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The Premium Brand's Role as a Key Driver of Employee Engagement

- *A Qualitative Case Study*

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**THE PREMIUM BRAND'S ROLE AS A KEY DRIVER
OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
- A Qualitative Case Study**

Employee Engagement is argued to be an important factor for organizations for becoming and staying successful. An engaged employee is likely to strive towards contributing to a successful organization and is most susceptible to develop engagement at an early stage of his employment. The purpose of this study is to explore what role the brand in a Premium brand organization plays in order to create Employee Engagement.

There are three central corner stones of Employee Engagement: *Vigor*, *Dedication* and *Absorption*.

The research is conducted as a qualitative case study. 35 employees within a Premium brand organization were interviewed – referred to as Organization X. The results showed that the brand influences the corner stones *Vigor* and *Dedication* stronger than *Absorption*. This indicates that organizations should focus on communicating their brand values internally at an early stage of the employee's employment, in order to positively influence their *Vigor* and *Dedication* and thereby their Employee Engagement. The researcher of this study suggest that Premium brand organizations focus on arranging brand related activities for their employees at a regular basis. However, comparative studies should be conducted in order to strengthen the arguments further and distinguish whether the results are specific for Premium brand organizations or also applicable to other segments.

Keywords: employee engagement, internal communication, premium brand, employer branding, vigor, dedication, absorption, brand engagement

Contents

1. Introduction	6
1.2 Problem Discussion	7
1.2.1 Purpose	7
2. Literature Review	9
2.1 Brand engagement	9
2.2 Employer Branding	9
2.3 Employee Engagement	10
2.4 Key Drivers of Employee Engagement	11
2.5 Three Corner Stones: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption	13
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Research Question	17
3.2 Research Approaches	17
3.2 Research Designs	21
3.3 Sampling in Qualitative Research	23
3.4 Data Collection	24
3.5 Operationalization	29
3.6 Interview Guide	32
3.7 Research Ethics	34
3.8 Data analysis method	35
4. Report of findings	38
4.1 Empirical Investigation	38
4.2 Analysis	45
5. Conclusion and Discussions	50
5.1 Conclusion	50
5.2 Reflections and Directions for Further Research	51
6. Literature	53
7. Appendix 1	57

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1. Introduction

In the business environment of today, it is getting more and more crucial for organizations to offer competitive products and services (Bhuvanaiah and Raya, 2014), but at the same time - it is important to bare in mind that a competitive strategy can also be to make sure to engage their employees (Chaudhary, 2014) and thereby protect the knowledge within the organization (Bhuvanaiah and Raya, 2014). It is important for organizations to have a good relationship with its employees in order to be and stay successful. Employee Engagement is argued to be an important factor to reach this goal. (Hollebeek, 2011)

Employee Engagement can be defined as follows:

“feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and effort to help the organization succeed”

(Quirke, 2008, p.120)

Employees who feel engaged in the organization they work for tend to be more willing to work effectively and in favor of the organization (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014). An engaged employee is committed and passionate about his or her work (Mone and London, 2010), and tends to be loyal to the employer and stay long with the organization (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014). Furthermore, an engaged employee is argued to be more productive, which in turn leads to a higher profitability for the organization (Hollebeek, 2011). This, is argued to be more efficient and less expensive than making changes in terms of compensations and benefits (Bates and Weighart, 2014).

At the same time, an employee who is not engaged in his or her work and organization does cost the organization a lot of money, due to for example bad quality in what the employee produces, health problems (Bates and Weighart, 2014), low production and higher absenteeism (Ologbo and Saudah, 2012).

The employee is more susceptible to engagement in the beginning of his or her employment and this is important for internal communicators to bare in mind when initially communicating with the new employee. (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014)

1.2 Problem Discussion

It is crucial for organizations of today that its employees find value in their work place, understand the organization's goals and values and that they are motivated to work towards successful results for the organization (Sehgal and Malati, 2013; Miles and Mangold, 2004).

Furthermore, it is widely debated in research that engagement of employees can be a successful competitive advantage (Chaudhary, 2014; Bhuvanaiah and Raya, 2014; Albrecht, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011; Karanges, Beatson, Johnston and Lings, 2014; Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014) However, additional research on employee engagement is needed with a focus on particular industries and not only as a general phenomenon (Bhuvanaiah and Raya, 2014). Factors such as good leadership, opportunity for development, social environment and feedback on performance have already been identified as key drivers for creating Employee Engagement (Albrecht, 2010).

However, this study aims to explore what role the brand in a premium brand organization plays as a key driver to create Employee Engagement. In a premium brand organization, the brand tends to be an important factor when attracting customers. However, there is a need to further investigate what role the brand plays when it comes to creating Employee Engagement.

These conclusions might show whether the brand is or is not an important factor for organizations to communicate in detail immediately when a new employee is entering the company, in order to create strong Employee Engagement already from the beginning.

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore what role the brand in a Premium brand¹ organization plays in order to create Employee Engagement.

¹ The difference between Premium brands and Luxury brands is that Premium brands often have lower prices and are less selective in its distribution of products and services than Luxury brands. However, terms such as quality, status, prestige and conspicuousness are central for Premium brands as well as for Luxury brands. (Dall'Olmo Riley, Pina and Bravo, 2015)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

<h3>Introduction</h3>	<p>It is getting more important to focus on engaging employees as a way for organizations to become and stay successful (Chaudhary, 2014; Hollebeek, 2011; Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014). Especially at an early stage of the employment (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014).</p> <p>A definition of Employee Engagement: <i>“feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and effort to help the organization succeed”</i> (Quirke, 2008, p.120)</p>
<h3>Problem Discussion</h3>	<p>Factors such as good leadership, opportunity for development, social environment and feedback on performance etc. have already been identified as key drivers for creating Employee Engagement (Albrecht, 2010). Further research is needed for investigating the brand’s role as a key driver of Employee Engagement.</p>
<h3>Purpose</h3>	<p>The purpose of this study is to explore what role the brand in a Premium brand organization plays in order to create Employee Engagement.</p>

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand engagement

First of all, when discussing brand engagement in general, it is important to clarify how to define the concept branding and engagement separately (Buckingham, 2008). Branding is often connected to promises. The brand is what customers and employees associate with certain products and services. (Kotler, 2011; Buckingham, 2008) Engagement on the other hand, is an expression for emotional and moral commitment. These two concepts together - *brand engagement* - stands for the relationship between the promises made by the organization and the commitment by the employee or the customer. (Buckingham, 2008)

Brand engagement from the organization's perspective can be summed up by the following:

- understanding the company's core values,
- understanding the needs of stakeholders, employees and customers that these values result in,
- communicating the promises the organization gives to stakeholders, employees and customers in an efficient, clear and correct way, as well as involving them in how to fulfill those promises. (Buckingham, 2008)

2.2 Employer Branding

Employer branding can be explained as the image of the organization (Sehgal and Malati, 2013) and has come to be argued as a competitive advantage for organizations (Biswas and Suar, 2013; Sehgal and Malati, 2013). At the same time as organizations try to make customers choose their brand, they also try to make employees choose their brand as an employer. (Biswas and Suar, 2013) The core of Employer Branding is to capture the organization and express it in an engaging way to existing as well as potential employees (Sehgal and Malati, 2013).

More specifically, Employer Branding refers to the employee's ability to adapt to the organization's brand image and express it to others internally and externally (Miles and Mangold, 2004). An organization's brand image is reflected in what customers and others associate with the brand (Keller, 1993; Kotler, 2011). It is argued that it is important for an organization to express the same brand image in every situation - to customers *and* employees. Hence, Employer Branding requires that the employee understands the brand image

completely (Miles and Mangold, 2004) as well as the organization's goals (Sehgal and Malati, 2013). Furthermore, Employer Branding aims to make employees feel that they are working in a good work place towards which they have a positive attitude and want to contribute to further success (Sehgal and Malati, 2013).

The organization needs to find out what values that potential and existing employees look for in an employer. With this statement in mind, organizations need to think about brand management not only as a strategy to attract customers, but also to attract employees. Furthermore, to make sure to have the right people on the right positions has shown to be an important success factor for organizations. (Biswas and Suar, 2013)

If an employee manages to express a brand image which goes in line with the organization's brand image, this will lead to successful outcomes such as that the employee talks positively about the organization to others or the employee might be more productive. However, if the organization does not succeed in expressing a coherent and clear brand image to the employee, the opposite result may occur. (Miles and Mangold, 2004)

2.3 Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement can be explained as the organization's ability to create enthusiasm among its employees (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014) which in turn is linked to organization effectiveness (Karanges, Beatson, Johnston and Lings, 2014). Engagement is often connected to emotions and moral (Buckingham, 2008) and terms such as *dedication*, *commitment*, *absorption*, *signification*, *inspiration*, *pride* (Karanges et al., 2014), *passion*, *enthusiasm* and *energy* are used for explaining the concept (Albrecht, 2010). An engaged employee is an employee who feels that he or she has a purpose in the organization and therefore is focused and dedicated to his or her working tasks. (Albrecht, 2010)

Further, Quirke 2008 defines Employee Engagement as follows:

“feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and effort to help the organization succeed”

(Quirke, 2008, p.120).

Hence, a strong emotional bond between the employee and the organization can result in successful outcomes for the organization, due to the employee being more willing to work in the organization's favor (Quirke, 2008). Research argues that engaged employees are more likely to strive towards a successful development not only for themselves, but for the organization as a whole. They are also more eager to talk positively about the firm and tend to stay longer with the organization. (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014)

Mone and London (2010) explain Employee Engagement on the basis of terms such as *involvement*, *commitment* and *passion* and emphasize that engagement is shown when the employee demonstrates these emotions in his or her working behavior. (Mone and London, 2010)

Commitment is also a central term when talking about engagement (Buckingham, 2008). This is however a complex term, but can be explained as the relationship between the employee and the organization. This relationship results in both parts reaching goals, since the employee works for the best of the organization, which he or she also perceives the organization doing for him or her. This in turn, results in employee efficiency. (Brajer-Marczak, 2014)

2.4 Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

There are several identified key drivers, that are argued to all serve as motivators for creation and maintenance of Employee Engagement within organizations (Albrecht, 2010; Sinha and Trivedi, 2014; Truss, et al, 2006):

- Feedback on Performance (Albrecht, 2010; Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- Autonomy (Albrecht, 2010),
- Social Support (Albrecht, 2010; Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- Good organizational climate and environment (Albrecht, 2010 Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- Opportunities for development/career advancement, (Albrecht, 2010: Sinha and Trivedi (2014)
- Influence within the organization and possibility to get his/her voice heard, (Albrecht, 2010: Truss et al., 2006)

- Good and trustworthy leadership, (Albrecht, 2010: Truss et al., 2006: Sinha and Trivedi, 2014)
- The employee feels needed within the organization (Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- Trust for the organization (Albrecht, 2010: Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- Training offered in order to develop knowledge and skills (Albrecht, 2010),
- The organization's ability to share business information with its employees (Truss et al., 2006),
- Employees' praise/recognition of good work (Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- It is clear to the employee what is expected from him or her (Sinha and Trivedi,2014),
- The employee feels that the organization cares for him or her (Sinha and Trivedi,2014),

All factors mentioned above are argued to drive Employee Engagement. It is also identified that the employee is more likely to be influenced positively in terms of engagement in the beginning of his or her career within the organization and therefore internal communication professionals need to have this in mind when new employees enter the organization. (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014)

A strong employee engagement within an organization is the key to several positive outcomes, such as:

- positive word-of-mouth by the employee (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014),
- the employee as an ambassador of the organization (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014),
- good relationships between the employee and the managers (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014)
- a higher performance quality within the organization (Mishra, Boynton and Mishra, 2014; Hollebeek, 2011) leading to profitability (Hollebeek, 2011).

2.5 Three Corner Stones: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption

There are three central key concepts when defining Employee Engagement, listed and explained below:

Vigor

When defining Employee Engagement, the term *Vigor* refers to several emotions and behaviors within the employee: the high levels of energy and resilience that the employee experience during his or her work, the willingness he or she has to put effort into his or her work and the employee's persistence when facing difficulties (Schaufeli et. al, 2002; Sarti, 2014). Vigor can further be reflected in the employee's motivation to go to work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012), over win difficulties, willingness to put effort into their work (Schaufeli et. al, 2002) and overall motivation regarding his or her working tasks (Sarti, 2014).

Vigor is argued to be connected to a behavioral form of engagement (Sarti, 2014), meaning that the employee is willing to do everything that is expected from him or her and often even more in order to help the organization succeed (Mauno, Kinnunen, and Ruokolainen, 2007). The employee is simply highly driven by the goal of a successful company (Sarti, 2014).

Dedication

Dedication in this context, refers to the employee's sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge (Schaufeli et. al, 2002). It is also reflected in the employee's feeling of meaningfulness and purpose in his or her work situation (Viljevac et. al, 2012) as well as his or her feelings of belonging in and identifying him or herself with the organization (Sarti, 2014). While Vigor is strongly connected to a behavioral form of engagement, Dedication is rather connected to a psychological or emotional form (Sarti, 2014), which often is closely related to a feeling of commitment towards the organization (Mauno, et. al, 2007).

Absorption

Absorption in Employee Engagement theory refers to how immersed the employee is in his or her work - if he or she perceives that time goes fast and he or she has difficulties to detach from the work (Schaufeli et. al, 2002). An absorbed employee tends to be deeply concentrated and focused on his or her tasks (Sarti, 2014), feeling that time flies and that he or she forgets

everything else when working (Viljevac et. al, 2012). It is common that an absorbed employee loses track of time at work (Sarti, 2014).

This is rather a cognitive form of engagement and is reflected in the employee's immersion of his or her work (Sarti, 2014).

This model will be the basis for the empirical investigation in this study, since it is one of the most recent theoretical models for Employee Engagement (Albrecht, 2010) and since it captures three central concepts of Employee Engagement, which is likely to be relevant when answering the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Brand Engagement	<p>Brand Engagement stands for the relationship between the promises made by the organization and the commitment by the employee or the customer. (Buckingham, 2008)</p>
Employer Branding	<p>Employer Branding refers to the employee's ability to adapt to the organization's brand image and express it to others internally and externally. It is important for an organization to express the same brand image in every situation - to customers <i>and</i> employees. Employer Branding requires that the employee understands the brand image completely. (Miles and Mangold, 2004) (Miles and Mangold, 2004)</p>
Employee Engagement	<p>There are three central key concepts when defining Employee Engagement: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption (Schaufeli et. al, 2002).</p> <p><i>Vigor</i>: the high levels of energy and resilience that the employee experience during his work, the willingness he has to put effort into his or her work and the his persistence when facing difficulties (Schaufeli et. al, 2002; Sarti, 2014).</p>

	<p><i>Dedication</i>: refers to the employee's sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge (Schaufeli et. al, 2002), meaningfulness and purpose (Viljevac et. al, 2012)</p> <p><i>Absorption</i>: refers to how immersed the employee is in his or her work - if he or she perceives that time goes fast and he or she has difficulties to detach from the work (Schaufeli et. al, 2002).</p>
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3. Methodology

3.1 Research Question

In what way does the brand influence the employee engagement in a Premium brand organization – with standpoint in the following three concept corner stones: *vigor*, *dedication* and *absorption*?

3.2 Research Approaches

Research approaches can be defined as the way the researcher chooses to go in order to transform assumptions to detailed data and analysis of this. There are three research approaches to choose from: *qualitative*, *quantitative* and *mixed approach*. The difference between qualitative and quantitative approach is often argued to be that qualitative approach has a stronger focus on words, while quantitative approach are more based on numbers. (Creswell, 2014) These approaches will be explained in detailed further down in this chapter.

Inductive vs. deductive approach

Inductive research approach can be explained as when the theoretical concept becomes the outcome of the research. *Deductive research approach* on the other hand, is when the outcome of the research is conducted by logic reasoning - the theoretical framework becomes the foundation of the research and hypothesis are created on the basis of theory. One could say that deductive research, focuses on the relationship between theoretical framework and the data. (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

This research will be based on a mix between deductive and inductive research approach, for the following two reasons:

- *The research will be done on the basis of the theoretical framework that was created prior to the empirical investigation,*
- *The aim is that the outcome of this study, will lead to addition theoretical concepts, including or excluding the role of the Premium brand when creating employee engagement.*

Primary / Secondary data

Primary data is data that is collected for the particular research at hand and is tailored to fit the specific problem (Dawes Farquhar, 2012; Hox and Boije, 2005). When primary data is collected, new data is always added to the existing knowledge and the results are thereby possible to use as secondary data by other researchers. (Hox and Boije, 2005)

Secondary data is data that is reused by a researcher, but that was conducted for another purpose than this researchers' investigation. Secondary data often consists of quantitative data, e.g. statistical investigations. However, researchers can often use this secondary data for qualitative research. (Hox and Boije, 2005)

The advantages for a researcher who collects his own data is that he can make sure that the research design and data collection strategy is tailored to his particular research question(s). However, this is often time-consuming. If data already exists which can be used for the research, this saves time and can give the researcher a bigger sample base for testing interpretations. (Hox and Boije, 2005)

For this research, both primary and secondary data will be presented and analyzed. However, primary data will be the major part of the empirical investigation.

Qualitative research

When deciding on using qualitative research, the aim with the research is to find relationships between theory and practical research and the focus is rather on the meaning of words than the meaning of numbers - which tend to be more relevant in quantitative research (Bryman, 2011). A qualitative research approach can also be used in order to understand patterns in individuals' or groups' ways of looking at a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Trost, 2012). Description, analysis and interpretation are central concepts in qualitative research (Bryman, 2011; Bryman, 2004), since the researcher has to interpret the data and on the basis of this make conclusions (Creswell, 2014). Further, one could describe the intention of qualitative research as an attempt to see the world through the respondent's eyes, viewing actions, values, events or norms, etc (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative methods therefore often include open-ended questions and text analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Table 5.1 *Some differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research*

	<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>
(1) Role of qualitative research	preparatory	means to exploration of actors' interpretations
(2) Relationship between researcher and subject	distant	close
(3) Researcher's stance in relation to subject	outsider	insider
(4) Relationship between theory/concepts and research	confirmation	emergent
(5) Research strategy	structured	unstructured
(6) Scope of findings	nomothetic	ideographic
(7) Image of social reality	static and external to actor	processual and socially constructed by actor
(8) Nature of data	hard, reliable	rich, deep

Figure 1. *Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research (adapted from Bryman (2004), pp. 94)*

(1): The role of qualitative research: In quantitative research, the researcher can sometimes find the qualitative approach useful in the preparation phase of the investigation. However, quantitative research searches to *verify* rather than interpret, and therefore the qualitative approach is only (if at all) used in a preparation stage. In qualitative research on the other hand, the qualitative data is argued to be strong enough to stand for itself and is therefore central throughout the whole research process. (Bryman, 2004)

(2): Relationship between theory/concepts and research: A quantitative researcher's personal contact with the studied individuals tends to be very low, short-lived or even non-existing. In qualitative research, the opposite occurs. The researcher most often has direct contact with the respondents - again, in order for him to be able to view the subject through the eyes of the respondent. It is argued to be difficult to make qualitative analysis by viewing respondents from a distance. (Bryman, 2004)

(3): Researcher's stance in relation to subject: In quantitative research, the researcher has no intention to "go inside" the respondent's world. Instead, he stands outside, looking into the world of the respondent from a distance. In qualitative research on the other hand, it is important for the researcher to come close to the respondent. He strives to be an insider, rather than an outsider, since this is the only way to be able to view the world through the respondent's eyes. (Bryman, 2004)

(4): Relationship between theory/concepts and research: In quantitative research, the theories are what starts the research, while its role in qualitative research is more emergent (Bryman, 2004).

(5): Research Strategy: For quantitative research, a structured approach is often adapted. Qualitative research, is often more unstructured and open, which results in that the researcher often at an early stage of his investigation have difficulties to determine what is actually sufficient data for his specific research. This since the research opens up to so many potential aspects to study. (Bryman, 2004)

(6) Scope of Findings: For qualitative research, data is often collected in a specific setting - e.g. a case study - which implies that it might be difficult to beforehand know how generalizable the findings will be. Strategies must therefore be created, to ensure a generalizability to the research. (Bryman, 2004)

(7) Image of Social Reality: Social reality in quantitative research is often static, meaning that it ignores the role of change in social life. It tends to examine connections between variables, rather than the processes linking the variables together. Qualitative research rather focus on

reasons behind certain connections and interpretations, investigating *why* these linkage exist. (Bryman, 2004)

(8) Nature of data: Data produced by quantitative research is often considered to be hard, rigorous, precise and reliable. Therefore, quantitative data is often argued to be more persuasive. Qualitative data is often described as deep, rich and less superficial than quantitative data. (Bryman, 2004)

In this study, qualitative research is an appropriate choice of method. In order to interpret, describe and analyze the Premium brand's role in creating employee engagement, it is important to get thorough explanations from participants, which can be achieved through qualitative interviews and focus groups, rather than quantitative surveys. The researcher of this study will most likely be dependent on the possibility to ask probing questions during the data collection, which cannot be done in quantitative research methods. Simply, this study is dependent on rich and deep data, which can be achieved through qualitative research methods, rather than quantitative.

3.2 Research Designs

Case study

When using qualitative case study as a research design, the investigator aims to create an in-depth analysis of a certain case (Creswell, 2014) with the goal to understand and/or create theory (Dawes Farquhar, 2012). It is used when the researcher aims to investigate a phenomenon in its real environment, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the environment are not beforehand given (Backman, 2008).

Further, when a research requires focused insight in one specific unit, a case study is an appropriate strategy to use. Also if the aim is to investigate certain factors in relation to theoretical concept, case study can be effective. (Bryman and Bell, 2005) It is useful when the researcher wants to understand, describe or explain complex phenomena, organizations or systems (Backman, 2008). It can explore e.g people, issues or programs and aims to respond to focused questions through in-depth descriptions and interpretations (deMarrais and Lapan, 2008).

When using a case study, the researcher wants to get an understanding of for example complicated cause-and-effect relationships (deMarrais and Lapan, 2008). When you want to answer questions based on "how" or "why" or if you aim for an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon, a case study is likely to be a relevant choice (Yin, 2014).

The purpose of a case study is usually not to come up with generalizations, but rather to explore the uniqueness of the specific case at hand (deMarrais and Lapan, 2008). The researcher should instead focus on so called analytical generalizations, which means using the theories underpinning the research and on basis of that create an interpretation that could be applied to other situations. (Yin, 2012)

Conducting a case study, requires focused and analytical work. The researcher cannot study every situation on the chosen site, but has to focus on specific issues. To succeed with this, specific frames must be set before the case study research can begin. An effective way of doing this is using research questions, which will be followed during the whole research period. It is important that the researcher defines the case to himself at an early stage, by asking himself questions such as: "what exact issue is it that I am going to explore?" (deMarrais and Lapan, 2008)

In this study, the organization investigated will be referred to as Organization X. The reason why case study is chosen as a research design is that the researcher aims to study the uniqueness of phenomenon in its real environment.

Pretesting

Pretesting is done in order for the researcher to see if the questions in e.g. the interview guide should be changed or improved in any way. If he does not pretest the questions, problems might occur when the investigation has already started and then it might be too late to adjust. (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

Simply, the researcher ensures that the interview guide is understandable by testing it on respondents before the actual empirical investigation starts (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Prior to the empirical investigation, the interview guide was tested on three respondents in Organization X. Their inputs were then taken into consideration when finalizing the interview guide. This was much helpful, since the pretesting respondents provided useful feedback on what could be explained clearer in order to ensure that the respondent would understand the questions correctly. The pretesting respondents did not participate in the actual investigation.

3.3 Sampling in Qualitative Research

In order to investigate a population for the particular research, one needs to choose a smaller group, which can represent the population as a whole. This is called sampling. (Bryman and Bell, 2005) In qualitative research sampling, the researcher collects analysis of non-numerical data in order to understand the nature of the elements that are chosen for the study and the focus is not mainly on making generalizations. The goal is to get an understanding of the respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards a certain subject. (Daniel, 2012; Bryman, 2012)

In qualitative research, the researcher aims to select population elements which are most fruitful in providing rich data about the research (Daniel, 2012). The reason for doing this is that it can be both expensive and time-consuming to investigate a whole population (Bryman and Bell, 2005; Daniel, 2012). The researcher decides on individuals, organizations, documents or departments etc. which he considers relevant for providing data that will enable him to answer the research questions formulated (Bryman, 2011; Bryman, 2012).

When deciding on a sample, the researcher should go through a checklist of six steps, presented below (Curtis, Gesler, Smith and Washburn, 2000):

1. The researcher should ensure that the sampling strategy is suitable for the concepts chosen for the study, which can make it possible to answer the research questions,
2. The researcher should make sure that the sample can result in detailed data concerning the research subject,
3. The sample should make it possible for the researcher to make generalizations,
4. The sample should result in relevant and valid descriptions and explanations,
5. The researcher needs to make sure that her relationship with the respondents is ethical,
6. The researcher needs to make sure that the sampling structure is realistic. (Curtis et. al, 2000)

The population of this research is employees in a Premium brand organization, and on the basis of this a sample was made. First of all, one specific organization was chosen as a case study for this research (referred to as Organization X in this research), and 35 employees were interviewed. The interviewees all came from different departments; aftersales, business development, marketing, sales, accounting, controlling and human resources. This research does not put interest in investigating any potential differences between the certain departments, but the sampling was made this way in order to at least have a representation of the entire organization and not only one or a few departments and positions. None of the respondents had a manager position.

3.4 Data Collection

Qualitative In depth-interviews

Collecting data through interviews is commonly used in qualitative research when the aim is to identify conditions or properties regarding the respondent's opinions or attitudes towards a certain phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2005; Patel and Davidson, 2003). Interviews can be conducted face to face or over phone. Regardless of how the interview data is collected, it is crucial to be aware of the importance of confidentiality and anonymity (Patel and Davidson, 2003).

First of all, it needs to be considered that the respondent might not see the value in his or her participation and therefore the interviewer should focus on motivating the respondent. One way of doing this is to explain to the respondent the purpose of the interview and why his or her contribution is of importance for the outcome. It is also important to clarify to the respondent how the researcher aims to use the information that the interview results in - if it is confidential or not (Bryman and Bell, 2005; Patel and Davidson, 2003). All of this has to be done before the interview starts (Patel and Davidson, 2003).

Furthermore, motivation might also increase due to the relationship that is created between the interviewer and the respondent during the interview. The interviewer needs to show genuine interest in the respondent's answers. (Bryman and Bell, 2005; Patel and Davidson,

2003) If the respondent feels criticized or judged, he or she might get defensive and thereby the answers might not be as detailed – or even less truthful (Patel and Davidson, 2003).

When structuring the interview questions, it is usually good to start with the basic, general questions. In the middle of the interview the questions directly linked to the research questions should be asked. (Patel and Davidson, 2003)

The researcher can do highly standardized and lowly standardized interviews. High standardization is when the researcher makes sure they cover all areas of the research, by e.g. providing the respondent with relevant alternatives for answers. However, this is more common in quantitative research and low standardization is often used in qualitative interviews, meaning that the researcher follows certain themes throughout the session and lets the respondent speak more freely about the topic in his or her own words. Nevertheless, it is important to get all research areas covered even when using low standardization. (Patel and Davidson, 2003)

To structure the order of the questions, the researcher can use the so called "funnel technique". This implies starting with the broad questions and later on ask more detailed questions. This is often considered motivating, since the respondent gets the opportunity to start off by speaking freely. (Patel and Davidson, 2003)

However, the researcher can also use the "reversed funnel technique", which simply means that the researcher starts by asking detailed questions regarding different areas and then finishes the interview by asking more general questions. This is often used when the aim is to explore the respondent's opinion regarding a certain topic, in a case where the respondent does not already have a clear opinion at the start of the interview. The "reversed funnel technique" enables the respondent to make up his or her mind meanwhile the questions are asked and answered. (Patel and Davidson, 2003)

When constructing the actual interview questions, there are certain guidelines that should be followed. The researcher should avoid to ask too long questions (Patel and Davidson, 2003) or leading questions (Bryman, 2012; Patel and Davidson, 2003). Negations and double questions should also be avoided, meaning questions such as: "Do you not like to...?" or "Do

you usually do x or do you usually do y?" (Patel and Davidson, 2003) Further, it is important to make sure to create questions that are easy for the respondent to understand (Bryman, 2012). The researcher needs to bare in mind that the respondent might not understand research related terms or explanations and should therefore try to adjust the language. (Patel and Davidson, 2003)

In general, interviews are argued to be a flexible way of collecting data. However, one negative aspect is that it is time consuming, both to collect and to analyze. Furthermore, it is also of great importance that the interviewer does not influence the respondent in any direction. (Bryman, 2012)

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are constructed to follow a given list of questions (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010) and is argued to be a more quantitative form of interviewing (Bryman, 2011). The researcher creates the questions beforehand and lets them steer the interview session strictly. The aim is thereby not to let the respondent speak freely about a topic, but instead answer the particular questions at hand. (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010; Bryman, 2012)

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews implies that the researcher lets the respondent speak freely and openly about the topic (Bryman, 2011; Bryman, 2012). The researcher might for example only ask one question in the beginning of the session, which the respondent then can associate around and answer without getting steered in a certain direction. The researcher only reacts on information she finds particularly interesting for her research and she can in those cases ask probing questions in order to get more detailed data from the respondent. The unstructured interview can be described as a type of conversation between the researcher and the respondent. (Bryman, 2011)

Semi-structured Interviews

When using semi-structured interviews, the researcher has prepared interview questions prior to the session (Bryman, 2011), which follow the research questions but still are open enough to enable the respondent to speak freely about the topic (Wengraf, 2001).

The questions does not have to follow the structure of the Interview Guide, but the researcher can choose to ask them in whatever order he finds relevant (Bryman, 2011). This also requires that the researcher is able to improvise, since he might not be able to foresee which direction the interview will take. (Wengraf, 2001)

However, the prepared questions serve as a guidance throughout the session and the researcher can thereby make sure that the interview session goes in line with the research topic (Wengraf, 2001). Nevertheless, probing questions can be asked if the researcher finds this fruitful. If he wants the respondent to develop an answer or if she comes up with a new question related to an answer, these questions should be asked (Bryman, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews require that the researcher is good at planning, improvising and being creative. The analysis work after the semi-structured and unstructured interview tends to take more time than with structured interviews, due to the big bank of data that is usually the result of the session. However, if the semi-structured interview is well-prepared and handled by the researcher, it can gain much valuable information. (Wengraf, 2001)

On the other hand, if the researcher fails in preparations, the research might gain nothing at all. Therefore, planning is key when conducting semi-structured interviews, in order to ensure to receive as much valuable data as possible. (Wengraf, 2001)

With this said, both unstructured and semi-structured interviews are flexible in their character and focus is on the respondent's interpretation of the question and his or her way of selecting what information that is relevant and important (Bryman, 2011).

For this research, semi-structured interviews are chosen to be one data collection method for the following reasons:

- *The research questions of this study requires that the respondent can speak freely about the topic. The researcher will not guide the respondent into a discussion regarding Premium brands, but instead the aim is that the respondent him/herself mentions this topic if it is of importance for him or her. Therefore, it is important that*

the interview questions enables the respondent to speak openly and freely, but at the same time it has to make it possible for the researcher to ask probing questions or ask the respondent to develop his answers if needed.

- *It is also important that the interview follows the guide that the researcher has set up prior to the session, since the questions are designed on the basis of the research questions.*

Recording

For both qualitative interviews and focus groups, recording of the session is argued to be a good way of making sure to collect all the inputs (Bryman, 2012; Bryman, 2011). When recording, the researcher does not have to rely on her own ability to note down everything that is said, but can instead focus on guiding the respondent and ask probing questions. This way, the researcher can easier distinguish what is actually mentioned. Another important aspect is that the researcher can distinguish not only what has been said, but also how it was said, by recording the session. This might in some cases be valuable for an analysis further on in the research process. (Bryman, 2011)

Transcription is in many cases much more time-consuming than recording and in addition, it often results in a big amount of papers that the researcher needs to process when doing his analysis. A recorded interview saves time and can bring a more detailed recreation of the session. (Bryman, 2011)

Furthermore, a recorded interview enables the researcher to prove that his analysis was not affected by personal opinions or prejudgments, since other researchers can make secondary analysis of the material. However, it is important to always get the respondent's permission to record the session. If not, the session should be performed anyway, without recording. (Bryman, 2011)

All interview sessions for this research will be recorded, if the respondents permits this, in order to capture as detailed data as possible when constructing the analysis.

3.5 Operationalization

Operationalization is key when the researcher wants to connect the theoretical concepts he is investigating with empirically collected data. Operationalization helps the researcher to code the data in order to use it in relation to the theoretical framework and is visualizing how the concepts will be used when conducting the empirical investigation. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005)

This study aims to explore the brand's role in creating Employee Engagement in a Premium brand organization by focusing on the Three corner stones of Employee Engagement: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption, presented in the Literature Review chapter. Therefore, the theoretical concepts below have been divided up and defined and in addition the researcher explains how the measurement of these concepts will be done. This in order to create relevant and fruitful interview questions that can help answering the research question for this study.

VIGOR

CONCEPT	CONCEPT DEFINITION	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASURES
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Vigor (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)	The high levels of energy and resilience that the employee experiences during his or her work. (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation to go to work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Motivation to overcome difficulties on work situations (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002) - Willingness to put effort into work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)

DEDICATION

CONCEPT	CONCEPT DEFINITION	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASURES
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	<p>Dedication (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)</p>	<p>The employee's sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge, (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pride in the work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Feelings of meaningfulness in work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Feelings of having a purpose (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012)

ABSORPTION

CONCEPT	CONCEPT DIFINITION	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASURES
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	<p>Absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)</p>	<p>How immersed the employee is in his or her work. (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling of that time flies at work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Total focus on the work - forgetting everything else (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Difficulties to detach one self from work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)

3.6 Interview Guide

In the Interview Guide below, the measurements presented in the Operationalization are broken down into interview questions. These questions will be the guideline for the interview sessions.

The respondent will get questions identifying his or her Employee Engagement - to make sure the respondent fits into the chosen segment, namely engaged employees in the organization. However, in order to explore the Premium brand's role in this Employee Engagement creation, the respondent will also get open interview questions, focusing on what factors that underlie this engagement. For example, after asking the respondent "Do you feel proud of your work?" he or she will be asked "Why do you feel proud of your work?" or "Why do you not feel proud of your work?" (depending on the respondent's answer to the first question). This way, it will become clear which parts of Employee Engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) that the premium brand does or does not influence the most.

Most importantly, the questions will not touch upon the topic branding, but the ambition is to let the respondents themselves mention this, if this is a factor they consider relevant for the questions.

The questions will also cover the topic of Key Drivers for Employee Engagement, with the same goal - to let the employee speak freely and mention those factors he or she finds most important. If the brand is not mentioned, it can therefore be assumed that it is not of importance.

VIGOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation to go to work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Motivation to overcome difficulties in work situations (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002) - Willingness to put effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When you wake up in the morning, do you feel like going to work? Why/why not? - How do you handle difficulties at work? What drives you? - Do you feel that you put as much effort as possible to
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<p style="text-align: center;">DEDICATION</p>	<p>into work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pride in the work (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Feelings of meaningfulness in work (Viljevac, Cooper- Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Feelings of having a purpose (Viljevac, Cooper- Thomas and Saks, 2012) 	<p>your work? Why/why not? What drives this effort?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you proud of your work? Are you proud of where you work? Are you proud of your results? Why/Why not? - Do you find your work meaningful? Why? - (If yes) Why are your contributions important? - What is your purpose with your work? Why?
<p style="text-align: center;">ABSORPTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling of that time flies at work (Viljevac, Cooper- Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Total focus on the work - forgetting everything else (Viljevac, Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2012) - Difficulties to detach one self from work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you often bored at work? Why/why not? - Do you often find it hard to detach from work? Why/Why not? - Do you often think about work at your spare time? Why/Why not? - Do you often think about non-work related things while you are at work?

<p>KEY DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT</p>	<p>Factors that increase employee engagement: <i>feedback on performance,</i> <i>autonomy,</i> <i>social support,</i> <i>organizational climate,</i> <i>opportunities for development,</i> <i>influence within the organization,</i> <i>good leadership</i> <i>trust for the organization,</i> <i>training offered in order to develop knowledge and skills</i> (Albrecht, 2010)</p>	<p>What would you say influences your engagement in your organization?</p> <p>Is there anything you would wish that your organization would offer/do/improve in order to make you feel more engaged in your work?</p>
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3.7 Research Ethics

There are some important points to take into consideration when doing an empirical investigation involving respondents. It is crucial that the data collection does not harm the respondent in any way - psychologically or physically. The respondent needs to feel secure throughout the whole research. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

Further, it is important that the respondent feels respected and comfortable in the research situation. Lies or misleading behavior by the researcher is strictly against research ethics. Also, transparency is an important factor to create trust from respondents, and requires a clear, open and truthful communication from the researcher. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

When conducting this research, the researcher always explained to the respondent what the interview results were going to be used for – however, the topic in detail, purpose or research questions were never announced prior to an interview session, since that could have influenced the respondent when answering – in other words, the topic was not explained in order to prevent bias. After the session was finished, the interviewer explained the topic, if the respondent asked for it.

Anonymity

First of all, it is crucial that the researcher protects the respondent's anonymity. Anonymity refers to protecting the respondent's name and other personal information that might identify the respondent. For example, the researcher should remove all sort of information from the interview data that can directly identify who the respondent is. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

In order to protect the respondent's anonymity, all information related to their job positions is removed from the material to make sure not to explore the respondent's identity. Further, all respondents are informed about their anonymity before the interview sessions start.

Reliability

Reliability can be referred to as a measurement of quality of the study (Bryman, 2012). It is often discussed in terms of evaluating if the research is consistent, meaning that it would look somewhat the same if the research was done again by someone else or somewhere else (Bryman, 2012; Bryman and Bell, 2005). Simply, the study needs to be replicable (Bryman, 2012). Errors that might affect the outcome should be analyzed thoroughly (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

3.8 Data analysis method

Qualitative research tends to result in a big bank of data, which needs to be analyzed and presented understandably. What needs to be done first is to reduce the data bank. First, the researcher has to develop coding for the data, based on what the researcher aims to explore. (Creswell, 2014) This is done in order to be able to select data which can later be used for making conclusions. This reduction is not only done in a specific stage of the research, but throughout the entire study. (Miles and Huberman, 1984)

The data also needs to be displayed and visualized, e.g. in the form of text. Further, the data needs to be analyzed in order to clarify the meaning of it. This can for example involve finding certain patterns in the data. (Yin, 2012)

Simply, the data needs to be 1) reduced through coding, (Creswell, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1984) 2) displayed and visualized and 3) analyzed to understand the meaning, e.g. by seeing patterns in the data (Yin, 2012).

For this research, one specific code was crucial when analyzing the empirical data results; the brand. When the data was collected, the researcher reduced it on the basis of this concept. Meaning that the data was analyzed by looking into every question, referring to different theoretical concepts, in order to find the representativeness of the brand in the empirical data bank. In order to make conclusions, the data was visualized by presenting one concept at the time in the Empirical Investigation chapter. In the Analysis chapter, the concepts were discussed and compared in order to make conclusions, which were presented separately.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

<p>Research Question</p> <p>Approaches chosen for this study</p>	<p>In what way does the brand influence the employee engagement in a Premium brand organization – with standpoint in the following three concept corner stones: <i>vigor</i>, <i>dedication</i> and <i>absorption</i>?</p> <p>This research is a mix between deductive and inductive approach and includes both primary and secondary data. The research is conducted in form of a qualitative case study on a Premium brand organization – referred to as Organization X. Qualitative semi-structured interviews are done on 35 respondents – all employees of Organization X. In addition, 3 pretesting interviews were conducted, whose results were however not included in the actual research. All interviews were recorded, after agreed by the respondents. All respondents are anonymous.</p>
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4. Report of findings

4.1 Empirical Investigation

Secondary Data

The organization itself has conducted a study investigating what makes the brand attractive to existing employees, which the researcher of this study got the permission to use.

Organization X's study shows that the pride in the brand is a highly influential factor regarding what make the employees appreciate their work. 548 respondents (all working within the organization) answered the survey.

The survey included 3 questions relevant for this particular investigation, listed below. The reason why they are considered relevant is because it could clearly be analyzed whether the brand played an important role for the employees when answering these questions.

- Which are the first 3 words that come up in your mind when thinking about Organization X?

27,8 % of the respondents answered "premium" as the first word that comes up in their mind when thinking about Organization X.

- Why did you decide to work for Organization X?

32 % of the respondents mentioned the word "(the) brand" in their answers.

- Why do you consider Organization X an attractive employer?

32 % of the respondents mentioned the word "(the) brand" in their answers.

Primary Data

For this research, data was collected from 35 employees in total. All the interviews followed the same interview guide (see appendix 1).

Vigor

Motivation to go to work

All of all, all respondents except 2 expressed that they had positive feelings towards their work in general. They all claimed that they never or very seldom had a feeling of not wanting to go to their jobs in the mornings. It was clear that the attitude towards the working place was positive. One big reason behind this was the social culture at the working place, which was mentioned by 30 employees. They mentioned reasons such as a nice and friendly working environment, good colleagues and a relaxed working atmosphere where they felt secure and comfortable.

The 2 respondents who did not mention a positive feeling about going to work stated that they did not feel that they were getting as much attention and recognition from managers as they wanted (1 respondent) and that they did not enjoy their working tasks (1 respondent).

However, 22 respondents mentioned that they considered their tasks meaningful and that this was a reason behind the positive feelings about going to work in the morning – they felt that they did important tasks.

However, even though almost all respondents expressed positive feelings towards going to work in the morning, 11 of them plus the other 2 also mentioned that there could be days where they felt less positive. This was usually due to a stressful time at work, or the opposite – a very calm period where not much happens.

The brand was not mentioned specifically by anyone.

Motivation to overcome difficulties in work situations

The respondents also had similar answers on the question regarding what drives them to tackle problems and difficulties in their work. All of them emphasized that the will to perform and succeed with their tasks was the biggest drive. However, 3 respondents mentioned that their biggest drive was not to face negative consequences such as bad feedback from managers and colleagues.

The 7 respondents who did only have a temporary employment contracts all stressed the fact that they strived for a permanent contract as a factor for solving problems - they wanted to prove their efficiency and problem solving skills. The respondents with a permanent contract also talked about performance, results and success, but did not mention it in terms of it being stressful.

When asked why the respondents with temporary contracts were so eager to get permanent employments in this particular organization, all of them answered that they wanted to be part of such a well-known, successful and high status brand.

Willingness to put effort into work

All of the respondents mentioned that they felt that they put *much* effort into their work. For those with temporary contracts, the employment situation was again brought up as a reason for this effort. 10 of the other respondents explained that they were keen on performing in order to advance within the company. 5 respondents answered that they put much effort to their work, since they experienced that managers and colleagues had high expectations on their performance.

When they were asked why they were so eager to either advance in the company or achieve a permanent contract, 8 of the respondents mentioned that they enjoyed the social working environment, 7 emphasized the benefits within the company - such as company cars - and in total 27 of the respondents expressed that they wanted to work for the organization due to the following reasons: good reputation (15 respondents), global successfulness (8 respondents), well-known brand and products (12 respondents) and that the luxuriousness (4 respondents) and high status of the brand (20 respondents).

Another reason for this effort was the will to perform and thereby contribute to the success of the brand. 18 of the respondents stated that they wanted to be part of the successful reputation of the brand and that they thereby were willing to put much effort into their work every day.

Dedication

Pride in the work

All of the respondents said that they were proud of their achievements and results. When asked why they felt proud of working for Organization X, all of the respondents again mentioned that the brand strongly contributed to their feeling of pride. They mentioned

factors such as brand reputation (31 respondents), great products (27 respondents), high status brand (21 respondents) and premium brand (30 respondents) as drivers for their pride.

In addition, 16 respondents mentioned that they felt proud of putting so much effort into their work and felt satisfied with the outcome. 15 of them further mentioned that they were proud of being part of and contribute to such a successful brand and organization as Organization X.

However, 5 respondents mentioned that they did not feel that they achieved enough recognition from their managers for their contributions. They thought that they would feel more proud if they got recognition for their successful achievements more often.

Feelings of meaningfulness in work

28 respondents considered their work meaningful and 7 were more reluctant. Those 7 did find their tasks meaningful in general, but did not always understand the value of their contributions and felt that they did not always see in what way their work contributed to the success of the company – they just believed that it did from a gut feeling.

When asked if the respondents felt that they were a part of the successful brand of Organization X, all of them agreed without a doubt. No one had to think twice – everyone answered yes immediately.

When asked why the respondents' work contributions were important, they mentioned reasons such as: “no one else in the organization can do what I am doing”, “I understand that my work makes a difference”, “I feel that my work contributes to the success of the organization”. It was obvious that all respondents felt that what they do contributes to the success of the organization.

However, 3 respondents emphasized that they believed that managers should put more focus on discussing the meaningfulness of their employees' accomplishments individually with the employee and/or with the whole team.

When asked what sort of success, 23 respondents mentioned “successful brand/organization” or “strengthening the brand” as a reason. 8 of them addressed financial success and additionally 9 pointed out success in relationships with customers and dealerships.

Feeling of having a purpose at work

The answers regarding purpose of the work were very similar to the answers regarding meaningfulness above. However, 25 respondents did again mention “success of the brand” as a purpose of their work. In addition, 5 respondents pointed out that a purpose of their work also is success of their department and/or team, and 10 mentioned financial success for the department, team and organization as a whole.

Absorption

The feeling that time flies at work

All except 2 of the respondents stated that they were *very* seldom bored at work. They enjoyed most of their daily tasks and the social environment. 22 of them mentioned that they felt this joy, since they felt proud of working for Organization X. They emphasized the following factors: successful brand (18 respondents), well-known brand and organization globally (12 respondents) and produced premium products that they felt proud of representing (21 respondents).

3 of the respondents even mentioned that “joy” is one of the brand values for Organization X.

29 of the respondents further stated that the social environment and nice and friendly atmosphere strongly contributed to the joyous feeling at work.

2 respondents stated that they felt bored at work most of the time. The reason behind this was for one respondent that he/she did not find the tasks interesting and the other one did not feel that his/her work was challenging enough. However, they both emphasized that the social aspect of the work was positive.

Total focus on the work – forgetting everything else & difficulties to detach from work

22 of the respondents stated that they sometimes found it hard to detach from work. This could be for reasons such as: holding deadlines/time pressure, pressure from managers or simply just that they were very engaged in that specific task and wanted to get it done effectively and quickly.

9 respondents explained that they usually did not have difficulties to detach from work.

4 respondents expressed that they had no problems at all to detach from work at any time.

Every respondent answered yes to the question regarding if they often thought about work in their spare time. However, 25 of them did not see this as problematic, since they felt that they did not usually get stressed by thinking about work on their spare time.

3 of the respondents explained that they sometimes felt stressed thinking about work and that they saw this as a problem – however, not a major one. 15 of the respondents mentioned that they found it hard not to think about work on their spare time, since they easily got reminded of the products and the brand in their everyday life. 2 of them again mentioned that this rather made them feel proud than stressed out.

Furthermore, 14 of the respondents explained that they thought more about work in their spare time during certain periods, e.g. by the end of the year and/or month or if there was something particular coming up in the closest future that needed preparation.

12 respondents stated that they often thought about non-work related things while working. However, 23 of the respondents pointed out that they sometimes had difficulties focusing on their work, due to private reasons. However, none of the respondents believed that this was a major issue.

The brand was not brought up particularly on this topics.

Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

Finally, all of the respondents mentioned the brand as one of the first factors that influence their engagement in their work. They emphasized the brand's success, good reputation globally and exclusive products as reasons for this. 19 of them stated that they felt proud of working for the organization, and saw this as a reason for their engagement. 31 of the respondents also mentioned the friendly social atmosphere and additionally 11 pointed out the benefits of working for the organizations, e.g. company cars and travels. 15 respondents mentioned that they felt that their contributions were important to the organization.

12 of the respondents mentioned education as a factor that could influence their engagement positively. One of them even stated: "We work for such a fantastic brand – why don't we get more educated about it?" Their needs for education were different, but overall they mentioned areas of leadership (3 respondents), effectiveness in working (6 respondents), excel education (4 respondents) and brand related trainings (11 respondents).

5 respondents (all of them were on temporary contracts) explained that they would feel even more engaged if they felt more secure in their positions and if the management showed more responsibility in discussing their potential future in the organization.

15 of the respondents mentioned that they wanted to have more frequent information about other departments and colleagues, 9 of them brought up that the quarterly Associates Meetings were good forums for this, but that they would appreciate those sorts of updates more often. They believed that this could improve the ambition to support each other and work together as a team – even over the department borders.

Additionally, 2 respondents said that they could not think of any improvements.

4.2 Analysis

SECONDARY DATA

What could be analyzed from the secondary data is first of all something as fundamental as that one third of the respondents clearly find the brand being 1) a reason for why they decided to start working for Organization X and 2) what they find attractive about the organization as an employer. This is an important foundation when analyzing the primary data, since it shows that there tend to be a significant positive attitude towards the brand.

Furthermore, the word “Premium” was the top 1 word that came up in nearly one third of the respondents’ minds when thinking of Organization X. This surely indicates that the fact that the brand has a premium status is a strong reason for the respondents’ positive attitudes towards it. It also indicates that Organization X has truly managed a successful Employer Branding in this sense, since the Premium value has been clearly understood and adopted successfully by the employees.

When analyzing the primary data below, the brand’s role will be connected to the concept of Employee Engagement.

PRIMARY DATA

The empirical investigation filled two purposes. First, it needed to sort out whether the respondents actually were to be considered as engaged. The interview questions derived from the corner stone concepts of Employee Engagement and with them as a basis, it could easily be confirmed that all respondents in the research were somewhat engaged. However, 2 respondents were radically less engaged and the other 33. This is important to keep in mind, since the research questions cannot be solved if the respondents turned out not to be engaged at all – which was not the case for this research.

The second purpose of the empirical investigation was to explore whether the brand played a considerable role in creating this engagement. In order to do this, the analysis will focus on to what extend and in which way the brand was mentioned in the interviewees’ answers – or not. It was therefore important that the interviewer did not lead the respondents into talking about the brand. They had to think of it themselves when answering the questions. If the brand was

frequently mentioned by respondents in certain questions, it can be assumed that the brand as an engagement factor is of particular importance for that specific questions(s) – meaning, that specific corner stone of the concept Employee Engagement.

Similarities

An overall reflection when analyzing the empirical data, is that the respondents had very similar answers to many of the questions - especially when referring to the brand. Expressions such as “good brand reputation”, “high status”, “global success” and “premium” were all common among the respondents when referring to the brand and why they had positive feelings towards working with it – regardless of question asked. It is thereby obvious that Organization X has been effective in communicating not only the brand values, but also the current status of the brand when it comes to e.g. market shares, financial aspects, competitor comparisons or other factors that indicates an organization’s success. More importantly, they have managed to communicate this information in a coherent way within to organization, meaning that the employees tend to have the same way of describing the brand, which according to Miles and Mangold (2004) is important when managing Employer Branding. Hence, Organization X seems to have managed a successful Employer Branding strategy. According to Miles and Mangold (2004) it is crucial for organizations to communicate the same brand image in all situations, to all employees. The fact the respondents’ expressions of the brand were so similar, indicates that Organization X has succeeded with this. For example, it was frequently expressed by many respondents that they felt that they contributed to the success of the organization. They mentioned this specifically in questions related to:

- How much effort they put into their work (vigor)
- Motivation to go to work (vigor)
- If the employee is driven by the goal of a successful organization (vigor)
- Pride (dedication)
- Meaningfulness of their work (dedication)
- Importance of their contributions (dedication)
- Purpose of their work (dedication)

This is also a sign of successful Employer Branding, since the aim of this concept is to make employees feel that they work for a good employer, whose success they want to contribute to (Sehgal and Malati, 2013).

Vigor, Dedication and Absorption

Below is an analysis of the Employee Engagement corner stones, based on the empirical investigation:

Vigor

Vigor is according to Schaufeli et. Al (2002) and Sarti (2014) referring to the level of energy that the employee has during his or her work. It is also referring to the amount of effort he or she puts into the work and his or her persistence when facing difficulties (Schaufeli et. al, 2002; Sarti, 2014) and whether the employee is driven by the goal of a successful company (Sarti, 2014).

What is clear when analyzing the interview results is that the respondents did see the brand as a reason for putting much effort into their work. More than half of them mentioned that they wanted to contribute to the successful reputation of the brand and that they thereby were keen on putting much effort into their work. However, the brand was not mentioned by any respondent when asked: *When you wake up in the morning, do you feel like going to work? Why/why not? or How do you handle difficulties at work? What drives you? This* could indicate that the brand plays a stronger role for the engagement long-term than on a day-to-day basis. The employees might not reflect upon the brand on a daily basis, but when thinking in a long-term perspective, it seems to be a more crucial factor for their engagement. It also indicates that the brand has a strong impact on the factor of effort.

When asked *How do you handle difficulties at work? What drives you?*, the respondents answered that they wanted to perform well, but did not mention the brand as a particular reason. However, the respondents on temporary contracts explained that the reason why they wanted to perform well was to get a permanent contract within Organization X. Further, when asked why this was so important, the answer was that they wanted to work in such a successful, well-known and high status organization. So from a long-term perspective, one could say that the employees drive to perform in general is based on the brand and the will to be part of the organization. It is likely to assume, that this is the case even for employees with permanent contracts, even though they did not mention it specifically.

Dedication

It can be stated that the questions related to Dedication were the ones where the participants most frequently mentioned the brand.

First of all, it is clear that the respondents felt proud of their work, since they felt that they contributed to the success of the organization and the brand. This pride was however not only mentioned in questions related to Dedication, but was frequently mentioned even in questions referring to Vigor. The respondents also felt that their work thereby was meaningful, even though they did not always understand in detail how their contributions added value to the organization. However, they were still convinced that their work made a difference for the brand. The “success of the brand” was a commonly expressed reason behind why the respondents felt pride, meaningfulness and purpose of their work.

This is interesting, since it shows that the employees seem to care for the brand’s success, and not only their own working situation in general, which according to Quirke (2008) is a definition of Employee Engagement. The fact that the brand was a central topic when answering the dedication-related questions, shows that the brand strongly influences the respondents’ dedication – and thereby their engagement.

Further, it was also shown that the respondents believed that their work was meaningful, important and purposeful. Here they also mentioned the brand frequently when answering.

The fact that the brand was mentioned often in answers related to Dedication shows that it plays a central role for the employees for this matter. The brand thereby influences their pride, enthusiasm (Schaufeli et. al, 2002) and feeling of meaningfulness in the employees’ behavior (Viljevac, 2012) which are all factors creating Employee Engagement (Schaufeli et. al, 2002; Viljevac, 2012).

Absorption

First of all, the questions referring to absorption were the ones where the respondents mentioned the brand most seldom. However, a majority of the respondents did emphasize the brand as a reason for why they rarely felt bored at work. They mentioned factors such as “successful”, “well-known” and “premium” as factors creating this feeling. It was even mentioned by a few that “joy” is one of the brand’s corner stones.

Furthermore, it was clear that most of the respondents sometimes or often thought about non-work related things during working hours. On the other hand, a majority of the respondents found it hard to detach from work during their spare time. The brand was mentioned by around half of the employees as a reason for this. They emphasized that it is hard to detach from work, since they frequently got exposed to the brand on their spare time. However, no one argued that this was a problem.

Again, questions referring to Absorption were the ones where the brand was mentioned less often, compared to Vigor and Dedication. This indicates that the brand most likely plays a bigger role in driving Vigor and Dedication.

5. Conclusion and Discussions

5.1 Conclusion

What can be concluded is that the brand plays a bigger role when it comes to Vigor and Dedication than Absorption. The most employees mentioned brand as a reason for why they felt proud of their work and why they felt that their work was meaningful, important and purposeful – which are all referring to the corner stone Dedication. The brand was also mentioned when answering questions referring to motivation, effort put into work and how driven the employee is to strive towards a successful organization, which are connected to Vigor.

Vigor and Dedication are both important corner stones of Employee Engagement, and knowing that the brand can influence these among employees can indicate to organizations to put more focus on communicating the brand values. For public relations practitioners and internal communicators, it is of great importance to have an understanding of the brand's power of increasing especially employees' Vigor and Dedication and thereby Employee Engagement. Focus can then be put on communicating brand values internally, e.g. offer brand trainings to increase employees' knowledge and passion for the brand.

It is in other words important that the organization focuses on Employer Branding, not only in order to create loyal employees, but to also create engaged employees who will work effectively towards the goal of a successful organization.

It was also shown that employees tended to wish for more brand related trainings and activities, which according to Albrecht (2010) is one of the key drivers of Employee Engagement. This could, as mentioned above, therefore be a good tool in order to strengthen the brand values among them and thereby create a stronger Dedication.

What is important to keep in mind is that the employee is more likely to be influenced positively in terms of engagement in the beginning of his/her career within the organization (Mishra et. al., 2014). Internal communication professionals should therefore keep in mind to offer brand related activities immediately when the employee starts, for example brand

trainings or workshops. This in order to as quickly as possible create an engagement within the employee, by trigger his/her Vigor and Dedication.

Finally, it can be stated that the results of this research indicates that the Premium brand can work as a key driver for two out of three corner stones of Employee Engagement: Vigor and Dedication. It can therefore truly be argued to be a relevant strategy for Premium organizations to focus on communicating their brand values to employees – preferably at an early stage in their employment – in order to increase the Employee Engagement.

5.2 Reflections and Directions for Further Research

This research chose to focus on three specific corner stones of Employee Engagement: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption. The results of the empirical investigation showed that the brand influences Vigor and Dedication stronger than Absorption. Absorption was thereby found to be the factor which did not have a significant correlation to the brand.

However, it is important to keep in mind that this research was conducted as a case study, meaning that one specific organization served as the foundation for the entire empirical investigation. When conducting case studies, it should always be taken into consideration that there might be factors influencing the results that are based on particular circumstances within the organization of choice. In other words, if the study were conducted with another organization as a case, the results might look differently. It can thereby be argued that case studies make it more difficult for the researcher to make generalizations or apply results on other cases than the one at hand. The researcher should therefore be careful when claiming that the results are applicable to other organizations than the one investigated.

However, what can be argued for this specific research is that the result indicates that the brand influences Vigor and Dedication more than Absorption in a Premium brand organization. One suggestion for future research would be to make a comparative study, including more than one organization. The research should then focus on comparing the results in order to be able to strengthen or deny the arguments.

This specific research has contributed to the research field of Employee Engagement, since it has involved the brand as a key driver. The literature so far has pointed out key drivers such as *good organizational climate, autonomy, trust for the management, recognition of employees' performances* etc. These factors have been stated in the theoretical chapter. This

research has contributed to a possibility to add “the brand” to the list of key drivers of Employee Engagement, meaning that it has potentially shown a new angle when studying Employee Engagement within Premium brand organizations – and maybe even in other segments. This should be investigated further.

For Premium brand organizations this should be taken into consideration on managerial level, when forming strategies for internal communication. Since the brand might increase the Vigor and Dedication among employees and thereby also the engagement, it could for example be a reasonable strategy to focus on arranging brand related activities (e.g. visit to headquarters, workshops, and conferences), brand trainings to increase employees knowledge and passion for the brand. It is important that these activities are implemented already when the employee starts in the organization.

6. Literature

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7. Appendix 1.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Vigor

- When you wake up in the morning, do you feel like going to work? Why/why not?
- How do you handle difficulties at work? What drives you?
- Do you feel that you put as much effort as possible to your work? Why/why not?
What drives this effort?

Dedication

- Are you proud of your work? Are you proud of where you work? Are you proud of your results? Why/Why not?
- Do you find your work meaningful? Why?
- (If yes) Why are your contributions important?
- What is your purpose with your work? Why?

Absorption

- Are you often bored at work? Why/why not?
- Do you often find it hard to detach from work? Why/Why not?
- Do you often think about work at your spare time? Why/Why not?
- Do you often think about non-work related things while you are at work?

Employee Engagement Key Drivers

- What would you say influences your engagement in your organization?
- Is there anything you would wish that your organization would offer/do/improve in order to make you feel more engaged in your work?