabitants enjoying life, having fun and giving in to impulses and desires. These national cultures also tend to have more positive attitudes. Inhabitants in Germany and Hungary however, scoring low in IND, do not feel comfortable in indulging themselves, tend to be more pessimistic than optimistic and emphasize in controlling their desires. (Hofstede et al., 2010)

Applying IND to the case of Intrum Justitia could provide us with indications of which countries are most prone to working hard on implementing the corporate brand in their organization, or where this process would be completed in the shortest amount of time as the employees within the organization most likely also have a strict working morale.

Intrum Justitia Germany and Intrum Justitia Hungary have both worked intensively with implementing their corporate brand, especially on the managerial level. Intrum Justitia Hungary describe themselves as being very dynamic and is perceived more so than Intrum Justitia Germany, which is compliant with Intrum Justitia Hungary having a lower score in IND than Intrum Justitia Germany.

Intrum Justitia Sweden and Intrum Justitia Finland have both described very relaxed working conditions in their office, and the Swedish office's relaxed attitude toward implementing the corporate brand is consistent with the high score in IND. Intrum Justitia Finland on the other hand has a relatively intermediate score, which explains their attitude towards taking a stand against working to implement the corporate brand, in contrast to Intrum Justitia Sweden, but at the same time not actively fighting the implementation of the corporate brand, rather choosing to ignore it all together.

This analysis indicates that IND may not be the most crucial factor to consider when implementing a corporate brand, however it may have an impact on how quickly this implementation will be completed in certain countries opposed to others.

4.2.9. Research Findings from Primary Data Analysis

By analyzing the six different national cultural dimensions, as presented by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), against the corporate brand identities of four Intrum Justitia subsidiaries, we achieved the following research findings.

In the case of Intrum Justitia, the national cultural dimensions seemed to have affected the corporate brand management on several levels. First of all, different national cultural patterns seemed to call for a different level of transparency in the communication of the brand. For example, the offices where the national culture was characterized with having long-term orientation, as opposed to short-term orientation, did not seem to meet the change requires with the corporate branding initiative with the same extent of predetermined resistance. Short-term oriented national cultures however, like Intrum Justitia Finland, seemed to require an additional spur of motivation in why they should act against their instincts and behavioral patterns to comply to implementing a corporate brand that the Intrum Justitia Group had communicated. This indicates that the actual management of the corporate brand from the HQ to the various national subsidiary managers might need to be adapted to the diverse national cultural characteristics of the subsidiaries. If management in HQ was to compare national cultural patterns proactively they could possibly foresee where the most resistance to implementing the corporate brand would occur, which stand in accordance with MNC management theory, stating that management needs to take national culture into account when working with their internal strategy (Newman & Nollen, 1996).

From a corporate branding perspective, the fact that some countries might be unable to create an alignment between their corporate brand identities with that of the HQ's should be detrimental to the corporate brand in general (Urde, 2013). If the corporate brand identity is not aligned throughout the organization, the corporate brand is most likely perceived as not trustworthy and will not be well accepted by the affected stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012). Even if the brand is an accurate construct of all the various stakeholders' strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image, a company will not have a corporate brand if the managers see the idea of a corporate brand pointless. Our empirical analysis thus complies with theory, when managing a corporate brand; it is crucial to include national culture as a variable in the actual internal management process.

The diverse national cultures could also be seen as a variable that affects how well the corporate brand identities of the various national subsidiaries were aligned with the corporate brand identity of the HQ. In the case of the Intrum Justitia Group, the core of the brand had a somewhat feminine alignment, which could explain why for example Intrum Justitia Sweden had such a similar corporate brand identity to the HQ. In Intrum Justitia Sweden the corporate brand is 'lived' throughout the organization more than it is talked about. The corporate brand identity's core values are considered more in line with behavioral patterns and norms of Intrum Justitia Sweden, suggesting that HQ has an easier task when implementing the corporate brand in this subsidiary. Intrum Justitia Hungary, however, have more masculine tendencies in their national culture, which could explain why they felt the need to adapt the corporate brand identity so to fit their national cultural patterns in their

office better. This could also explain why Intrum Justitia Germany had their own perceptions of what the Intrum Justitia Group values meant.

Intrum Justitia Finland on the other hand, also characterized as a fairly feminine culture, did not seem to perceive value in aligning their corporate brand identity with that of the Intrum Justitia Group. This could either be an indication that Intrum Justitia Finland's other national cultural characteristics, such being relatively short-term orientated, being individualistic and having a need to avoid uncertainty, held a heavier weight in their identification of the corporate brand identity. Furthermore, factors such as the fact that the Intrum Justitia Finland has a long tradition (around 100 years), and that they are market leaders in their country could weigh in to their resistance to align their corporate brand identity with that of the Intrum Justitia Group.

These conclusion are somewhat reminiscent of the studies pertaining to global branding, where a similar idea that a 'true' global brand might not exist, as a global brand must be adapted to the local customer culture and markets in order for the customers to be able to identify with it (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999). However, in a corporate brand, all of the stakeholders of an organization need to be included and able to identify with the brand (Roper & Fill, 2012; Urde 2013). The managers are the key communicators of the corporate brand internally, and the employees can be thought of as the brand ambassadors externally (de Chernatony, 2001). This means that if managers perceive a different corporate brand identity than that of HQ, so will the employees (ibid). In the modern age, where information is available ubiquitously through the Internet, and companies are able to reach customers more directly through social media and their corporate websites (Roper & Fill, 2012), the option of

nationally adapting the corporate brand identity to a too great extent could misalign the customers' perception of the corporate brand that HQ has communicated through these external media. This makes it crucial for companies to align the corporate brand identity with that of HQ throughout the MNC, making our findings concerning using national cultural variables as a way to do so very important.

In summary, a company like Intrum Justitia who has had difficulties with the alignment of their corporate brand identities between differing national subsidiaries might find that this lack of alignment has its grounds in the differing national cultures. By pre-emptively analyzing the national cultural characteristics of the subsidiaries, as well as any potential national cultural characteristics of the corporate brand, management might find it easier to create corporate brand identity alignment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents which conclusions this study's research findings have lead to and will function as a basis for the upcoming discussion.

The MNCs diverse national cultures complicate the alignment of the corporate brand identity, which is imperative in implementing a consistent corporate brand. Management is faced with the problematic situation of not being able to align all subsidiaries' corporate brand identities, and at the same time maintain the desired corporate brand. By dissecting and analyzing the separate national cultural dimensions in a subsidiary, management may be able to facilitate the alignment of the corporate brand identities by investigating whether the corporate brand itself has influences that are included among the national cultural dimensions.

An alignment between the subsidiary's national cultural pattern and HQ's desired corporate brand identity sets the foundation for a smoother implementation process. However, absence of this alignment puts pressure on management to communicate in a way that is compliant with the national cultural patterns of the subsidiary, and requires flexibility towards accepting that not all subsidiaries' corporate brand identities will align to the same extent.

6. DISCUSSION AND OWN REFLECTIONS

This chapter provides our own reflections to the conclusions drawn from this study by discussing the theoretical implications our study has contributed to, the managerial implications that can be assessed when implementing a corporate brand as well as our recommendations for further research on this subject.

This study has been a study of how national culture can affect the corporate branding process in a multinational corporation. It is explorative in nature, and therefore consists of multiple different data sources, which have been consolidated and examined further by looking at a case multinational case company who has had problems aligning a corporate brand and corporate brand identity throughout.

Though we, the authors, are humble in the notion that national culture might not be the sole cause of a failed corporate brand initiative, we believe that national culture definitely has an effect in the managing of the corporate brand. This study has demonstrated that, and has opened up for further research within this field.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study has several implications from a theoretical perspective of corporate branding.

First of all, putting national culture in focus in a corporate brand management process, this study differentiates itself from previous corporate branding theories that often have national culture as a smaller variable. Previous corporate branding theories often acknowledge national culture in the sense that they argue that national culture is a part of the organizational culture, which in turn should be part of the defining a corporate brand or identifying a corporate brand's identity. However, what these studies fail to

do is to examine the more precise impact that having *several diverse* national cultures might have on a corporate brand management process. By putting national culture in the forefront, this study was able to combine corporate brand management theories and literature with that of organizational management and management of multinational corporations, thus taking a new angle on corporate branding in MNCs. This meant that this study was able to add to the understanding of why and how managing a corporate brand in a MNC might be difficult, and how national culture should be taken into consideration when facing these difficulties.

This study is also different from other international marketing and branding studies, as the focus of the impact of national culture lies rather on the internal management of the brand that the external management of the brand. In other words, rather than focusing on the national cultures of for example the customers, this study shifts the focus onto the internal stakeholders, such as the employees and manager.

This study has also aimed to a larger extent bridge the gap between theory and practice, which has lead to the discovery of several managerial implications.

6.2. Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, this study highlights the relevance of not only taking into consideration that multiple national cultures exist within a multinational corporation, and that these diverse cultures require adaptation in managerial practice in order to implement a corporate brand, but mainly that a subsidiaries national cultural characteristics can facilitate the process of aligning the corporate brand identity with that of the HQ.

First of all, this study introduces the importance of dissecting the national cultural patterns of a MNCs subsidiaries and using them to examine whether the corporate brand in itself shares characteristics with particular subsidiaries more than others. If these characteristics differ from those of the various national subsidiaries' managers who are expected to implement the corporate brand, upper management should take this as an indication of this subsidiary needing extra effort in aligning the corporate brand identity with that of HQ.

This study also shows, however, that by tailoring the communication of the corporate brand to the various national cultures of the managers within an organization, upper management might see a better alignment of the corporate brand identities throughout. This means that management could work proactively by attempting to identify how a corporate brand might bring value to various national offices from a national cultural perspective, and through this facilitating the corporate brand management process.

6.3. Recommendations for Further Research

This study has opened up for further research into how exactly varying national cultures within a multinational corporation might affect the success of the management of a corporate brand. We suggest conducting a study including more, or all of the employees in an multinational corporation where there have been difficulties aligning corporate brand identities between subsidiaries. This would be interesting to do through an ethnographic study as this approach would allow the national cultural patterns and its effect on the corporate brand management to be observed first-hand.

Further research might also include testing to what extent a national cultural approach to the internal management of a corporate brand could be successful in aligning corporate brand identities throughout the MNC. This could be done by using a duo-case study approach, where one of the case studies has a more national cultural oriented approach to the consolidating and managing of a corporate brand, and the other with less regard to national culture.

7. REFERENCE LIST

7.1. Publications

Aaker, D. A. 2004. 'Leveraging the Corporate Brand. (cover story)', *California Management Review*, 46, 3, pp. 6-18, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Aaker, D, & Joachimsthaler, E 1999, 'The Lure of Global Branding', *Harvard Business Review*, 77, 6, pp. 137-144, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Adler, Patricia A. & Adler, Peter (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. Accessed at: http://dx.doi.org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4135/9781412984973

Ahmed, P. K., Loh, A. Y. E., & Zairi, M. 1999. 'Cultures for continuous improvement and learning', *European Center for Total Quality Management,* Vol. 10: 426 - 434, LUB, EBSCO*host*, viewed 20 April 2015.

Ailon, G. 2008, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Culture's Consequences in A Value Test of its Own Design', *Academy Of Management Review*, 33(4): 885-904, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 15 May 2015. Accessed at: 10.5465/AMR.2008.34421995

Alvesson, M. 2004. *Knowledge Work and Knowledge Intensive Firms*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Alvesson, M. & Sköldberg, K. 2008. *Tolkning Och Reflektion: Vetenskapsfilosofi Och Kvalitativ Metod.* Lund: Studentlitteratur. LUB, EBSCO*host,* viewed 4 May 2015

Armstrong, G., Kotler, P., Cunningham, M. H. & Cunningham, P. H. 2005. *Principles of Marketing.* Pearson Prentice Hall

Backman, J. 2010. *Rapporter och Uppsatser.* Lund: Studentlitteratur AB, Lund.

Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S. 2004. 'Conceptualizing and researching employer branding', *Career Development International*, Vol. 9, No. 5: 501-517. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Balmer, J. 2001. 'Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing - Seeing through the fog', *European Journal Of Marketing*, Vol. 35, Iss. 3(4): 248-291. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Balmer, J. & Gray, E. 2003. 'Corporate brands: what are they? What of them?', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37, Iss. 7(8): 972 - 997. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host,* viewed 4 May 2015.

Balmer, J. & Greyser, S. 2006. 'Corporate marketing', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40, Iss. 7(8): 730 - 741. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Balmer, J. & Greyser, S. 2009. 'Aligning Identity and Strategy: Corporate Branding at British Airways in the Late 20th Century'. *California Management Review,* 51(3): 6 – 23

Balmer, J. 2011. 'Corporate marketing myopia and the inexorable rise of a corporate marketing logic', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 45, Iss. 9(10): 1329 - 1352 Accessed at http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090561111151781, viewed 4 May 2015.

Barney, J. 1991. 'Firm resources and sustainable competitive advantages'. *Journal of Management,* Vol. 17, 99-120. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015

Baxter, P, & Jack, S. 2008. 'Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers', *Qualitative Report*, 13(4): 544-559, ERIC, EBSCO*host*, viewed 17 May 2015.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. 2011. *Business research methods.* Cambridge: Oxford University Press.

Cruzes, D. S., Dybå, T., Runeson, P. & Höst, M. 2014. 'Case studies synthesis: a thematic, cross-case and narrative synthesis worked example', *Empir Software Eng*. Accessed at: 10.1007/s10664-014-9326-8

de Chernatony, F. 2001. 'Corporate branding and corporate brand performance', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35, Iss. 3(4): 441 - 456 Accessed at http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560110382101, viewed 4 May 2015.

De Roeck, K, Maon, F, & Lejeune, C. 2013. 'Taking Up the Challenge of Corporate Branding: An Integrative Framework', *European Management Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3: 137-151, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 13 March 2015.

Dixon-Woods, M, Agarwal, S, Jones, D, Young, B, & Sutton, A. 2005, 'Synthesising qualitative and quantitative evidence: a review of possible methods', *Journal Of Health Services Research & Policy*, 10, 1, pp. 45-53, SocINDEX with Full Text, EBSCO*host*, viewed 14 May 2015.

Dowling, G. 1993. Developing your company image into a corporate asset. *Long Range Planning,* Vol. 26, 2(2): 101-109

Eisingerich, A. and Rubera, G. 2010. Drivers of Brand Commitment: A Cross-National Investigation. *Journal of International Marketing*, 18(2), pp.64-79. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 25 April 2015.

Fleming, P. & Spicer, A. 2007. 'Faces of Resistance at Work'. In: *Contesting the Corporation.* pp. 28 - 46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Accessed

from: Cambridge Books Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628047.003 viewed 4 May 2015.

Ferner, A. 1997. 'Country of origin effects and HRM in multinational companies', *Human Resource Management Journal,* Vol. 7, No. 1: 19 - 37. LUB, Wiley Online Library, Accessed at: 10.1111/j.1748-8583.1997.tb00271.x viewed 12 March 2015

Ferner, A. & Varul, M. Z. 2000. 'Internationalisation and the personnel function in German multinationals', *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 3: 79 - 96. LUB, Wiley Online Library, Accessed at: 10.1111/j.1748-8583.2000.tb00028.x viewed 15 April 2015

Greyser, S. 2009. 'Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management'. *Management Decision,* 47(4): 590 – 602

Hatch, M. Schultz, M. 1997. 'Relations between organizational culture, identity and image', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31, Iss. 5(6): 356 - 365, Accessed at http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/eb060636 viewed 13 March 2015

Hatch, M.J. and Schultz, M. 2001. 'Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand?', *Harvard Business Review*, February: 128 - 134.

Hatch, M. Schultz, M. 2003. 'Bringing the corporation into corporate branding', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37, Iss. 7(8): 1041 – 1064, Accessed at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560310477654 viewed 13 March 2015

Hu, Y. 1992. 'Global or Stateless Corporations Are National Firms with International Operations', *California Management Review*, Vol. 34, Iss. 2: 107-126, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's Consequences.* Beverly Hills, California: Sage

Hofstede, G. 1991. *Cultures and Organizations.* London: McGraw-Hill

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G., & Minkov, M. 2010, *Cultures And Organizations : Software Of The Mind : Intercultural Cooperation And Its Importance For Survival*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Hofstede, G. 2002. 'Dimensions do not exist – a reply to Brendan McSweeney'. *Human Relations*, 55(11): 1355-61. Accessed at: 10.1177/00187267025511004

Kapferer, J. 2008. *The new strategic brand management.* London: Kogan Page.

Kawulich, Barbara B. 2005. 'Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method' [81 paragraphs]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *6*(2), Art. 43. Accessed at: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0502430.

Khojastehpour, M., Ferdous, A. and Polonsky, M. 2015. 'Addressing the complexities of managing domestic and multinational corporate brands'. *Corp Comm: An Int*

Jnl, 20(1), pp.48-62. Accessed at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-03-2014-0016 , Viewed 23 February 2015

Kjeldgaard, D. and Askegaard, S. 2006. 'The Glocalization of Youth Culture: The Global Youth Segment as Structures of Common Difference'. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(2), pp.231-247.

Laurent, A. 1983. 'The Cultural Diversity of Western Conceptions of Management', *International Studies of Management and Organization,* Vol. 13, No. 1(2): 75 - 96. Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Laurent, A. 1986. 'The Cross-Cultural Puzzle of International Human Resource Management', *Human Resource Management,* Vol. 25, No. 1: 91-102, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Luthans, F. & Doh, J. P. 2012. *International Management: Culture, Strategy and Behavior. Boston,* MA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education

McSweeney, B. 2002. 'Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith — a failure of analysis', *Human Relations*, 55(1): 89 - 118, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 14 May 2015. Accessed at: 10.1177/0018726702551004

Miles, M, & Huberman, A. 1984. *Qualitative Data Analysis : A Sourcebook Of New Methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage

Newman, K. L. & Nollen, S. D. 1996. 'Culture and Congruence: The fit between Management Practices and National Culture', *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (4th Qtr): 753 - 779. LUB, JStor, Accessed at http://www.jstor.org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/stable/155511 viewed 4 May 2015.

Roper, S. and Fill, C. 2012. *Corporate reputation*. Harlow, England: Pearson.

Sadri, G. & Lees, B. 2001. 'Developing corporate culture as a competitive advantage', *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 20, Iss. 10: 853 - 859. LUB, Emerald Insight, Accessed at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02621710110410851 viewed 4 May 2015

Schuler, R. S. & Rogovsky, N. 1998. 'Understanding Compensation Practice Variations across Firms: The Impact of National Culture'. *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 1 (1st Qtr): 159 - 177, Accessed at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/155593, viewed 17 February 2015

Trompenaars, F. 1997. *Riding The Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*. Chicago: Irwin

Urde, M. 2009. 'Uncovering the corporate brand's core values', *Management Decision*, Vol. 47, Iss. 4: 616-638, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Urde, M. 2013. 'The corporate brand identity matrix', *Journal Of Brand Management*, Vol. 20, Iss. 9: 742-761, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Urde, M. 1999. 'Brand Orientation: A Mindset for Building Brands into Strategic Resources', *Journal Of Marketing Management*, Vol. 15, Iss. 1-3: 117-133, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 4 May 2015.

Wentling, R. M. & Palma-Rivas, N. 2000. 'Current Status of Diversity Initiatives in Selected Multinational Corporations', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring): 35 - 60, LUB, EBSCO*host*, viewed 24 March 2015

Yin, R. K. 2007. *Fallstudier: design och genomförande.* Liber AB

7.2. Lectures/Unpublished

Ferraton, J-L. 2014. 'Introduction to Intrum Justitia Case). *BUSN35 Corporate Brand Management.* Available at https://liveatlund.lu.se/departments/BusinessAdministration/BUSN35/BUSN35_2 014HT_33_1_NML__1281/Pages/default.aspx [Accessed 6 February 2015]

Urde, M. 2014. 'CBMR Intro'. *BUSN35 Corporate Brand Management.* Available at https://liveatlund.lu.se/departments/BusinessAdministration/BUSN35/BUSN35_2 014HT_33_1_NML__1281/Pages/default.aspx [Accessed 6 February 2015]

7.3. Online Sources

Cambridge Dictionaries. 2015. *hermeneutics definition, meaning - what is hermeneutics in the British English Dictionary & Thesaurus - Cambridge Dictionaries Online.* [online] Dictionary.cambridge.org. Available at: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/hermeneutics [Accessed 4 May 2015].

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2015. *Multinational corporation (MNC).* [online] Global.britannica.com. Available at: http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/397067/multinational-corporation-MNC [Accessed 4 May 2015]

Ennova.com. 2015. *European Employee Index® Rapporter, EEI-rapport - mätning av arbetsglädje.* [online] Available at: http://se.ennova.com/kunskap/european-employee-indexreg-rapporter.aspx [Accessed 4 May 2015].

Intrum.com. 2015. *Credit management and financial services - Intrum Justitia.* [online] Available at: http://www.intrum.com [Accessed 4 May 2015]

8. PILOT STUDY

The conclusions of this pilot study lead us to establishing the research question for our study on corporate branding in MNCs, and describe the underlying problems that Intrum Justitia has been faced with prior to the start of our research.

8.1. Introduction

In order to establish whether the impact of national culture in a MNC's corporate branding process would be an interesting topic of study for our Master's Thesis, we conducted this pilot study. Prior to our study's commencement, Intrum Justitia had taken action towards identifying the problems behind their corporate branding process, one of them being conducting Internal Education Seminars for Intrum Justitia managers from the different national offices. We were able to attend one of these sessions as observers, which resulted in us being able to justify that the impact that national culture may have on a multinational corporation's corporate branding process is a topic worth further research.

Firstly, we have described the purpose and content of the Internal Education Seminars and explained how we collected our data through participant observation. Secondly, we describe how we analyzed the collected data. Thirdly, we introduce the research findings of these analyses and lastly present our conclusions. The pilot study in its entirety lead us to the research question that we have used in our Master's Thesis.

8.2. Purpose

The aim of the Internal Education Seminars was to educate the managers of Intrum Justitia on what corporate branding as a subject entailed, and also on what Intrum

Justitia's corporate brand was meant to be. This stands in accordance to theory on corporate branding, which suggest that one way for "harmonizing perceptions" (de Chernatony, 2001: 452) can be to organize workshops, where managers or employees discuss until a consensus is reached for all the components of a corporate brand identity (de Chernatony, 2001).

Those participating in the seminar were employees from Intrum Justitia offices. There were both employees from the same office, employees from offices in different cities and also employees from offices in different countries. Employees from Intrum Justitia's Headquarters (HQ), located in Stockholm, Sweden, were also present and included in group discussion and exercises. A representative from Human Resources in HQ was present, on whose initiative these seminars had been put together. Furthermore, two external actors were present: one being a representative from the company who managed the facility, being a professional within these kinds of internal training seminars; and the other being a guest lecturer within corporate branding.

8.3. Methodology

8.3.1. Collection of Data

We attended one of the Internal Education Seminars as observers, using the method of 'participant observations'. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002 in Kawulich, 2005), participant observation is beneficial when aiming to understand a context or phenomenon under study and facilitates the development of new research questions. This is highly applicable to this pilot study, as its main purpose is to bring light to the complexities that create the foundation for our thesis.

In order to gain a better understanding of the social settings that are to be observed, it is recommended to map out the count of attendees, a description of the physical surroundings and a description of the activities being observed (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999 in Kawulich, 2005). During the internal training seminar, the approximately 30 participants were seated at tables of six people to achieve a somewhat relaxed atmosphere. The first session of the seminar consisted of lectures on Intrum Justitia, what upper management saw as the company's corporate brand and included smaller group discussions between the participants and the lecturer. The second session was focused on corporate branding and corporate brand identity, and introduced a framework that can be used to map out the corporate brand identity of a company; namely the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* (Urde, 2013) (See *2.3* How is a Corporate Brand Managed?). The participants' challenge was to apply this matrix to Intrum Justitia in order to see for themselves where the corporate brand message is consistent throughout the seminar group, and where it is not. Following this exercise was a group discussion on why there were discrepancies, and suggestions on solutions.

During the Internal Education Seminar we acted as silent observers without any interaction in discussions and were seated in the back of the room to reduce our presence among the participants, compliant with Adler and Adler's (1987) peripheral membership role. During the observations we took extensive field notes individually throughout the seminar, and compared and discussed in detail after the seminar was over.

8.4. Analysis and Research Findings

The extensive field notes, which we took during the Internal Education Seminar, were combined with our observations and general impressions from the participants' statements and body languages. From what we observed when the participants were faced with the task to fill out the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)*, there were discussions including the statement "That's not how we see it in our country" and "This is the kind of reasoning that *we* in [country] use for this kind of issue". There were clear signs of segregation of opinions between the different country offices managers.

We ourselves applied the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix* on Intrum Justitia from what we had observed during the Internal Education Seminar in order to analyze whether our observations would align with the *CBIM* that would later be produced by the managers in the seminar. There occurred alignment in some variables of the *CBIM*, but in its entirety, the *CBIM* that was produced in the seminar was not coherent with what we had interpreted that upper management wanted to achieve. However, this could have to do with not all participants completely understanding the exercise, though we got the feeling that this occurred due to the fact that some participants were more dominant in the discussions than others, making the *CBIM* not reflect the seminar group as a whole, but rather the strong opinions of a smaller amount of individuals.

After the participants completed the *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix*, the upper management and the leaders of the seminar explained how they perceived the various elements (See Figure 1. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013)). From

this, and together with the group's assertions, they assembled the corporate brand identity matrix below. This can be thought of as the desired corporate brand identity that Intrum Justitia group has.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix: Intrum Justitia Group		
Value Proposition Intrum Justitia has a strong track record in debt collection, and holds high ethical standards with a friendly approach. Intrum Justitia offers full financial solutions	**Relationships** Intrum Justitia is constructed as a Business-to-Business (B2B) and a Business-to-Consumer (B2C) company. Stakeholders should see Intrum Justitia as someone trustful and responsible. Intrum Justitia should also be someone that the clients can trust.	**Position** Intrum Justitia is a market leader and a first mover. It is a helping hand that drives the consumers in the industry. Intrum Justitia are the good guys.
Expression Intrum Justitia is recognized for its green color, which is considered fresh and friendly. The logo is also an important part of the expression, as is shows a person and the world.	**Core** Intrum Justitia's core values are 'Seeking Insight to Feed Innovation', 'Making a Difference', 'Committing to Challenge' and 'Understanding People'.	**Personality** Intrum Justitia is a friendly and open person, but is also someone who is smart and professional.
Mission & Vision To stabilize the economy from a people-focused perspective by being 'A Catalyst for a Sound Economy'. The vision is to create 'Better Business for All'	**Culture** Intrum Justitia is a well working, individual experts and individual dependency Open and friendly, but still a competitive environment. Separate entities are clashing	**Competences** Intrum Justitia has passionate and great people who have a lot of knowledge and great market insight. There is an analytical intelligence in the company, and an international knowledge base.

Table 10. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix for the Intrum Justitia Group

8.5. Conclusions

Our pilot study provided us with clear observations that different opinions on the corporate branding process resided between the different national offices in Intrum Justitia. We could also conclude that to some extent the disagreements were linked to the fact that 'this was not the way 'this' was done or perceived in the local country'. Furthermore, people from the same offices tended to agree with each other. These differences in opinion about the corporate brand *between* countries, but not *within* them, indicates that there is a factor connected to people's actions and beliefs within a country. It is our belief that this factor could be national culture and that it would be beneficial to conduct further studies on its impact on national culture. This pilot study

thus leads us to the following research question: How can a MNC's corporate brand

management be influenced by its diverse national cultures?

9. APPENDICES

9.1. Appendix 1: Glossary

The large amount of definitions and concepts explained may at times be overwhelming, which is why we have chosen to thoroughly explain these concepts in the written text, but to also provide the reader with this list of definitions that can be used as an easily used reference.

Boosting Europe
Boosting Europe is a CSR campaign that Intrum Justitia is running. The Intrum Justitia website defines Boosting Europe as "our contribution to improving the economy and creating jobs." The campaign is based around ensuring that the companies who work with Intrum Justitia are receive the money that is owed to them by the clients, without loosing the loyalty and respect of the companies customers i.e. the debtors. In the whole, the campaign centers on ensuring that the European economy continues to grow in a healthy fashion.

Corporate Client
The corporate clients are the companies to whom the debtors owe money. These can be any large company that offers services or products, and who has customers who are in debt to them. These are the people that 'buy' Intrum Justitia's services.

Corporate Identity
A corporate identity is a somewhat ubiquitous term, that essentially answers the questions "'what are we?' and 'who are we'" about an organization (Balmer & Gray, 2003: 979). It is not a fixed variable, but is constantly changing and developing.

Credit Management Service (CMS)
Credit management is a somewhat unclear term. The International Credit Insurance Service Association defines CMS as "It is usually regarded as assuring that buyers pay on time, credit costs are kept low, and poor debts are managed in such a manner that payment is received without damaging the relationship with that buyer." (Icisa.org, 2015)

Debtors
Debtors are in this thesis defined as the individuals or companies who are in debt. These are the 'end customers' that Intrum Justitia collects debt from, one part of the corporate clients.

Multinational Corporate Brand (MCB)
A multinational corporate brand is a multinational corporation's corporate brand. It is often described as being neutral and broad in order to work in many countries, and has a strong international root. (Khjoastehpour, 2015)

Multinational Corporation (MNC)
A multinational corporation is a corporation who has its headquarters in one country, however who also operates through subsidiaries in many other countries. (Khjoastehpour, 2015)

National Culture
as early learned beliefs, values and assumptions that differentiate one national group from another (Beck & Moore, 1985; Hofstede, 1991; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Sparrow, 1995; Adler, 1997; Hofstede, 1993 in Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998)

Product Brand
A product brand can be thought of as the "manufacturers way of adding value and giving its product or service an individuality that sets it apart from the rest" (Roper & Fill, 2012: 1089) and is primarily directed towards the consumers.

Service branding
Service branding is the act of branding a service, and is built one taking into context the employees and customers loyalty to the organization as a whole, not just the product (Aaker, 2004; Balmer & Gray, 2003).

Stakeholders
A stakeholder is simply defined as a party that is interested or has relations to a corporation or enterprise. An internal stakeholder can be thought of as the employees in the organization, whilst the external stakeholders can be thought of as the customers, clients and non-customer stakeholders (such as supplier, financiers etc.) (Urde, 2013)

Third-Party Debt Collector Agencies
Third-party collection agencies are in business to collect debts on behalf of companies or private people. They function as the middleman between debtors, who owe money, and their corporate clients, who the debtors owe money.

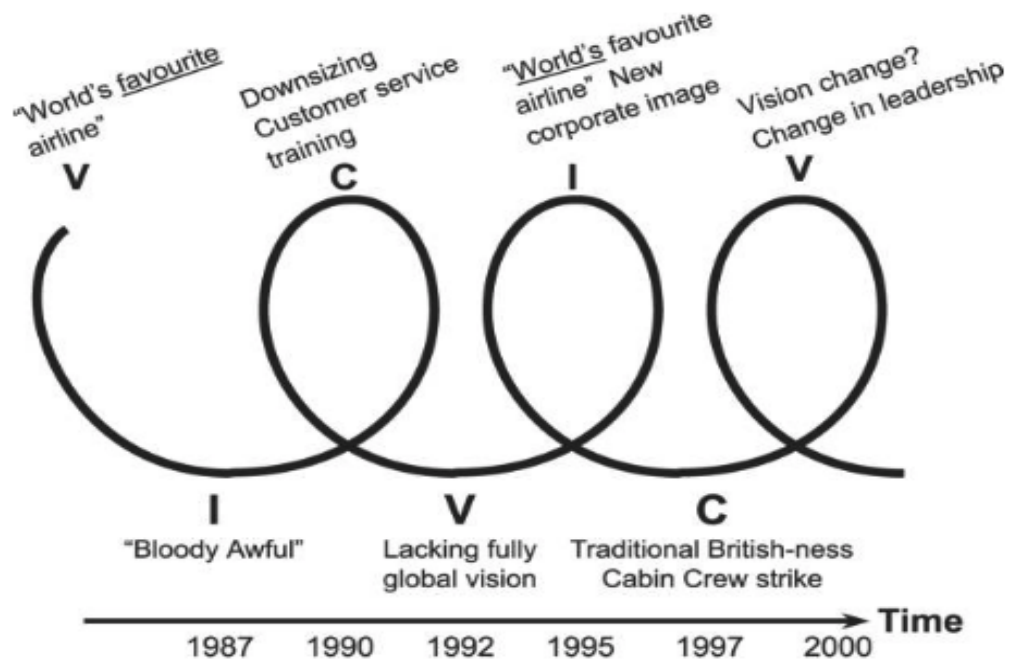## 9.2. Appendix 2: British Airways Branding Initiative

Figure 3. The Vision, Culture and Image Model Applied to British Airways

Figure *3* demonstrates the somewhat failed corporate branding initiatives of British Airways, in a combination of the vision, culture and image of British Airways over time. The lower part of the spiral demonstrates 'real/public view' and the top part demonstrates the company branding initiatives.

9.3. Appendix 3: Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism

Kaferer's *Brand Identity Prism* is a hexagon containing six elements that are crucial to the identifying of a brand identity. It is widely accepted and used in various branding literature. The six elements are a product brand's physique appearance and qualities, the brand's personality, the culture, the relationship associated with the brand, the customer reflection of the brand and how the brand speaks to our self-image (Kapferer, 2008; Urde 2013).

The prism is to be primarily used in a managerial as a strategic brand management tool. The prism can be found below, as well as some examples of how it can be applied on two popular brands.
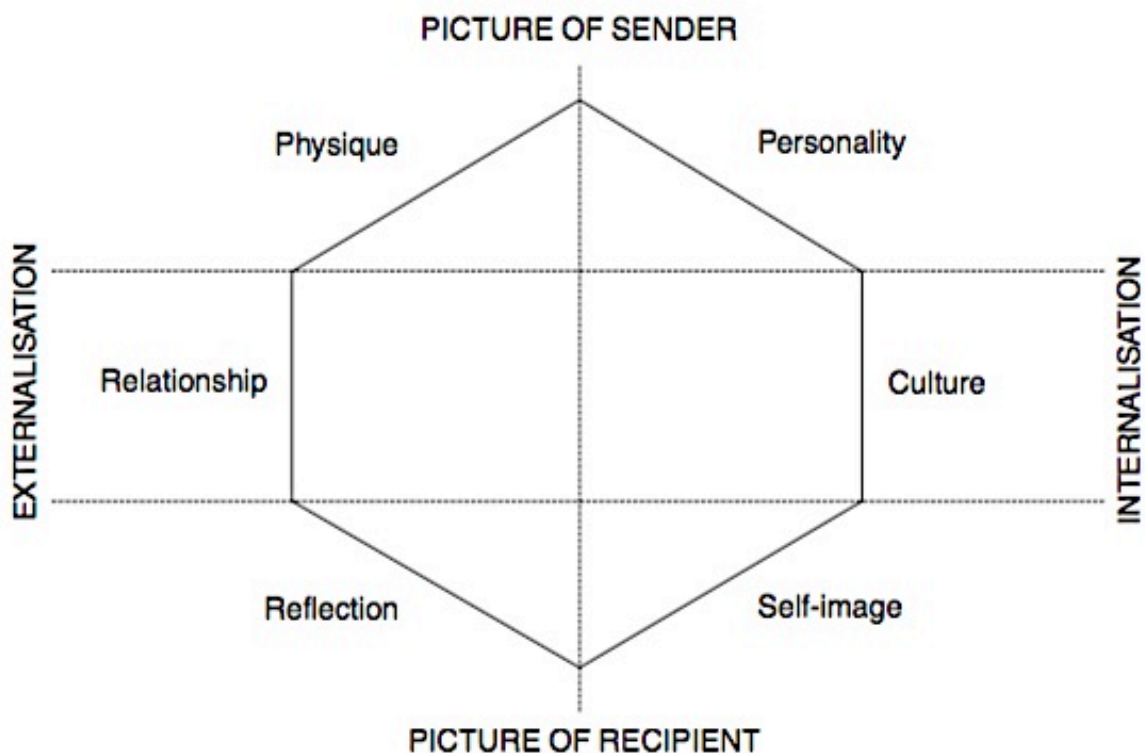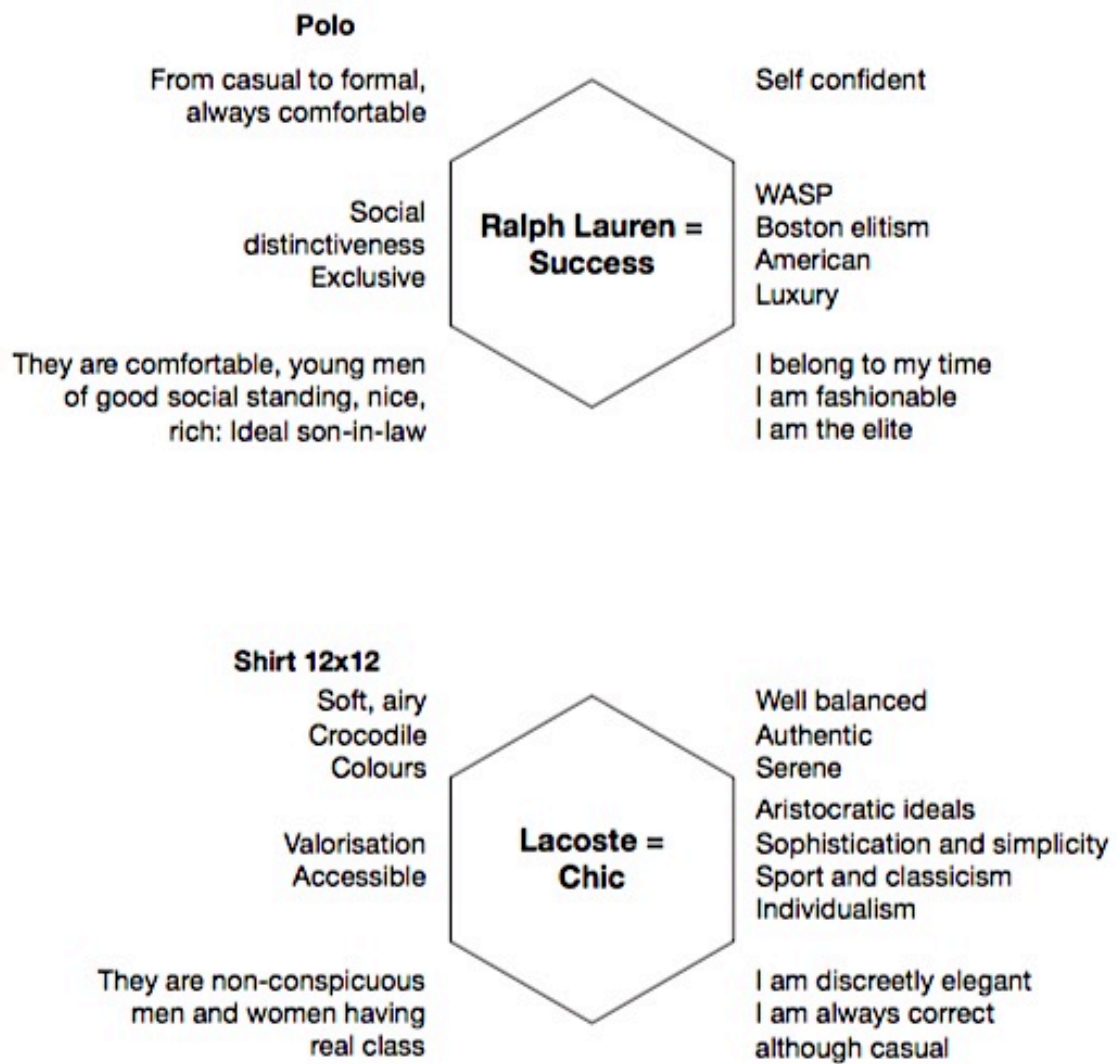

Figure 4. The Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2008: 183)

Polo

From casual to formal,
always comfortable

Self confident

Social
distinctiveness
Exclusive

**Ralph Lauren =
Success**

WASP
Boston elitism
American
Luxury

They are comfortable, young men
of good social standing, nice,
rich: Ideal son-in-law

I belong to my time
I am fashionable
I am the elite

Shirt 12x12

Soft, airy
Crocodile
Colours

Well balanced
Authentic
Serene

Valorisation
Accessible

**Lacoste =
Chic**

Aristocratic ideals
Sophistication and simplicity
Sport and classicism
Individualism

They are non-conspicuous
men and women having
real class

I am discreetly elegant
I am always correct
although casual

Sample brand identity prisms

Figure 5. Examples of Using the Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2008: 183)

9.4. Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Introduction

(To be read in beginning of each interview)

A bit about ourselves and our project; Jennifer and I/Erika and I are two students in our fourth year at Lund University taking our Masters Degrees. Our thesis aims to explore the principles of corporate branding from a managerial perspective. In particular, we are looking at the management of a multinational company's Corporate Brand Identity, and as Intrum Justitia has driven a project on this subject we are very interested in speaking to you.

This interview will take about 30 minutes. We will ask you a few questions, but urge you to speak as openly and candid as possible. If there is a question that you do not feel comfortable answering you may refrain from doing so. We will be recording this interview. This is done in to make sure both that you are correctly represented, as well as to ensure that our data is as unbiased as possible. The recordings are purely for our own use and will not be shared with an external party. In our thesis later on we will be referring to you as 'a manager from <insert country here> in order to keep this as anonymous as possible.

Fact Sheet Grid:

To be filled our by passive interviewer and/or when transcribing the material.

Name (e.g. Manager 1, Manager 2 etc.)	Country/ Position	Years working at Intrum Justitia	Years working at department/ position	Nationality	Mother Tongue/Lang uages spoken

Corporate Brand Identity Grid:

Value Proposition	Relationships	Positioning
Expressions	Core Value	Personality
Mission & Vision	Culture	Competences

Interview Questions

Disclaimer to Interviewer

The interview will begin with the Introduction text found in the beginning of this document, and is followed by the (1) Introductory Questions. After that we will ask questions related to the (2) Brand Identity, alternated with questions pertaining to (3) Culture. Each interview will end with the (4) Direct Questions. These will also act as 'closing questions', signifying that the interview is over. Not all questions will be asked. This guide is more of a toolbox of questions. Each interview ends with asking the interview subject if he/she has anything more to add than what has already been said.

1. Introductory Questions

Could you please begin by introducing yourself? Your name, which department you work for and how long you've worked at Intrum Justitia?
Where you come from, which languages you speak, what is your mother tongue?

2. Brand Identity

General questions:

How would you describe Intrum Justitia? What is Intrum Justitia to you?
What is your favorite thing about Intrum Justitia?

How would you describe Intrum Justitia's … :

Core Value
What would you say Intrum Justitia stands for?

M&V
What kind of value could a clearly defined M&V bring to the company?
What is IJ's M&V?
How/Do you incorporate the M&V in your leading?

Culture
In your own words, how would you describe 'the Intrum Way'? (Ref. http://www.intrum.com/About-Us/Our-values/)
How would you describe working at Intrum Justitia?

Personality
If Intrum Justitia were a person, which 3 characteristics would you use to describe it?

Expressions
How would you describe Intrum Justitia? Aesthetically?
What for you represents Intrum Justitia?

Value prop
What does Intrum Justitia offer its customers? Its stakeholders? Its employees?
What is Intrum Justitia's greatest asset?
What is your favorite Intrum service or product?
What could Intrum Justitia do for me? For a client?

Relationship
Who would you say that you work with?
Which relationship is most important for Intrum Justitia, in your eyes?

Positioning
How would you compare Intrum Justitia to one of your competitors (insert actual competitor name here to make it more specific)?

Competences
What makes Intrum Justitia better than other credit service management companies?

3. Culture, National Culture, CBI & National Culture

Depending on how the other questions go, these can be baked into the interview following up on their answers ex. "you mentioned that Intrum was international, how would you describe that? What language?"

What language do you feel most comfortable explaining who Intrum Justitia is/(M&V, CBI, Core Value etc)?

Where would you say Intrum comes from?

What language do you speak in the office? Primarily?

What would other people (in your life) say about Intrum Justitia?

Is it easier conferring in your mother tongue or English (if it isn't English)?

4. Direct/closing questions to use at end of interview

What do you think Intrum Justitia's brand promise is? (explain what brand promise is if they don't know)

Do you think the fact that Intrum Justitia is a multinational corporation makes it difficult to create one brand promise?

What is more important, Intrum Justitia's culture our office national culture?

Do you think that there is a conflict between Intrum Justitia's organizational culture/the Intrum Way and the **<COUNTRY>**'s national culture?

9.5. Appendix 9: Article

MODERN MARKETING

'Kids These Days' Features:

'Lost in Translation
– a Multinational Corporation's corporate branding struggle'

Article by: Dexter Karington

"Here's a dilemma for you: What do you get when you cross a Marketer, a HR manager and a multinational corporation?
An Identity crisis."

This was how Erika Fredrikson and Jennifer Annvik greeted me when I sat down with them last Sunday to discuss their findings from their paper: 'Lost in Translation – a Multinational corporation's corporate branding struggle,' a fascinating exploratory study putting well-known corporate branding theories in light of organizational and multinational corporation (MNC) management theories.

The two students of Lund University School of Economics and Management explain that the original idea for the paper originated in a disagreement concerning the use of terminology in between the field of marketing and organizational studies.

Corporate branding, as the readers of Modern Marketing will know, is a branding technique where an organization profiles the company as a whole in order to differentiate themselves in the market they act on, and in the minds and hearts of the customers they target. It is a popular management and branding technique that grew forth from the cross-pollination of organizational studies and branding theories. Corporate branding theory uses a lot of the terms developed by organizational and HRM literature, which makes it no surprise that these two students had heated discussions over the definitions of corporate branding theory.

"In the start, we were mostly arguing over the definitions of the terms we were using," Erika said with a laugh, "Jennifer would berate me with organizational theory and concepts and I would counter by trying to put them in terms of corporate branding," Erika explained.

I asked the girls how these discussions of correct theoretical jargon ended up leading to the thick-paged research paper I had in my lap. Jennifer responded "Oh, that was largely due to our case company, Intrum Justitia!"

Intrum Justitia is a credit management service agency, founded in 1923 by Swedish Bo Göransson. Intrum Justitia is the market leader within credit management and financial services in most of the 19 European markets they are present in. The company has revenues of approximately 4.6 MSEK, and boast circa 3,800 employees. In 2007, Intrum Justitia underwent a strategic reorganization and a corporate rebranding, with the aim of transforming the corporate brand and to reposition the corporate brand identity of Intrum in the minds of both customers and employees.

The girls explain that this corporate rebranding was meant to position Intrum Justitia differently to their competitors by transforming their image of being traditional 'debt collectors', to being a credit management company helping clients retrieve outstanding debts in a way that is viable to the debtors. The aim of the rebranding was to create a corporate brand identity, which focused the brand core around the aim of creating better business for all.

"Though this corporate brand was a construct of the opinions of all the employees in Intrum Justitia's opinions of Intrum, and though the upper management and head of HR followed theory in order to implement the brand company wide – the corporate brand identities of various national subsidiaries did not align with the corporate brand identity communicated by the HQ. In other words: something had gone wrong along the way." Jennifer explained enthusiastically. "Now, some 7 years later, Intrum Justitia is *still* struggling with aligning their corporate brand identities throughout the organization."

The girls asked themselves: Why? Why is it possible that an MNC with 19 different countries acting in Europe, with fairly similar products and services being offered, are still after 7 years working with trying to consolidate their corporate brand, which was a product of the opinions of the organization in the first place?

Upon hearing this I tentatively asked them if perhaps using a corporate brand in the case of Intrum Justitia might not actually be appropriate – not all industries and corporations need a corporate brand. In response to this the girls laughed and explained that yes, of course this thought had also crossed their minds. However, seeing as Intrum Justitia was a service-based company, active in a industry where the value propositions are fairly homogenous amongst competitors, having a corporate brand that

differentiates Intrum Justitia in a positive way would be incredibly beneficial.

In order to go about tackling this dilemma, the girls were able to sit in on an internal education seminar that Intrum Justitia was holding on the corporate branding initiative. What they quickly noticed was that different national offices differed in opinions concerning the corporate brand identity, and often motivated this by arguing for example "this is not the way we see this in Switzerland". It was after this seminar that the girls realized that somehow, the diverse national cultures that existed in the MNC seemed to be warping the different managers' idea of what the corporate brand was. And so they began their research.

"Considering this was an exploratory study, a large part of our paper is based on explaining the nature and concepts that are crucial to, and that make up a corporate brand identity as well as a MNC," Jennifer explained. "Aside from literature and the seminar, we were also privy to an employee satisfaction survey, which to a large extend confirmed our suspicion that national culture could effect the management of a corporate brand. After that, we turned to the managers in Intrum Justitia and applied our theory and research method in order to see how exactly national culture could be affecting the management of Intrum Justitia's corporate brand."

Being a researcher myself, I was somewhat skeptical to the idea of being able to 'classify' national culture. We all know of the heated debate concerning Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as well as that of the idea of an increased globalized society.

The girls responded to this by jokingly answering, "Tell us about it! You should see the length of our method and limitations! What we want to make clear is that we never advocated 'defining' a country subsidiary by its national culture. Instead, we encourage managers to compare the different subsidiaries national cultures to each other too see if the corporate brand they're trying to implement somehow might have national cultural alignments that fit in with those of the subsidiaries."

I wrapped up the interview by asking the girls to make a quick 'elevator pitch' of the importance of their study; "First and foremost, what our paper shows is there is still much research to be done within the management of corporate brands. By looking at corporate brand management from a national cultural perspective, this study differentiates itself from previous corporate branding theories, in which authors often have included national culture as a smaller variable. To researchers, this paper should be seen as an invitation to research the possibility of aligning national cultural characteristics with corporate brand identity to facilitate a successful corporate brand implementation. Furthermore, should be an invitation for researchers within these fields to revisit their theories and see how their theories work on a deeper, more practical level.

From a managerial point of view, the results of this paper should be seen as a tool for managers of MNCs to

facilitate the management and implementation of a strong corporate brand by working proactively with the identification of corporate brand identity. Today, there is little literature on what exactly can go wrong in the corporate brand management process from a MNCs managerial perspective, and this paper hopefully helps shed some light on this."

With this, I thanked the girls for their time and I turned to the slightly crumpled pile of papers in my hands and muse: This research paper is truly an interesting read both in light of its contribution to literature on the topic of corporate brand management, and due to the light it sheds for manager of MNCs wishing to create a strong corporate brand.