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MORAL BRANDING

The role of a moral brand in a context of organizational culture, identity & change

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THANK YOU

To our supervisor Charlotta

Thank you for your valuable support and feedback – you are fantastic.

To the company and participants

Thank you for being so welcoming.
Without you this research would not have been possible.

To each other

For our great teamwork during long days with much laughter and joy.

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ABSTRACT

Title: *"Moral Branding – The role of a moral brand in a context of organizational culture, identity and change"*

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Purpose: To gain an understanding of how organizational culture and identity are seen as interrelated with a moral brand, by investigating a company that is going through an organizational change. In addition to this, we intend to explore what happens with a company's moral brand, culture, and identity, when going through these kinds of changes.

Research question: How are culture and identity related to a moral brand, and how are they affected by rebranding and expansion?

Method: A qualitative hermeneutic study within an interpretive paradigm. The empirical data was foremost collected by 13 semi-structured interviews in order to capture the employees' experiences of the change. In addition to this, we observed the company internally and externally through their social media channels, in order to gain a richer insight in the company.

Findings: The company had a strong moral brand, working as a unifying force, interrelated with the culture and identity. It further had a strong cultural alignment, and the moral brand values appeared to be deeply rooted in the culture and identity. The change led to an identity-shift and the creation of two subcultures. However, the change seemed to strengthen the moral brand values. Our research indicated how the moral brand 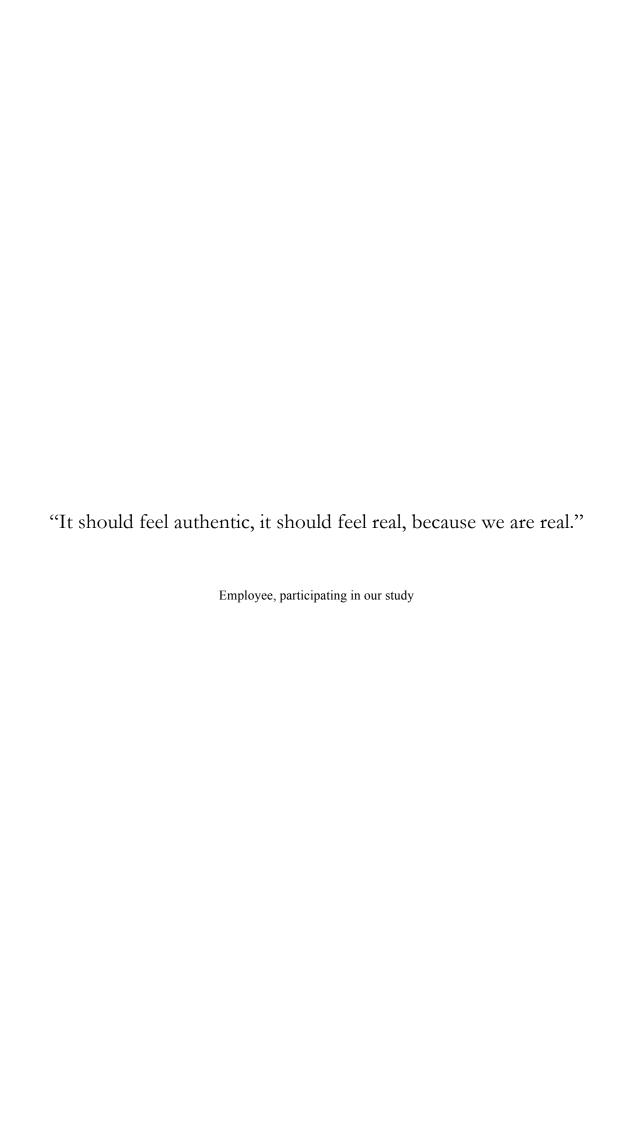worked as a unifying force, holding the company together. It was striking how the product had a central role in the moral brand, identity and culture.

CONTENT

"It should feel authentic, it should feel real, because we are real."

Employee, participating in our study

1 INTRODUCTION

"The good thing is that everybody experiences brands as part of their lives.
That's also the problem: the things that are closest to us are often the most mysterious and unknown"
(Kornberger, M. 2010;xi)

Literature on branding is mainly emphasizing on how to build and manage a brand. It is often described as a significant tool in order to achieve competitive advantages, and communicate the organizational image to consumers in order to gain external recognition (Kornberger 2010; Lee 2013). Historically, there has primarily been an external focus on shaping an attractive brand that builds a relationship between the consumer and the organization (Hatch & Schultz 2003). However, this has shifted towards a stronger focus on how the brand also influences the organization internally (Kornberger 2010), which is discussed in the field of corporate branding. Corporate branding is often described as important in order to attach a meaning and identity to the brand, as well as keeping an internal stability and employee alignment in the organization. This indicates that the brand also influences the organization internally and creates value for the employees that further may contribute to cultural alignment (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009).

When the brand reaches internally, it also may influence the organizational culture and identity. In the field of corporate branding, the three notions brand, culture and identity are often described as being interrelated in a dynamic process where they are constantly changing (Hatch & Schultz 2002; Gioia, Schultz & Corley et al. 2000). Culture has always had an important internal meaning in organizations as it is shaped by the employees' shared meanings and assumptions that are often taken for granted. Hence, the culture is constantly reconstructed in the interaction and interpretation among the employees when they are making sense of the organization (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008; Schein 2010; Sveningsson & Sörgärde 2013). Identity on the other hand, is connected with individuals' own decisions in organizations, and is thus understood as influencing the organizational culture (Alvesson 2013). The field of identity emphasizes identity theory and social identity theory by explaining how employees find their identities when identifying themselves with the organization (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Hogg, Terry & White 1995). Consequently, when a brand reaches internally in the organization, it may be important to consider how the

interrelation of organizational culture, identity and brand are influencing the company. Brand is usually presented as expressing the identity of the organization and is claimed as both controlling society through shaping trends, as well as being controlled by the society due to environmental pressures (Hatch & Schultz 2009; Kornberger 2010). In order to cope with the changing market, organizations may thus need to change the brand and engage in corporate rebranding in order to ensure that the organizational identity and external image are balanced and aligned (Lee 2013). Due to an increasing trend in acting ethically, companies are starting to take on a greater social responsibility in order to improve society, which some companies emphasize by creating a moral brand (Morsing 2006). From what we have seen, this is a field within the literature on brand that is yet rather new and unexplored.

A moral brand involves communicating and reflecting moral issues and concerns in society, and is co-created within and beyond the organizational boundary. These types of brands are shaped by a discourse of 'doing the right thing', and are thus seen as meaningful for the employees. When the moral brand also is perceived as meaningful for the consumers, it may inspire the employees to further live and embody the brand, which adds extra value to it. The employees may thus be seen as co-creating the brand, but at the same time being controlled by it whereas their self-expression comes from identification with the brand values (Jeanes 2013). Moral brand may further operate within a corporate brand, which means that the moral brand values concern the organization as a whole (Morsing 2006).

Since a moral brand in a large extent is shaped in line with contemporary social debates, it implicates that organizations may need to implement a rebranding in order to stay competitive on a continuously changing market (Jeanes 2013). However, as mentioned, the field of moral branding is still rather unexplored, and there is little (if any) written about how a moral brand is affected by an organizational change, something we find interesting to further investigate. A moral brand is meant to be deeply rooted within the individual's moral that is closely related with the organizational moral (Morsing 2006), which means that it also may influence the organizational culture and identity. Therefore, we find it interesting to explore the relation between organizational culture, identity and moral brand, and how these are affected by an organizational change in the form of rebranding and expansion.

1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Veggie, the company of our study, is a Swedish food company manufacturing vegetable-based products, addressing especially vegans and people with lactose intolerance. The company was founded in the early '90s by a couple of engineers at a university and was soon expanding thanks to a successful launch of a product. During the last couple of years, the company has made a strategic shift in order to move from being a traditional food company towards a lifestyle company, which led to an organizational change in the form of rebranding and expansion. This implied an internal organizational restructuring, and moving parts of the company to a new site, in which the sales and marketing departments were merged into a commercial department. Today, the company's headquarters are situated in the new site, and the departments of production and development are situated in the original site. The company hired a creative director and started collaborating with an advertising agency. This change further resulted in increased marketing, and the company decided to be fully transparent in their communication, focusing on offering a sustainable and healthy food alternative. By stating their sustainability, environment awareness and health consciousness, the company has a moral brand.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM & QUESTION

The aim with our research is to gain an understanding of how organizational culture and identity are interrelated with a moral brand, by investigating a company that is going through an organizational change in the form of rebranding and expansion. In addition to this, we intend to explore what happens with a company's moral brand, culture, and identity when going through these kinds of changes. Our study is thus based on the following research question:

❖ *How are culture and identity related to a moral brand, and how are they affected by rebranding and expansion?*

1.3 STRUCTURE & ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of six chapters, which will be summarized below in order to clarify the structure and facilitate the reading.

Chapter 2: In this chapter, the theoretical framework of the research is presented. The literature review addresses the fields of corporate brand and moral brand, within the context of organizational change. In addition to this, the fields of organizational culture and identity are outlined since they are explained as playing important roles when exploring a moral brand.

Chapter 3: In chapter three we outline our choice of methodology. We present how the research is based on a qualitative hermeneutic approach within the interpretative paradigm, and describe how the empirical data has been collected. Thereafter, we explain how the data was managed and analyzed, and end the chapter with a critical reflection.

Chapter 4: This chapter presents the empirical findings of our research that we captured and interpreted from our empirical data. We aim to outline the respondents' experiences of the change, the cultural alignment, and the significance of Veggie's moral brand.

Chapter 5: In this chapter we discuss and analyze our empirical findings based on the theoretical framework, and discuss how the moral brand, culture and identity is visible, within the case of Veggie, together with the outcomes of the change.

Chapter 6: We conclude with a chapter that presents the main findings connected to our research aim and question. We end the chapter by outlining our theoretical and practical contributions, and suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we present the theoretical framework that will be the basis of our analysis in order to answer our research question. We start by introducing the field of organizational change and rebranding, followed by an outline of the literature on corporate branding in order to show how a brand influences within and beyond the organizational boundaries. Thereafter, a description of the literature on moral brand, culture and identity will follow, and we aim to show how these notions are interrelated.

2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE & REBRANDING

In regards to literature on organizational science, organizational change could be defined as a new organizational position that is different from how the organization functioned, and how the organizational members and leaders acted, before the change (Huber 1991). Organizations change when people seek to reach new goals due to, for instance, environmental changes or new market demands. This could result in changes such as expansion and growth. Some organizational changes may be specific for a certain company, market or demographic area, where the common element is that the organization needs to fit the internal strategy and structure with the external demand (Jacobsen 2004; Palmer, Dunford & Akin 2009).

Organizational changes may further be explained as large and radical, or small and operative (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2012). They can also be described as episodic or continuous, where the former refers to radical changes, that appears as linear and rapid in order to keep up with the fast changing environment. The latter implies a natural incremental adaptation when keeping up with the environment (Weick & Quinn 1999). The company of our study is going through an organizational change that involves rebranding, a concept that will be presented in the following section.

In order to achieve sustainable advantages in a competitive environment, organizations may need to adapt by changing the brand and engage in corporate rebranding (Lee 2013). Brand is a complex notion with many different definitions. Much time and money are invested in order to create a successful representation of the organizational vision, where the brand is supposed

to communicate the organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz 2009). Brands may be described as part of our lifestyle and could further be seen as creating desires that we believe is in accordance to our innermost selves. Brands also have an essential impact on organizations; the way the organizational identity, culture and innovation is managed and interpreted is transformed by the brand (Kornberger 2010).

According to literature on branding, there is a distinction between the two concepts of *product rebranding* and *corporate rebranding* (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009). A brand that is primarily communicating to external stakeholders and focusing on building a relationship between an organization and its consumers can be referred to as a product brand. A corporate brand, on the other hand, is defined as an extension of product branding that is only focusing on targeting consumers, to also involve images formed and held by organizational members, investors, partners, suppliers and other interested parties. In other words, a corporate brand contributes to the whole organization being visible in the brand and it should involve strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image. These three variables must further be related to the company both internally and externally and could increase companies' visibility, reputation and recognition, if it successfully draws on the three variables simultaneously. Since a corporate brand communicates to multiple stakeholders, this also implies that a corporate rebranding may result in strong reactions and concerns (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009).

However, a corporate brand could contribute to employees' feelings of doing a meaningful job if it connects the organizational culture with the strategic vision. It could further be described as a vision of attracting stakeholders by letting them feel a sense of belonging and, as Hatch and Schultz argue: "strategic vision and organizational culture are strongly linked and there is a need for perceived long-term mutual support between them" (2003:1048). The corporate brand helps creating the relationship between consumers and the organization. To explain this further, there is a difference between being aligned with the product brand solely, and being aligned with the whole corporation. Moreover, there is another dimension of corporate branding in relation to product branding that involves where in the company it takes place. If product branding is handled in the marketing department, the corporate brand is rather handled on an organization-wide level (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009).

It has further been said that the intention of corporate rebranding often refers to an action of changing an organization's name, target, and position in order to attach a new meaning to the corporate brand and the stakeholders. When going through a process of rebranding, it is essential to maintain the red thread between the old and the new brand strategy and communicate it to external and internal stakeholders. It may also be problematic if there is too much emphasis towards the external stakeholders, which in turn may lead to forgetting about the internal stakeholders. Related to rebranding, this may further result in a loss in the new brand vision since the organization loses its credibility when failing to mirror the external image internally in the organization (Gotsi & Andriopoulos 2007).

2.2 EMBODYING A MORAL BRAND

A brand can represent more than just the purpose of the organization by communicating moral issues. This could be defined as a *moral brand*, which includes moral narratives and personal beliefs. Moral brands are shaped by the discourse of 'doing the right thing', and are supposed to give a meaning to the employees' lives (Jeanes 2013). When linking ethics and moral to a corporate brand, organizations are experimenting with the engagement and commitment of their employees, since they in one way could be seen as facing the ultimatum of choosing between 'good or bad' (Morsing 2006).

A moral commitment to a corporate brand reaches deeper than an aesthetic brand, since it is claimed to be real and thus makes a promise to the employees and external stakeholders that they actually are supporting and living these morals. Thus, the employees' personal moral is linked with the corporate brand where the moral aligns them, and the moral promise reaches into their souls. This may also attract new employees that feel morally committed to the organization, and giving them a feeling of contributing with an ethical responsibility to society, because of the strength of the corporate brand (Morsing 2006).

Furthermore, when the brand is highly influencing consumers, and the brand values are seemingly moral regarding social and/or environmental responsibilities, it can inspire the employees to further embody the brand. Thus, when the employees are expected to embody the brand values, and it becomes the organizational culture, it is claimed that the organization has a *moral brand culture*. A moral brand culture is constructed both from within and beyond

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the organization. External agents have a direct involvement in the creation, as well as the employees who are supposed to personify the brand values. It reflects the issues and debates of the time and is dependent on being acknowledged in society more widely than other types of cultures. The moral brand culture is thus focused on the position within society, as well as the importance of the brand values to be 'right'. It becomes meaningful and legitimate when it is confirmed by external brand communities and consumers (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006).

When the employees embody and live the moral brand, they become authentically engaged and consequently add value to the brand. The employees could then be claimed to both control and be controlled by the brand due to their moral commitments. It could create passion and values of the employees, but it may also regulate them when their autonomy stems from the identification with the moral brand culture (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006). This may be explained as normative control, where the moral commitment could be seen as a religion with one accepted way of thinking. If the employees do not recognize themselves in the corporate morals, this implies that the corporate moral brand may lose parts of its credibility, both externally and internally. In a company that presents itself as having a corporate moral brand, the employees immediately represents the moral claims since the personal moral and the corporate moral are seen as tied together (Morsing 2006). The attributes of employee alignment with the corporate brand may thus be seen as necessary to consider, which we will present in the next section.

In relation to describing strong values attached to a brand, it becomes interesting to discuss brand from the concept of *brand charisma*. This means that external stakeholders and employees somewhat relate themselves to the brand, as it functions as a source of meaning, which gives the brand its legitimacy. Further, it is interesting to relate brand charisma with corporate branding, where the organization as a whole may act together as a legitimate brand. Several aspects may be described as essential to brand charisma, where product charisma is one of them. The product charisma can be explained as special feelings that make the self feel endowed with exceptional qualities towards the brand, which generates enthusiasm. One way to build a strong brand charisma is to involve everyone in the creation, and make everyone feel part of and one with the corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz 2013).

In regards to organizational change, much literature is written about the necessity of employee alignment. This means translating the change and making sense of it so that the participants

feel part of the change, as well as understanding the urge of it, especially if the change will affect the organizational culture (Palmer, Dunford & Akin 2009; Hardy 1996). Organizations may also face challenges when trying to create cultural alignment to the corporate brand values, since these are in most cases externally driven, and thus not entirely reflecting the tacit meanings and values amongst the organizational members (Gotsi, Andriopoulos & Wilson 2008). The organizational members might be attached to a certain organizational culture, and if this culture is affected by a change, resistance might occur. Therefore, it is essential to consider the organizational culture when implementing a change (Palmer, Dunford & Akin 2009), which will be further explored in the next section.

2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In the description of branding, it is clear how symbols and culture play a decisive role. Organizational culture is a key area in organizational science and practices, and is a concept that is sometimes referred to in a vague way, easily used to cover everything or nothing (Alvesson 2013). Organizational culture is a construction of meaning and sense-making and created by shared symbols through shared experiences, and it is expressed in behavior, actions, language, stories and myths. Culture is sometimes used to describe slogans and weak expressions, and may thus be hard to get a grip on (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008).

When taking a cultural approach to change, it involves looking at how the organizational members are interpreting and making sense of the change (Sveningsson & Sörgärde 2013). In order to understand organizational culture, it is therefore important to consider the expressive and symbolic form that represents the employees' feelings and thinking in their everyday life. Meaning is about how an object or expression is interpreted, and it makes an object meaningful. In a cultural context, it is the socially shared meanings that are interesting. A symbol refers to an object that stands for something else, and is rich in meaning as it entails a complex set of meanings (Alvesson 2013; Rafaeli & Worline 2000). However, it is important to be conscious about the fact that the people interpreting the symbols are doing so through their own individual perspective, and they could thus have different meanings depending on their interpretation (Rafaeli & Worline 2000).

Furthermore, culture is both what is going on in the present, as well as a powerful background structure, which influences the people involved in several ways. It is shaped by the individual's own behavior, and continuously reconstructed in the interactions with others. During our socialization, we are taught how we are supposed to act and feel within a given organization in order to preserve the social order, which facilitates the feeling of belongingness and meaning in what we do (Schein 2010).

According to literature on change, it is crucial to take the organizational culture seriously in order to make a change successful. Culture could create problems, and neglecting the culture is often referred to as one of the main reasons for why change efforts fail. It can either obstruct or facilitate the organization's possibility to accomplish change (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008). The cultural dimension is therefore crucial in all aspects of organizational life. Seeing organizations as cultures could result in a richer view of what goes on in the organization regarding feelings, values and behaviors. How the employees think and what they value is guided by beliefs of a cultural and socially shared nature (Alvesson 2013).

COMPLEXITIES OF CULTURE

It is common to view the culture as a 'social glue', meaning that the organization is integrated and controlled by shared values and understandings. In this sense, culture is seen as creating consensus and community, and avoidance of conflicts and tensions (Alvesson 2013). However, it is important to comprehend that organizations are complex and could involve diverse subcultures, and it is hard to understand the organizational culture without taking this under consideration. When the culture is interpreted in different ways, it could lead to a formation of multiple subcultures with shared assumptions of the total organization, together with assumptions reflecting their members' functional tasks or unique experiences (Schein 2010; Guy & Saffold 1988). Therefore, cultural expressions, values, and ideas are not easily ranked and could sometimes be incoherent (Alvesson 2013). The context of the organizational culture comprises a set of interacting subcultures that could have difficulties communicating with each other. If they do not share the same organizational goals, they may get in conflict with each other. It is thus important to not only consider the corporate culture, but also the subcultures and how they interact with each other (Schein 2010).

There is a common assumption that the employees' commitment to same beliefs and values will lead to positive results, since it makes it easier to agree upon goals and facilitates motivation. The culture is thus seen as a building block and is often assumed as good or bad, standing in a simple causal relationship to corporate results. Some researchers also claim that high performance contributes to a strong corporate culture. There may be some connections between corporate culture and performance-motivation, but the causal link cannot be clear and simple; it is rather speculative and uncertain (Alvesson 2013).

When discussing organizational culture, it is common to touch upon the field of identity. It could be complex to distinguish between the two concepts of culture and identity since the notions often overlap each other. Due to this overlapping meaning, culture and identity are often used to define each other, which means that they are also inevitably interrelated (Hatch & Schultz 2002). Culture tends to be too internal and complex in order to influence external communication, and organizational identity is more likely to have a strong link to image and branding since it provides a greater holistic view of the organization's position. Identity is easier to communicate and change, and is focusing on a more specific theme than culture, which covers a broader terrain. Moreover, identity is something that the individuals within an organization decide, and is about how people define themselves through their relationship to the organization, whereas culture is more about the assumptions and meanings that are being taken for granted (Alvesson 2013). In order to clarify the identity concept, there will be a further presentation of the field in the section that follows.

2.4 THE FIELD OF IDENTITY

Identity is a relevant aspect to consider when analyzing organizational change and branding. It can be understood as the answer to questions such as: "Who am I?" as well as "Who are we?" within a certain context. In order to make sense of identity, it is useful to base the analysis on *identity theory* or *social identity theory*. Identity theory origins from a sociological tradition, and social identity theory from a cognitive tradition. Both theories use the same language and expressions, but with different meanings. They also emphasize the multiple self in relation to social contexts in order to convey the relationship between the individual self and social contexts. Even though they both have similarities and perform in a parallel universe, they still act within separate universes (Hogg et al. 1995).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To clarify the identity theory, it is often claimed to be a micro-sociological theory with the aim to describe a person's role behavior, focusing on the relation between the society and the self. The multiple and dynamic forms of self is socially constructed and described as role identities. Identity is the link between individual action and social structure, which is why identity theory work in order to predict role related behavior. When the role behavior is satisfying the individual self, the self-esteem reaches a fruitful outcome. If the role behavior is perceived negatively, this may contribute to poor performance and bad self-esteem. Moreover, role identities are hierarchically organized, which means that those acting in the top due to self-concept are more likely to stronger act in line with the role behavior. Consequently, there is another hierarchy that distinguishes individuals' multiple identities, and thus makes certain role behaviors more prominent than others (Hogg et al. 1995).

Social identity theory, on the other hand, can be explained as a social psychological theory, that is useful to describe intergroup relations and group processes. This implies that an individual identifies the self when relating to the characteristics of a certain group in order to form a self-definition. When a certain social identity becomes salient, this further contributes to the construction of *ingroups* and *outgroups*, distinguished by characteristics connected with the social identity. Social identities are also evaluative as well as self-evaluative, which means that groups use strategies in order to keep the comparisons between ingroup/outgroup, and thus maintain the characteristics of the group and self (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Hogg et al. 1995).

In order to reason for the social identity theory, there are two underlying socio-cognitive processes to emphasize. Firstly, *categorization*, which means that groups create intergroup boundaries, in order to strengthen distinctive group-stereotypes and normative views. Secondly, the process of *self-enhancement*, which can be described as leading the social categorization process, in order to strengthen the stereotypical characteristics of the ingroup. That is, defining their ingroup against relevant outgroups. To describe group behavior, people tend to use the two socio-cognitive processes with subjective belief structures, which also affect the group-evaluation and the self-enhancement. Social identities are also striving towards value, which implies for a competition between groups in order to achieve a positive social identity. This also implies that intergroup relations and social identity are dynamically intertwined (Ashforth & Mael; Hogg et al. 1995). It is shown that organizational socialization is important for new employees, in order to be loyal to the organization and feel one with the

organizational beliefs and values. Additionally, since people have multiple identities, the identities need to be ordered, buffered, and separated, instead of cognitively integrating the identities to avoid conflicts (Ashforth & Mael 1989).

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

In line with the identity literature, organizations have multiple identities, and individuals need to experience and manage several organizational identifications (Pratt 1998). In addition to this, organizational identity is the collective perception by organizational members in order to distinguish the organization from other organizations (Gioia et al. 2000). While identity refers to the question of 'Who am I?', identification takes this question one step further and refers to 'How do I come to know who I am in relation to you?' and thus puts it in a context. Working in an organization, the 'you' in this sense can be explained as the organization (Pratt 1998). Identity is defined as self-referential, but is also argued to be self-reflexive to the question of 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we as an organization?' (Gioia, Patvardhan & Hamilton 2013). In order to explain the nature of identity it may be fruitful to determine the notions as either enduring or continuous. The enduring identity is the one that stays in the organization, while the continuous identity obtains the core values of the identity, but keeps on evolving (Gioia et al. 2000).

All types of identification, both with people and targets, can be understood according to *belief*. This means that it is the personal belief of different contexts that decides the self-defining of the identity. When certain beliefs suddenly change due to contextual issues, this implies that the identification may also change. Identification can be made in two different ways, either as feeling as one with the organization connected with the own self, or changing the self in order to get a stronger fit with the organization. This means that identification also implies perception of people's values, where they are already fitting, or may change in another direction in order to fit (Pratt 1998). Identification can further be distinguished between identification with people and identification with values, goals and objects. In daily life, people are identifying themselves more with social groups and lesser with objects and activities. As organizations may be viewed as socially influenced, this also means that it is easier for employees to identify themselves in social relations (Cheney 1983).

Due to the multiple identities within an organization, it is important to realize that organizational identity is dynamic. Identity is always visible in organizational contexts, and when organizations change, this also changes the identity (Gioia et al. 2013). Organizations need to adapt to the fast-changing environment, which implies a constant movement in the organizational image and the organizational identity. Therefore, the interrelationship between organizational image and identity is facilitating the organizational adaption of keeping up with the environment (Gioia et al. 2000). Organizations' aim is to maintain the identity that is unique compared to other organizations, which is especially important during organizational changes. However, sometimes organizations change in order to find their original identity (Gagliardi 1986).

There is a general understanding within the field of identity claiming that identity conflicts might increase whereas organizations are imprinted by stressful work environments and complex work roles (Fiol, Pratt & O'connor 2009). Just as organizations produce products and services, they also, in a symbolic and meaning-making way, produce people since they shape identities and images. Thus, when producing people, this may create insecurity and anxiety through disciplinary systems affecting trust relations. Insecurity can be viewed according to multiple forms in organizations, such as economic, psychological, existential, and social. These forms may also interact with each other, and thus strengthen the workplace-self and reproduce organizational power-structures (Collinson 2003).

Furthermore, an individual has multiple workplace identities within the self, which means that a person has one identity when working in the workplace, together with a relational identity as a colleague, and a collective identity as an organizational member. These different self-identities are characterized by different frames, references, motivations and demands that may contribute to identity conflicts among the different self (Horton, Saskia Bayerl & Jacobs 2013).

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have presented our theoretical framework, focusing on organizational change connected to branding, culture and identity. These concepts were considered relevant in accordance to our research question. We have seen that moral branding is interrelated with

culture and identity, and since moral branding reaches into people's own moral values, it automatically influences the organizational culture and identity. We have thus found it interesting to explore how culture and identity is understood within the field of organizational science. By putting this within the context of corporate branding, it is apparent how the moral brand may be visible within the organization as a whole, and its influences both from within and beyond the organizational boundary.

We find it interesting to further explore the field of moral branding, as it is a relatively new and unexplored phenomenon. The literature review presented above will guide us through our research, and in the next chapter, a further explanation of our methodological approach will be presented.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this section we will present our choice of methodology, which will be the basis of our analysis. We start by outlining our research process, presenting the research context and our empirical data collection. Thereafter, a description of how we have managed and analyzed the empirical data will be presented. Ultimately, we end the chapter with a critical reflection.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

We will base our study in the interpretive paradigm, which means that we see the world as socially constructed by multiple interpretations (Chalmers 1999), and we are thus not driven towards finding one single truth. In our thesis, we are conscious about how the interpretation of the world is dependent on contextual factors (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009), and that individuals socially construct meaning in their interaction with reality. Our research is based in a qualitative tradition, meaning that we are interested in highlighting the employees' perspective, instead of confirming our own assumptions (Bryman 2008). By adopting this perspective, we do not see the reality as fixed; instead, there are several constructions and interpretations of reality that change over time. Therefore, our aim is to understand these multiple interpretations at a particular time and context. In other words, understanding the meaning of the different experiences by individuals, and how they interact with their social world (Merriam 2002).

Since our strive is to capture the subjective meaning and gain a deeper understanding of the employees' experiences of the organizational change and rebranding, we have adopted a hermeneutic approach, which implies that we see meaning as layered and highly complex, and consider the context in order to understand the meaning of one part. In line with the hermeneutic approach, we have asked questions to the text and listened to it in a dialogic way. When working with this type of method, we are aware that we will not come to a general knowledge conclusion. The study follows an abductive reasoning between data and theory, which means that we collect theory and data in an integrated process (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009). Consequently, our strive is to stay reflexive throughout our study and interpretations of the sampled data, which implicates an awareness of patterns instead of one fixed truth.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

Below, we present our collection of our empirical data as well as our reasoning in accordance to this process. We start by outlining the context of our study, followed by a thorough description of our empirical data collection.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

We base our study on Veggie, a company that is going through a major organizational change, partly in form of a strategic rebranding and expansion. Due to the company's increased advertisement, this is visible externally, and the change is apparent both by its rebranding and remarkable growth, which caught our attention and interest. This, together with the fact that one of us is working in Veggie, is the reason for our choice of company. Because of this direct contact with the company, it became easier for us to gain access to information and respondents within the company. To clarify, in our presentation of the empirical findings and discussion we will refer to 'the product' when talking about Veggie's original product, that also is the foundation for the other products, and 'the products' when talking about their whole range of products.

EMPIRICAL DATA COLLECTION

In our interpretive point of view, we intend to account for the employees' experiences along with the organizational change. Thus, our empirical data is foremost collected from interviews with employees at Veggie, since we believe this to be the best method in order to capture a deeper understanding of their experiences. The interviews could be seen as professional conversations with the purpose to obtain descriptions of the respondents' world. It is however not seen as a conversation between equal partners, as the researcher is the one who defines and controls the situation (Bryman 2008).

Prior to the interviews, we made an interview guide containing questions regarding their own perceptions of their work situation. The interview guide was shaped in line with our research question and was used in all interviews. During the interviews we strove to be as open as possible in order to encourage the respondents to tell their own stories and capture their own interpretations. Furthermore, we also made sure to critically follow up the respondents'

answers. It was therefore relevant for us to use semi-structured interviews, where the questions were decided but not necessarily strictly followed. Hence, the interview guide was used as a tool for us in order to keep track of our research topic, and to ensure not missing out or misunderstanding a phenomena or being too structured (Ryen 2004).

One of the challenges during our interviews was the fact that the respondents had different ways of expressing themselves. Some of them were very talkative while others were less talkative. This affected the way in which we approached them and asked our questions. In interviews were the respondents were short in their answers we were often longer in our questions and the other way around. Furthermore, we chose to see the interviews as a journey leading us through the conversations and letting the interviews be dialogues where we were wandering together with the respondents. Seeing the interviews as journeys made us stay open and responsive towards their stories about the organization (Kvale 1996). Before the interviews, we decided that only two of us should participate in the interviews, as we believed that three people could make the respondents feel uncomfortable and contribute to an unwanted power relation (Bryman 2008). We also decided that the one of us with a history in the company should not participate in the interviews. This in order to avoid that the personal relationship with the employees should have an impact on the interviews and the respondents answers.

During the interviews, one person conducted the interview by asking questions, and the other person took notes. Further, most of the interviews were held in separate conference rooms and some in the respondents' own offices. This may be fruitful for the interviews as it probably led to the respondents feeling more safe and relaxed (Bryman 2008). All interviews were held in Swedish as all participants, both interviewers and respondents, had Swedish as their mother tongue. We believe that this facilitated our interpretation process of the interviews, as we could understand and translate all responses from the same language into English. We also used idiomatic translation when citing the respondents in our analysis, meaning that we translated their Swedish expression into an equivalent expression in English, simply in order to make the expression understandable in English and facilitate the reading.

SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS

One of the most salient characteristics of Veggie's change is their relocation of some departments from the main site to a new, additional site in a larger city. This means that the company is located in two different cities, and when sampling respondents for our interviews, we made sure to contact employees in both sites. This was done in order to embrace the employees' interpretation of this new situation from the both sites. All interviews began with a brief introduction of ourselves and our thesis project and continued with asking the respondents if they agreed to being recorded and ensuring their anonymity of our project. In this thesis, we have decided to ensure both the employees and the company's anonymity by renaming the company to Veggie, and giving the respondents fictive names. When mentioning the company's two different sites in the thesis, we will refer to them as site A and site B.

Our first contact with the company was held in February with a colleague to one of the authors in the thesis group. After the first interview with this person, we got recommendations of other employees to interview. We contacted them ourselves through e-mail, which gave us some more influence on whom to choose and ensure a spread of our respondents working in all the different departments. We believe that this gave us a wide range of perspectives, experiences and perceptions.

We chose to interview people with varying positions with different grades of responsibility, and in different departments; Commercial, Business Administration, HR, Supply Chain, Customer Relations, Warehouse, Innovation, Security and Quality Control. In total we interviewed 13 employees, both females and males from the two sites. We held 8 interviews in site A and 5 interviews in site B. Some of the respondents had been in the company for several years, a few even from the very beginning, and some only for a couple of months. We see this as beneficial for our study as it makes it easier to ensure more than one truth or side of the story, than if the respondents only would represent one or few departments (see Alvesson 2009).

ADDITIONAL DATA COLLECTION

When visiting the two sites, we have also been observing the company internally as a complement to the interviews. We got the opportunity to walk around and see their working environment, which gave us an insight in the internal atmosphere among the employees and how they interacted with each other. We have also reflected upon the differences and similarities in the interior design between the sites, and whether this could affect the workplace. The observations have contributed to a richer overall picture of the company, as well as patterns of similarities and differences in the working environment between the sites. In order to capture our reflections, we have been taking field notes as well as regularly writing memos in order to be reflexive about our findings.

In addition to this, we have also collected articles, internal document regarding the change, and social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, which has given us a deeper insight in the company and their internal and external communication. Due to this, we have been able to capture some salient characteristics of the company that have given us an insight in how and why Veggie's brand could be seen as a moral brand. In their communication, the company is actively presenting statements regarding environmental and nutritional concerns. The company has created forums in social media channels, where they are engaging their consumers in these matters, which we have observed regularly during our research process.

3.3 MANAGING & ANALYZING THE EMPIRICAL DATA

When the interviews were completed, they were transcribed in order to facilitate an accurate and detailed analysis (Bryman 2008). This helped us analyze the transcriptions of the interviews as different texts, in which meaning emerged through the process of interpretation. The different parts of the texts may therefore be understood as pieces of a pattern, which led to further analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

After the transcription, we made an initial coding of the interviews by coding them into three themes that we found salient in our empirical data; change, culture and identity. When reading the material, we constantly wrote memos and comments on our thoughts and how we made the connections, as well as why they were relevant for our further analysis. In addition to this, parts of the interviews and quotes were selected and divided into categories according to their

similarities and differences, which facilitated the finding of patterns. This made it easier to find it later and to discuss different quotes with each other.

When documenting our empirical findings, our empirical material was analyzed based in our theories. We created a first draft of our findings that were printed out in order to further analyze it. From this second analysis, we found new salient themes that became the basis for the next chapter. The same process was made during the creation of our discussion and analysis chapter. By doing so, we gained a deeper understanding of our empirical data, which we believe facilitated our analysis and reflexivity.

The fact that we have kept an open mind towards our material along the way, has helped us to see new themes and theories that was interesting to develop further. An example of this is the focus of moral branding, which was something that emerged from our initial interpretation of the empirical findings and even more when we analyzed our data.

3.4 CRITICAL REFLECTION

Qualitative research should be seen as interpretive research and must be analyzed from the aspect that it is affected by the researchers, their pre-assumptions, and their understanding of the world they are living in. We believe that the data we have sampled is authentic in the sense that we do not believe the respondents have had any interest in misleading us or manipulate their stories. However, we have been critical towards our sources in order to gain an authentic data. During the interviews we have continuously kept a critical perspective in mind towards the respondents' descriptions to avoid glorified stories. Since memories often can play tricks with people's individual beliefs, it is important to stay source-critical when checking the material and not accepting the source as one single truth (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

Furthermore, reflexivity is an important part of the knowledge creating process. Due to the fact that one of us already had a pre-understanding and knowledge about the organization, and knew some of the respondents, we were conscious that this would be brought into the research. To cope with this bias, this author documented field-notes about her knowledge of the company, in order to inform the rest of the thesis group, and to make sure that everyone

had the same understanding of the company before the research process. However, we were aware of and open to that our frame of reference are transforming when new facts emerge during the process. Further, we realize how the understanding constantly must refer to the prior understanding, and the new understanding must influence the prior understanding. We have also regularly been ventilating and discussing our biases together as a group and been self-reflexive during the whole analyzing and writing process. We also acknowledge the fact that we are interpreting other people's interpretations and this, as mentioned before, should not be seen as representing the whole company's experience (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

Veggie's new strategy has made them more visible on the market because of their new marketing strategy and launch of the new brand. Thus, their marketing activities with statements about their standpoints might have affected our pre-understanding of the company, something we have been aware of when collecting our data. All three of us have a great interest in healthy food and are conscious about the environment. Consequently, there is a chance that we have, in some aspects, a glorified image of the company that acts in line with our personal values. We thus regularly need to remind ourselves about having a critical perspective. It is also important to mention that Veggie's organizational change is still ongoing by the time of our research, which may have affected our data.

All three of us are master students in business administration, and have theoretical knowledge about organizational change and its affection on culture, both negatively and positively. These biases may have affected the way we interpret both the empirical data and our theories, which we have been conscious and reflexive about during our research process. We have attempted to look beyond the texts and be "in" the project instead of trying to define a specific reality in our object of study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009). Henceforth, we will constantly be looking "beyond" our material and its ambiguous characteristics and try to avoid naivety by emphasizing on several perspectives in order to provide a richer and nuanced view on our material (Alvesson 2003).

In order to achieve sincerity in our research, we have been self-reflexive and transparent with our biases. We aim to give a thick description of our research findings in order to make them trustworthy and achieve credibility, meaning that we try to show rather than tell as much details as possible so that the readers can come to their own conclusions. The fact that we are using different data sources and are three people with different interpretations may further

contribute to the credibility of our research and ensuring that our findings are authentic (Tracy 2010; Bryman 2008).

When it comes to the generalizability of a study, it is often referred to quantitative research with potential for being valuable across other context. This is not applicable for qualitative research because of its emphasis on gaining culturally situated knowledge, but it can still generate knowledge that can be useful in other contexts. We do not seek to generalize across different cases, but rather within them by talking about a small instance that is put in a larger context. Our interest has thus been to gather a contextual understanding rather than generalizability (Tracy 2010; Bryman 2008).

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter we will present the case of Veggie. The chapter is divided into four sections, starting with a description of the organizational change followed by a section about the identity-shift and identity struggles. Thereafter, we will present the company's two sites, which will be referred to as site A (the original site), and site B (the new site). This is followed by a section about the cultural alignment in Veggie.

4.1 THE CHANGE - REBRANDING & EXPANSION

Veggie is operating in a market where people are getting more conscious about their environment and health, which has contributed to an increased interest in products that meet this demand. Hence, the market Veggie operates in is imprinted by a rapidly growing competition with entrance of new competitors. This was further explained by Matthew, working in site A, who mentioned that Veggie did no longer stand out from the crowd and was starting to become mainstream. Thus, the board of directors at Veggie decided that they needed to go through a radical change in order to stay competitive, a change that was characterized as fast and revolutionary because of their new bold marketing approach. As one of the respondent declared:

> "We have the vision of upgrading people's life, health, as well as the planet [...] and we wanted to be perceived as something real, clean and healthy [...] and now we have started to display ourselves, and make us visible in many different ways [...] and how you look at Veggie now, I believe it is seen as a small, bold, Swedish company, that is a bit hip and that we have created a hype that is built by our marketing and communication" (Simon, working in site B)

The new strategy implied an entire change in the design of Veggie's products and logo, and the only thing that remained was the name of the company and the product itself. As Patrick, working in site B, mentioned, their packages are now covered with bold expressions and are seen as a perfect way for Veggie to market itself. As a complement to their packages, Veggie also started advertising in social media and TV, where the company are using slogans that stands out from the crowd, causing attention from the public. As far as we have seen, Veggie

has created debates in social media, mainly on Facebook and Instagram, where consumers are being engaged and creating communities. For example, Veggie invites their consumers to influence the product development as well as in social debates regarding health and environmental matters. In order to strengthen the feeling of the Veggie-community, the company further created the expression of being 'Veggiefied'. They also opened an online-store, where they are selling clothes covered with Veggie slogans. The new strategy includes full transparency about the company as well as the content of its products. One of the respondents explains the new approach by saying:

> "The transparency is an important part, [...] before we had belt and braces, but now we actually dare to stick our neck out and talk about it" (Miranda, working in site A)

Originally, Veggie was a company mainly focused on being a food company, developing quality products directed primarily towards vegans and people with lactose intolerance. When implementing the change, the company aimed to broaden their target group by enhancing how the products would improve people's lives. The change led to a switch, focusing more on the external market demands. As a result of this, they increased their advertising in social media and thus improved their visibility. Jennifer working in site A mentions how some of their consumers are highly engaged in their social debates about their products, and almost act as ambassadors when showing strong commitment to the products. This has sometimes led to Veggie changing things in their product due to these demands from their consumers.

The change started about two years ago when the board decided to hire a new CEO to lead the company in a new direction. The CEO was seen as a visionary with a talent in making sure everyone was included in the change and felt important to the company, a perception that has been expressed by several respondents. As one of them explains:

> "He has such an incredible social ability, in a way that makes you feel appreciated, that you are valuable in the daily work. I don't believe that this would have worked if he hadn't managed to involve everyone. He has managed to make the idea trustworthy the whole time" (Jennifer, working in site A)

The new CEO started out by holding an inspirational presentation, as well as launching a change book, in order to motivate the employees. The book was created with the aim to bring

about a feeling of the change and its visions, and to make sure the employees understood the reason for the change. The majority of the respondents have expressed how they had an understanding for why the change was implemented. However, some of them mention that they were critical in the beginning:

> "If I've been comfortable with it? Absolutely not (laughs)! No, honestly, I can't say that I've been that at all. I have been a bit old, and been thinking that this can result in anything. It has been very radical changes that have been made, to restructure the whole company with the logo and the packages and the statements and everything. What will happen to our current consumers and how will everyone react? [...] but it has turned out to be good, I guess I was more pessimistic in the beginning." (Angela, working in site A)

In order to cope with the new external strategy, the management of Veggie decided to create a new internal structure of the company, which implied that some positions were removed and some were changed. The sales and marketing department merged into a commercial department and was moved to a new site in a larger city. This was made in order to stay closer to the consumers, having greater networking possibilities, and being more available for consumer. However, it was expressed by some respondents that they perceived the internal communication as weak during the change, and a difficulty in knowing what has been going on in the company and why certain decisions were made.

> "Could have gotten more information. Sometimes it was quiet during longer periods of time [...] maybe one would have wished that the communication would have been more often and more clear, that is what I would have wished during the process" (Kate, working in site B)

Some of the respondents also experience a lack in the communication between the different departments in the company, and mention that it is sometimes difficult to know what is occurring in other parts of the company.

BALANCING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL NEEDS

In the case of Veggie, where the company needs to be responsive towards their consumers as well as their organizational members, we have seen that some of the employees are concerned about the new external approach and feel that the company has directed the focus externally, and thus forgotten about listening to the internal needs. As one of the respondents mentions:

> "You felt very welcome [...]. Now it has shifted, it is no longer, I no longer feel that you, now you're looking more at trends, you are not looking inwards, you're looking outside of the company all the time when taking decisions and, what is right at the market" (Carmen, working in site B)

However, even though some of the respondents acknowledge that there is a greater focus externally than internally, they also express a strong cultural alignment to the brand values. Some respondents believe that the new brand could be seen as an enhancement of the company's true identity. When asking the respondents about the organizational values, most of them refer to what the product stands for, namely something healthy, sustainable and environment-friendly. The brand values could thus be seen as having influenced the whole organization since the employees seemingly are embracing them.

Furthermore, when asking about describing Veggie internally, one respondent reaches out for a package covered with bold statements of the product, and states: "This is Veggie" (Simon, working in site B), meaning that this is what the company is about. This clearly shows how the externally communicated statements may be seen as essential for the internal values, and the rebranding could be viewed as incorporating the internal culture. During the interviews, the majority of the respondents perceive the change as a natural development of the company, and the new brand is seen as an extension of what the Veggie represents. This implicates that even though the brand could be seen as externally driven, it has created a cultural alignment to the brand. As the following quote shows, the new image could be seen as an enhancement of the original identity of Veggie:

> "I believe that we now, after this change, we are back to what it was from the beginning, even though a bit tougher and some would even say aggressive [...] but it's like coming home. That's my feeling about it." (Matthew, working in site A)

The change of the brand and the new external approach have further broadened Veggie's target group and increased their sales, which has affected the internal environment and culture. The management considered that they needed to work faster, increase their production and be more innovative in the processes in order to cope with the new circumstances. One respondent exemplifies this by saying:

> "The CEO's fast development, striving forward, reach out to more, demands that [...] he wants to release products fast, and if you want to follow our processes as we have been working before, it takes a year to create a new product. That time does not exist today. [...] and it is important that we keep our image of high quality" (Jennifer, working in site A).

This has created a sense of anxiety among some of the respondents, mostly regarding the possibility of keeping the quality of the products when the production is increasing rapidly. The shift towards the work environment becoming more fast-moving contributed to an extensive workload. This, together with a pressure to always perform in line with the new external image has resulted in frustration among some of the respondents. As stated above, the new external approach has thus affected the internal culture of Veggie in many different ways that also may have an immediate affect on the organizational identity, which could have resulted in an identity-shift.

4.2 IDENTITY SHIFT & IDENTITY STRUGGLES

In the beginning of the change process, there was a general concern about the direction of the change. Some employees felt an insecurity and fear regarding their own role within the company as well as the future of Veggie. Angela, working in site A, mentions how she was questioning why they should risk the company's stability at the market and do this radical change, a change that was seen as risky and bold. The restructuring of some positions also led to that some employees were given notice. This further contributed to insecurity within the company, and as one states;

> "Of course there are some insecurities when some of your colleagues had to go and some stayed, and after a while, the ones that didn't fit in this new way of thinking and couldn't let go of the 'old' had to quit" (Simon, working in site B)

As shown in this quote, it is clear that some employees were not considered as adaptive to the change by the management as they needed to be. It was also claimed in some interviews that being part of Veggie's culture means being adaptive to change since Veggie is an innovative, entrepreneurial and fast-changing company.

> "Changes might scare people [...] but if you're working at Veggie, you can't be afraid of it. Because then you don't fit here and then you have to search for something else" (Susan, working in site A).

In our interviews, it was mentioned how some of the employees were given notice during the change or left by their own will. As the quote implies above, the employees that had to go were the ones that did not identify with the new direction.

In relation to the change at Veggie, the majority of the decisions are made faster than before, which has led to a difficulty for everyone being involved in all the decision-making. Prior to the change, the decision-making as more structured, and some of the respondents mentions how they felt more included before the change. As Miranda, working in site A, mentions, it is a typical 'Veggie-thing' to be highly committed to the company. Therefore, when they are not involved in all decisions they get frustrated and feel left out.

Some of the employees have the feeling that the decisions are made due to external demands rather than looking at internal demands, which is conflicting with the 'Veggie-thing' to be highly committed in all decision-making. In general, the respondents felt positive towards the new direction of Veggie, but some express a concern about the results of the change and how it will affect their way of working, and one mentions:

> "It's comfortable having a structure and knowing that this is our direction and this is how we should work [...] so if you have your plan, how annoying is it then if someone says 'no, by the way, we were supposed to work in this direction instead' and then you're supposed to run even though you have put a lot of effort on the other direction" (Angela, working in site A)

This statement exemplifies how some of the respondents have a feeling of frustration towards the new way of working, since the working assignments are not as clear as before. It seems like they want to preserve the 'old' culture of Veggie, where the routines were more

structured with a stronger focus on working as a group. Even though they want to keep the old way of working, they still want to develop and follow the new strategy. However, when following the new strategy, they find it difficult to retain the old culture within the new strategy.

As a result of the change, some of the respondents express a sense of confusion regarding their own new roles as well as their colleagues' roles within Veggie. When asking the question regarding a typical working day, most of our respondents are laughing and having a hard time describing their working roles. Their roles could thus be seen as somewhat ambiguous, and it is hard to find a balance between the old and new identity role within their workplace. Another respondent, stating that Veggie has experienced an identity-shift as a result of the change, further describes this:

> "There is an identity-shift [...] and also this insecurity, what will happen in the future, what will happen to us, what will happen to our amazing company, where everyone feels included? That's where I believe there is a sense of fear and insecurity." (Sarah, working in site B)

Some respondents also express a frustration about not always knowing who to contact when working with a certain project, since they still have not fully determined the working roles within the company. This could also be a result of that Veggie hired several new employees in a short amount of time, which adds a confusion regarding 'Who does what?' and 'Who are my colleagues?'. We have perceived confusion among the respondents. What holds them together could be the common belief in Veggie's purpose, as well as the engagement of the CEO is described as a highly appreciated and motivating factor.

> "He is incredibly talented in recognizing all the details of what everyone does [...] he creates a feeling of that you mean something, and I think everyone agree with this [...] he has a social ability making sure that you feel appreciated, that you are very important in this work. I don't believe that it would have worked if he wouldn't have been like that, the fact that he makes everyone feel included." (Jennifer, working in site A)

4.3 THE TWO SITES ‐ OLD VS. NEW VEGGIE

One of the most salient aspects of Veggie's organizational change is the separation of the company into two sites. This change resulted in mixed reactions. Some of the respondents agree with the reason for moving the site, while some of them, mostly those working at the old site A, are critical towards the move. As one of the respondents mentions: "We once said that we always were supposed to be here, and everything were supposed to happen here" (Tim, working in site A), which indicates a feeling of being left out, and other respondents showed a fear of Veggie becoming disunited.

It was also salient in the interviews that the majority of the strategic decisions are now being made in site B, as a contrast to when Veggie only operated in site A. This could be an additional aspect of why some of the respondents are feeling excluded. However, this could be understood as a natural reaction due to the geographical distance between the two sites. The management has tried to solve this by creating videoconference rooms and an internal communication channel where they all can share ideas and news. The meaning of these communication solutions were to implement a way to facilitate the personal meetings among the employees, which many respondents mention always has been a central part of Veggie's culture and creates a sense of togetherness.

However, some of the respondents mention how they miss the personal meetings, and as John, working in site A, explains: "We have sporadic mail contact, but sometimes it feels, it's annoying with mail-contact because you don't know who the person is, only that it is a colleague". Although they still have personal contacts within their own departments, there is an absence of this type of contact with the other site. It is also mentioned how many decisions are being made in informal meetings, such as coffee breaks, and as one respondent states:

> "If you're not at the right place at the right time, you won't get the information [...] if you have not been at a coffee break or at the office one day, then you haven't got the information, and then you don't know anything" (Carmen, working in site B)

Before the change, these informal meetings occurred in site A, but after the move, most of them are now taking place in site B. This could be a result of the new way of working, which implies a need for fast decision-making, and thus everyone cannot be included.

> "There is something special with this company since everyone is very involved in the work, which also becomes a challenge, because then everyone wants to know everything about everything and then communication becomes very important. And then I feel that we are a very fast-growing company who are suffering from some growing pains" (Miranda, working in site A)

This quote indicates a strong engagement of the employees, and how they have started to understand that it is no longer possible to be involved in every decision and meeting in the company. As Miranda, working in site A, mentions, this could be seen as a challenge as it differs from Veggie's original culture.

THE CREATION OF SUBCULTURES

In our interpretation, the separation into two sites has resulted in a development of two subcultures. To quote some of the respondents:

> "Well, you are a bit afraid of that now when we are sitting in different places and are growing so much, that we will grow apart from each other. There is one Veggie down in site B and then there is one Veggie here." (Angela, working in site A).

> "When you are here, it is almost like (site A) doesn't exist, it's only a production site" (Carmen, working in site B)

> "I mean, there's no office, it's only the production. [...] We only have that department to clarify" (Kate, working in site B, talking about site A)

Our respondents describe how the culture in site A is imprinted by the original way of working at Veggie, where everything is based on quality, seriousity and accuracy. Some of the employees working in site A claims that they are the ones knowing Veggie by heart:

> "Here, we are more of the original Veggie [...] which means that the old core that was and still is Veggie is not in the heart of those in site B" (Elisabeth, working in site A).

According to Simon, working in site B, the two sites communicate and operate in different ways. In our interpretation, site B is imprinted by being playful, fast-paced and acting as the

company's external image. When visiting this site, which now is located in a large and modern media industry center, we were faced by an office characterized with a propulsive atmosphere. To clarify this, one of the respondents express:

> "It becomes like two different sites, when coming back to (site A) you feel how it was and recognize this mood, and when you come here, it is a completely different atmosphere. For good and for bad. But there is a difference, significant difference" (Carmen, working in site B)

Some respondents express that the company's values are implemented "in the walls" in site A and that everyone working there know them by heart. One respondent states that:

> "Here we are many from the old Veggie which makes this old core that was Veggie, and still is Veggie for us, is not in the heart of those in site B in the same way" (Angela, working in site A)

This further adds to the perception of site A as the 'old', original site and site B as the 'new' site. However, what does not seem to be taken into consideration when making such statements, is that many of the employees working in the new site actually have worked at Veggie before the change, and could thus be seen as what the respondents define as 'old Veggie-people'.

Some respondents working in site A mention that their colleagues from site B do not visit them in site A, and they also feel that it is complicated to visit the other site B. It is apparent in our interviews how it is less common to drop by the other site, although the majority feel welcome visiting the other site. The reason for this could be the simple fact that some of them do not have work responsibilities that includes a direct contact with the other site. Furthermore, some of the respondents have had more influence in the change process than others. These people also proved to be understanding and open towards the other site and not seeing the separation of the two sites as problematic.

"US" AND "THEM"

From what we have seen, the separation of the company into two sites seems to have created a feeling of 'us' and 'them'. Some of the respondents working in site A are talking about site B

as if they are working in another company, and the other way around. One way of exemplifying this is when one of the respondents in site A states that there is no need to talk with the ones working in site B since they do not have anything in common:

> "Everyone that are down there in site B are the new Veggie, while we that are sitting here are the old Veggie-people that has more information about what Veggie always has been" (Angela, working in site A)

Carmen, who is working in site B, claims that her site has the new culture, while site A has the old. As one respondent states "It is almost like we are on two different boats" (Miranda, working in site A), and during the interviews, the respondents have often referred to the different sites as 'us' and 'them', which further shows how they could have developed two subcultures.

> "It's not only two different buildings, it's also two completely different businesses [...] here it's a lot of marketing and creativity [...] and I believe that there's a risk for two different cultures because of these totally different businesses. [...] and it depends on the people working there as well [...] and there is a challenge of keeping the company together." (Patrick, working in site B)

The comparison of the two sites was also visible when some respondents from site A defined themselves as the 'real Veggie' compared to site B. Respondents from site B, on the other hand, also define themselves as the 'real Veggie', referring to the new marketing approach that they are strongly connected with, which according to some shows the original identity of Veggie. One of the respondents states the following:

> "It is actually not such a bad description that with the new and old Veggie because everyone who is down there in (site B) is the new Veggie, while we sitting here are old Veggie-people [...] We have more knowledge about what Veggie always has been, and what is behind much of why we have this type of product, and why we do what we do with it, and what has been discussed before, about the different products and ideas, a background knowledge the new employees might not have. Quite naturally, they do have a different image of Veggie." (Angela, working in site A)

This further shows that there is a categorization between the old and the new employees. The 'new' is referring to the employees that have started their employment when parts of the company were moved to site B. The categorized group of the new employees is something that is strongly highlighted in the interviews, and there is a concern that the new employees are missing out on the meaning of the products. From what we have seen, there is a concern regarding the new employees' knowledge about the original history of Veggie, where some of the respondents express fear of what will happen to the product. Since such a big part of Veggie's new strategy is to have true knowledge about the product in order to be transparent, some express a concern regarding if the new employees are able to have this true knowledge. One respondent questions whether they can represent Veggie if they do not have the core of the company within them.

> "It's important that you can trust us. That's a part of Veggie, [...] I thus believe that they need to have a deeper [...] knowledge, so that they have it themselves and [...] It's a part of the transparency, to be able to answer questions and be open." (Angela, working in site A)

Many of the respondents express a belief that the introduction process is important for the new employees in order to be a part of the culture. It is however hard to find time to this because of the fast pace, which one of the respondents further clarifies:

> "It is the introduction process that needs to be better, that even if you are employed here (site A) or in site B you need to get a face on the person" and continues by saying that; "My experience is that this is not working due to the fact that we are running as fast as we are, and that is what I believe is the big threat" (John, working in site A)

4.4 THE VEGGIE FAMILY

The culture of Veggie appeared to be imprinted by the history of the company. The founders seem to have established a meaning of the company that influenced the culture. This history could be seen as essential for the culture and the respondents express a strong pride of being a part of Veggie. Matthew, working in site A, states that the employees in Veggie have always done everything by themselves, something they are very proud of. They have together created and developed the products, and when the business started to go well, they also built their

own production site (site A). We have seen signs of a pride in the culture of Veggie that implies that the products and everything around them are created by the 'Veggie family'. One respondent gave the following description of Veggie's organizational culture:

> "Well, it's like a family. In a family you have a mum, dad and children, but everyone are together. Mum and dad are directing when it's needed [...] and this is how everyone acts within Veggie, we are all working together and we are all having our small children, even the CEO that is the leader he is [...] taking on the role of a parent and gives direction only when it's needed. This is how I perceive it" (John, working in site A).

This pride of the company's autonomy and unified feeling of working 'in a family' is something that we have interpreted as highly imprinted in the organizational culture. During the interviews, the brand that the employees identified themselves with is put in relation to other companies. What unified them is an overall pride of the company and the products, which implies that the employees feel a strong identity with the organization and its values. It has been clear that the respondents feel a strong connection with the product since it is something they strongly believe in:

> "This is a product that I can stand for, so I am very proud over it and it feels good to tell people that I work for Veggie with our products."
> (Carmen, working in site B)

> "It's not possible to dislike the product in itself, it's harmless."
> (Sarah, working in site B)

> "This product should get the chance that it deserves"
> (Matthew, working in site A)

Throughout the interviews, we have noticed a sense of an almost spiritual way of referring to the product as something more than just a business. Sometimes, it is almost like they are talking about a living person instead of a product. What is apparent here is the fact that some respondents are mentioning the product as the source of why they are proud of working at Veggie, something that the majority of the respondents express.

> "Before, people didn't know what Veggie was [...] but now, it's the opposite - it is like 'oh, nice, you work for Veggie, I have seen that on TV' that's cool.

> It's actually quite fun, because it's a company that has become known and
> that is quite fun actually." (Carmen, working in site B)

When Veggie now has grown and become externally visible, this has also developed and encouraged the employees' belief in the product. Our observations of Veggie's social media channels, shows a strong engagement from their consumers, which confirms the goodness of the product.

One of the respondents express a fear of losing their old consumers due to the new brand strategy, and explains how she feels like it almost is a bad thing talking about Veggies original focus on allergies and intolerance stating that:

> "I'm a bit torn because it has almost become something bad talking about the
> lactose intolerance and gluten intolerance and all of that" (Jennifer, working
> in site A).

This shows how the focus on the interest of the consumers could be seen as influencing the internal company. The original aim of the product may be conflicting the employees' feeling towards the new strategy. Although all the respondents mention how they are positive towards Veggie's new direction, many of them are still expressing a concern of the company's future. Some respondents are anxious about losing the original vision of the company during the change, and how it could affect the product negatively. They seem protective of the product and the company, due to their passion and engagement.

It seems that the respondents have personified the brand, and they show a great pride of being a part of Veggie. "It should feel authentic, it should feel real, because we are real" (Simon, working in site B). This expression about the authenticity is seen in other interviews as well, indicating the employees' feelings of believing in the brand and its values. A few of the respondents also showed a fear of risking the authenticity and quality in the products when moving too fast as a result of the change, which could be understood as a concern of not being able to fulfill the new image. In relation to this, there has been a repeating metaphor of 'running too fast' and 'running in the same direction' during the interviews, which refers to the respondents' aim of making sure that the pace of the change will not affect the product.

Veggie's work model appear to be imprinted by their brand, and the employees express that being a part of the company contributes to making the world a better place. As one respondent states:

> "We are [...] doing something good for the world, it is about that we are a part of changing it [...] by just using our products" (Sarah, working in site B)

This is an example of how some respondents highlight the products as the source of the company's goodness. Also, as mentioned before, the majority of the respondents are referring to the product when answering the question about the company's values, which further shows how important the product seem to be for the organizational culture. One respondent confirms this by saying:

> "Veggie is and will continue to be a very serious company, and it is very important grounds that we stand for, health and environment and changing the world" (Patrick, working in site B)

The respondents show the same engagement and passion for the product, and they express the same reason for their work motivation, which could be exemplified with one comment from a respondent:

> "We have been expanding by our own force, and that is also what I think is imprinting [...] the organizational values [...]. I believe this is the reason why the force is so strong here, that you might have noticed, that people have actually felt that they can make a difference when working here." (Matthew, working in site A)

During the interviews, all respondents talk about a conference occurring twice a year. All respondents state that this conference is important in order to maintain the fellowship and the organizational culture within the company. During one of the conferences, the employees created organizational values, which were supposed to show the direction of the employee alignment during and after the change. However, when we ask the respondents about the organizational values during the interviews, only one could describe the company's official values. The other respondents refer to values connected with the product, which proves the power of the product.

4.5 SUMMARY

The presentation of the empirical findings shows the respondents' perception of Veggie's rebranding and expansion, and what this change means for the organizational culture and identity. The overall perception of the change is that the respondents are positive towards the direction, and the rebranding is seen as an enhancement of the original meaning of the company. It appeared that Veggie has a strong organizational culture with highly engaged employees, who are proud of working in the company.

As a result of the new marketing approach, Veggie is becoming more visible in social media channels. This creates a sort of Veggie-community with engaging consumers, which further contributes to a confirmation of the perceived goodness of the company. As a result of the external marketing approach, the company is facing challenges when balancing the external and internal needs. The rebranding and expansion could also be seen as resulting in an identity-shift and two subcultures, and changed working roles within Veggie.

Furthermore, the overall belief of the respondents is that working at Veggie equals changing the world and being authentic. Due to our interpretation, the source of doing something good could be seen as strongly connected with the product. We have further seen that they are connecting the goodness of the company with the brand values. In contrast to this, we have also presented how this strong engagement creates a concern regarding how the change could affect the product and the original vision of the company. The empirical findings will be further discussed and analyzed in accordance to our research question in the next chapter.

5 DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

In this chapter we will take our empirical findings one step further by applying our theoretical framework. We will discuss and analyze how the moral brand is related to Veggie's organizational culture and identity and how they were affected during the rebranding and expansion. Further, we discuss the moral brand as a unifying force, and how the product appeared to be a central part in the moral brand values.

5.1 A MORAL BRAND CULTURE

According to our empirical findings, it seems that Veggie has a strong corporate moral brand. The brand values were visible in the organizational culture and identity, and could thus be seen as interrelated with the brand. In contrast to having a brand that only has external affection, the result of our interviews clearly suggest how Veggie's brand also influences the company internally as a whole, which is typical for a corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009).

Veggie's organizational change did not involve a change of the products per se, instead, we interpret that the company has attached a meaning to the brand by using the company's values. Our interviews indicated how some respondents experienced the rebranding as an enhancement of the company's true identity, claiming that it was an extension of what Veggie represents. This indicates how the external brand also reaches internally in Veggie in line with corporate branding (Hatch & Schultz 2003; 2009). When describing the organizational culture, the respondents were primarily referring to the brand values, which further shows how the brand seemingly has influenced the internal culture and identity.

The overall impression in our interviews was that the respondents expressed strong feelings towards the brand and some even mentioned that working for Veggie was equal to doing something good in the world. This, together with them talking enthusiastically about the brand, implies that the employees feel that they are being a part of what the brand express. Our interpretation is thus that the employees are embodying the brand. All of this is typical for a moral brand as the employees' moral becomes unified with the organizational moral.

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When living the brand and engaging in its values, the employees may be seen as co-creating and reproducing the moral brand. The respondents' passion for the company appeared to create extra value to the moral brand, which in some respects may be a way to shape and thus control the moral brand (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006).

Furthermore, what may distinguish Veggie's moral brand from an aesthetic brand is the perception of being authentic and real (Morsing 2006), something that several respondents have expressed. The strategy of being transparent may add extra value to the company's authenticity, as it creates an image of being honest. In our interviews, Veggie was described as taking social responsibility, by engaging in social debates about food consumption and its impact on the environment, which is typical for a company with a moral brand. We also noticed that the goodness of the product was prominent in all conversations with the respondents. All of this indicates that Veggie can be claimed to have a moral brand culture, since its culture seems to be constructed by the moral brand values (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006).

The strong engagement in Veggie further implies that the company in one way could be described as having created people, meaning that it is producing people by shaping images and identities in the same way it is producing products (Collinson 2003). Our interpretation is that Veggie has shaped the employees into 'Veggie-people'. The moral brand values seem to be deeply rooted in the culture, and the employees find their identities when identifying with the moral brand values (Hogg et al. 1995). It was evident how the respondents constantly referred to the moral brand values, and some even mentioned typical Veggie-behaviors. This indicates that the employees, by being strongly attached to the moral brand values, may be interpreted as being shaped into Veggie-people in the 'Veggie-family'.

The employees' self-expressions seem to come from the identification with the moral brand values, and when talking about Veggie, the respondents referred to the company and its product in an almost spiritual way. This could be seen as if they are led by a normative control, where the employees are unconsciously following the brand values. They may be facing an ultimatum whereas they need to either rely on the company and 'do the right thing' or simply leave (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006). This was also confirmed by some respondents mentioning that those who did not adapt to the new work model, consequently left the company.

When the respondents were talking about Veggie, they described the company as a community, and some even referred to it as a family. When being in this type of community, employees may be living the brand values and strengthening the relation to the moral brand (Morsing 2006). Veggie's new marketing approach contributed to an external confirmation, which the respondents mentioned increased their pride for the company. When the moral brand is confirmed by their consumers and brand communities, it appears to become meaningful and legitimate for the employees, which inspires them to further embody the brand (Jeanes 2013). Therefore, the external confirmation seems to have strengthened the brand charisma, and made the employees more enthusiastic about their work (Hatch & Schultz 2013).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRODUCT

Something that was striking in the interviews was how the product appeared to play an evident role in Veggie's moral brand, as well as in the respondents' identification with the company. It was interesting how the respondents expressed a strong belief and pride connected to the product. This could be seen in contrast to a general view in the field of organizational research, saying that it is easier and more common for people to identify themselves with social groups instead of objects and activities within an organization (Cheney 1983). In the case of Veggie, the product was central in the conversations, and the respondents talked about it as if it was a living person that should get the chance that it deserves. Since the moral brand was connected to the product, it could be understood as if the product is living the brand values and is similar to a social relation. This may facilitate the identification with the product, and the respondents were referring to it as if it was more than just a business, enlightening the product as a source of meaning.

As a result of Veggie's new marketing approach, it also appeared how they gained external verification of the goodness in the product. This could have strengthened their self-identification with the product as well as the identification with the organization (Pratt 1998). The external confirmation thus seems to add value to the employees' belief in the product.

5.2 CHANGE AS SOURCES OF ANXIETY

It appeared in the interviews that Veggie's rebranding and expansion led to some internal complications. In our interpretation, the change created a concern and insecurity regarding its affection on the organizational roles and identities. The employees could be understood as having multiple and dynamic identities that are prominent in different contexts (Gioia et al. 2013; Hogg et al. 1995). This means that when Veggie as a company changes, the employees' self-identities within the company also change as an outcome.

We have seen that it was difficult for the employees to rapidly adapt their identities along with new conditions and demands (Horton et al. 2013; Fiol et al. 2009), which may have resulted in an identity-shift and ambiguity in their working roles in the new context. Even though they want to identify themselves with the new direction of Veggie, as they are strongly committed to the moral brand values, the 'old' culture and identity are still noticeable. The respondents were positive towards the new direction of Veggie, although they expressed a need for keeping their old way of working and influencing the company.

Our interviews indicate a creation of two subcultures as a result of the expansion of the company, one in site A and one in site B. Within these subcultures there were different assumptions of the other site's work, where they sometimes referred to the other site as if it was a different company. It was apparent how these two sites were distinguished by the respondents as 'we' and 'them', which indicates how they referred to the other site as an outgroup. Identifying themselves with their own site as the ingroup, may have led to a stronger identification to the own site (Hogg et al. 1995). As mentioned, Veggie seems to have a strong culture that is imprinted by its history, working as a unified family. Therefore the separation into two sites appeared as threatening the strong culture with an anxiety of the company becoming disunited.

In our interpretation, the strong identification to the moral brand was striking in the case of Veggie. When new employees entered the company, some respondents were concerned that it may threaten the moral brand values. Due to the importance of the employees embodying the moral brand (Jeanes 2013; Morsing 2006), the fear may be understood as whether the new employees could be socialized into the moral brand culture. When identifying with a company, people's values are either already fitting in line with the organization, or they need

to change their values in order to fit (Pratt 1998). A moral brand is deeply rooted within the employees' identity and moral (Jeanes 2013), so that when going through a rebranding, which in Veggie's case led to an increased external approach, further concerns arose regarding whether the new employees share the company's moral values.

As stated in the previous section, the product seems to play a central role in the case of Veggie, which also was evident when the respondents were talking about complications of the expansion. Once again, the product was in focus in the conversations. The respondents seemed somewhat protective of the product, expressing a concern regarding whether the change would affect the product negatively. This further implicates the strong commitment of the employees towards the product in Veggie.

5.3 THE UNIFYING FORCE

The complications of the rebranding and expansion in Veggie have not, in our interpretation, yet resulted in any salient struggles. Even though there were signs of identity-shift, subcultures and internal concerns in Veggie it appeared that there was something holding them together. The core of Veggie's culture, with the product as a central symbol, seemed to play a significant role in keeping the company aligned. Some of the employees were positive towards the new direction of Veggie, but wanted to keep the old culture. Since the rebranding seemed to enhance the moral brand values with Veggie's original organizational culture and identity, this may be a reason for the employees dedication to align with the new direction of the company. The corporate moral branding appeared to be a reason for the employees' strong cultural alignment, and was an example of how identity, culture and brand may be interrelated and plays an important role within the company (Hatch & Schultz 2002; Gioia et al. 2000).

We argue that the moral brand has facilitated Veggie's change, since the rebranding was seen as an enhancement of the moral brand and thus strengthened the employees' faith and engagement in the brand. However, this does not indicate that they never question decisions in the company. On the contrary, the majority of our respondents expressed a concern regarding decisions affecting the internal processes and the product. Still, we claim that they align with the new strategy, as it is in line with the moral brand and strengthens their belief in the goodness of the product. Therefore, we state that the moral brand values within Veggie

are an important source for the organizational identity and culture, and acts as a unifying force holding the company together during the change.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter, we start by presenting a short review of our research process. Thereafter we outline the main findings in connection to the research question, followed by our theoretical and practical contributions, and ultimately suggestions for further research.

6.1 OUR PROCESS

During the process of our study, we found a gap in the literature regarding how a moral brand, in which identity and culture play a central role, is affected by a change. This further led to the aim of our research. The question that led us through our research journey was the following:

> ❖ *How are culture and identity related to a moral brand, and how are they affected by rebranding and expansion?*

Our research is based in an interpretative paradigm with a qualitative approach, and the overall aim is thus not to find one single truth. It is therefore important to mention that our aim has been to gather a contextual understanding rather than a generalized conclusion. We collected our data foremost from interviews with employees in order to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. As a compliment to the interviews, we have observed the company internally, from which we gained an insight in the internal atmosphere. In addition to this we have also been studying their internal documents and social media channels, in order to capture an insight in the company's internal and external communications. This was analyzed in line with our theories with a reflexive approach.

6.2 MAIN FINDINGS

Our research pointed towards how Veggie has a strong moral brand that seems to be working as a unifying force, being interrelated with the culture and identity. From what we have seen, Veggie's moral brand has been an important source of sense making in the change process. Our main findings will be presented below.

Veggie strives towards being authentic, doing something good in the world and engaging in social debates. In our interpretation, the company has a strong cultural alignment, and the moral brand values appeared to be deeply rooted in the culture and identity. It was interesting how the employees' seemed to embody the moral brand values by their strong engagement and passion for the company. When describing the organizational culture as well as their work, the respondents were constantly referring to the brand values. Having a moral brand was proven to be an important asset in the respondents' work motivation, as it provided them with a feeling of doing something good in the world.

The employees' identification with the moral brand was prominent in our research. Our interpretation is that they were shaped into 'Veggie-people' and seemed to be normatively controlled, meaning that they were unconsciously led by the moral brand values. In contrast, when embodying the moral brand, it seemed as they were adding extra value to the moral brand and thus simultaneously controlling and co-creating it. The 'Veggie-people' may further be seen as operating in a community, which we referred to as the 'Veggie-family', wherein they shared the same values that held them together. The moral brand values were visible in the culture and identity, and it was hard to distinguish them from each other as they seemed to be interrelated. As the moral brand were influencing the culture and identity within Veggie, the culture and identity were also influencing the moral brand.

Our research led to an additional, rather unexpected, finding regarding the product's central role in the moral brand as well as in the culture and identity. In contrast to literature on identity, in which social groups are referred to as the main source for identification within an organization, it was striking how the product appeared as a strong source of identification in Veggie. The employees had troubles distinguishing the organizational values, moral brand values as well as the characteristics of the product when talking about the organization, which clearly shows how important these all are for the employees.

THE OUTCOME OF THE CHANGE

In our interpretation, the change led to some internal complications for Veggie. For instance, there were signs of an identity-shift, in which the employees struggled to find their new roles

in the company. When separating the company into two sites, the respondents were concerned of the company becoming disunited. Our research indicates how two subcultures emerged as a result of this expansion, one in site A and one in site B. This led to a creation of 'us' and 'them', in which both sites referred to the other site as an outgroup. There were also concerns regarding whether new employees, possibly could share Veggie's moral brand values and be socialized into the moral brand culture.

It was explicitly interesting how the product was central in the conservations when talking about concerns regarding the change. The concerns were mainly regarding how the rebranding and expansion would affect the product in itself, indicating a sort of protective feeling towards the product, as if the moral brand had provided the product with social values.

The complications of the change have, in our interpretation, not resulted in any bigger contradictions for Veggie. We have seen that the rebranding has strengthened the moral brand values that, together with the external confirmation, have enhanced the employees' identification with the moral brand. This seems to have facilitated the change, as the shared belief in the moral brand has functioned as a unifying force holding the company together. It further shows how the employees seem to be working under a normative control. The moral brand may thus be understood as having preserved the culture and identity in the company and kept the Veggie-family together.

6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, the field of moral branding is relatively unexplored and it, as far as we have seen, has not yet been investigated in how a moral brand is affected by an organizational change. Our research has exemplified how a moral brand can act as a unifying force when a company is going through an organizational change in the form of rebranding and expansion. As long as the change does not affect the moral brand in a way that impairs its values, the moral brand may thus be facilitating employee alignment.

Drawing on the findings of our research, we argue that the product may play an important role within the organizational culture and identity in general, and in the moral brand in particular. This can be seen in contrast to the general view within the field of organizational science,

which is emphasizing more on how people in organizations are identifying themselves with social groups rather than objects.

We claim that our research also has resulted in practical contributions, showing how a moral brand may facilitate an organizational change. Based on our findings, it is evident how the identification with the moral brand values are significant in order to make sense of the change for the employees. We suggest that it is important that the change works in line with the moral brand values, since they are deeply rooted within the organizational culture and identity.

6.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

The theoretical field of moral brand is currently quite narrow and it was difficult to find relevant research regarding this. When analyzing our empirical findings, we noticed richness in our data that opened up for interesting topics and interpretations. In this study we have mainly focused on rebranding and expansion, which in our case has not changed the brand values, rather strengthen the existing ones. It would thus be interesting to further explore how a rebranding, that completely changes the moral brand, affects the organizational identity and culture.

The aim of our study was not to investigate in the product's role in organizational culture, identity and moral brand. This was something that appeared during our research process as an interesting topic to further investigate in. It would be interesting to further explore the product's meaning in a context without moral branding, as the values of the product may be enhanced by a moral brand.

Due to the limited time frame of our research, we narrowed our study to only touch upon the internal processes. Henceforth, we see how our research could be expanded further; by also include the external perspective of the moral brand, and how this is affected when going through a rebranding and expansion.

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APPENDIX – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introducing questions
- Tell us about yourself and your role at Veggie
    - How long have you been working at Veggie and what is your position?
    - Can you tell us about a typical working day?

About Veggie as a company
- Tell us about Veggie as a company (internally)
- How would you describe Veggie's organizational values?
- What is your perception of working at Veggie?
- Tell us about Veggie's brand (externally)
- Who are your closest colleagues?
- How has the company changed during your time here?

About the brand and organization:
- How would you describe Veggie's rebranding that has been going on during the recent years? Would you say that it has affected the organization internally?
- How would you describe the change process?
    - o Who has been in charge of the change and how has this person been operating?
    - o How would you describe the pace of the change?
    - o How would you say the change has been managed?
- How has this been communicated internally?
    - Has it changed your routines and way of working in Veggie?
- In what way have your work role been affected by the change?
- How do you perceive your colleagues reactions of the change?
- How did you feel when you got to hear about the change?
- Has your perception of the change been changing during the process?
- From what we have heard, there is a change book that has been a part of the change implementation process, have you seen it? How did you perceive it?
- You have moved a part of the company to another city, how do you think this has affected the company?
- How do you experience the communication between the two sites? (Is it like before or differently?)

- How would you say it has affected the cohesiveness?
- Do you think this has affected Veggie as an organization? How?
- What do you perceive to be the biggest or most noticeable changes?
- How do you think this has affected:
    - Yourself and your work role? Your colleagues? The work climate and atmosphere?
- Do you think others are sharing your perception?
- Have you felt included in the change?
    - If yes; in what way?
    - If no; why not? (What have you been engaged in and what have you not been engaged in?)
- Tell us about the conferences that is held 2 times a year
    - What happens on these? How do you perceive them? What do you gain from them?
- Is there any part of the change that you have not been a part of?
- Have you always felt that you have known what has been going on during the change process?
- What challenges do you think Veggie is facing?