Non-core business talent attraction

A qualitative study exploring talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business.

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Abstract:

Title: Non-core business talent attraction
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Research Question and Purpose: The research question will investigate what talent attraction looks like in non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business. The purpose of this thesis is to explore talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business.

Methodology: The research paradigm is a relativist ontology with a social constructivist epistemology. A qualitative method is the foundation for extracting empirical data. The research approach is inductive.

Theoretical Perspective: To understand the phenomenon, existing research and theories will be used to interpret the collected empirical data. The theoretical perspective includes the halo effect, brand extension, and corporate brand and identity research.

Empirical Data: The study is based on empirical data from a qualitative method, which extracts values, opinions, and information from Swedish professionals in HR and marketing, working at non-core businesses with a shared brand with a core company operating in another industry.

Findings and Conclusions: The main finding is that the non-core businesses in the study found the shared brand to affect their talent attraction in a predominantly positive way. The shared brand offers a sense of security, which is a significant factor that attracts talent. The non-core businesses agreed on a shared reputation with the core businesses and experienced a positive halo effect. However, there is a risk linked to the halo effect turning negative due to a scandal at the core business. Since the non-core business' brand is closely related to another industry, they might have to be even more precise than other companies in their industry. Values and employer branding are fundamental aspects when attracting talent, and there exists a particular person-organization fit. The non-core businesses can also benefit from being part of a company group with a shared brand, if talent can move between the different companies.

Theoretical Implications: This research study has contributed to theory by showcasing the importance of trust, security, and safety in a brand, that non-core businesses might not want to attract the same talents as their competitors in the same industry, that the non-core and the

core business share reputation due to a halo effect and that a shared recruitment platform is beneficial for concerns.

Managerial Implications: The managerial implications offer suggestions to both HR and strategic marketing departments at companies. The suggestions include; making sure that the employer brand showcases security, dare to collaborate with other companies in the concern, use a shared recruitment platform in the concern to collect as much talent as possible, make it easier for talent to move between companies in the concern, keeping the core business brand for your brand extension might be a good idea, be aware of scandal scenarios and a negative halo effect, dare to be innovative at the non-core business' employer branding and make it clear what the non-core business does and what products it offers.

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I am so very happy to present this master's thesis to you! Doing research is not always easy, if it is ever easy. When conducting this study, I simply met a lot of obstacles that I never thought I would have to face.
But, with that being said, there are some people that I would like to say thank you to.

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Lund, 2021-05-31

Karin Törnblad Davidsson

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1. Introduction and Background:

A sunny noon in March, I was sitting on the train between Lund and my hometown of Gothenburg. Gazing out the window, daydreaming, and just watching the buildings pass by. Suddenly, in Ängelholm, a large facility caught my attention with a sign saying "STENA", but it was far away from the sea.
As a Gothenburg native, I'm so very into the idea that the Stena brand refers to the ferries taking you to Denmark for the day. But this facility belonged to their recycling company, Stena Recycling, which has nothing to do with the ferries, apart from the brand.

For the rest of the train ride, I could not help to think about this exciting subject; how does that work out? Companies sharing the same brand but operating in entirely different industries. There must be challenges there to explore, mustn't there?
Because, when you carry a brand that kind of belongs to, or is heavily associated with, another industry or business area - isn't it hard to attract the most talented employees then? Are they sharing the same employer brand? I wanted to know everything about it!

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"To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace", was famously stated by Douglas Conant, the former CEO of the Campbell Soup Company (Conant Leadership, 2020). And it sure is essential to win in the workplace. Research has shown that happy employees are 13% more productive at work when they are happy (University of Oxford, 2019), and to show potential and future employees that your workplace is a happy workplace, and perhaps even an innovative career opportunity promising and caretaking one, a strong employer branding is needed.

Employer branding has grown into a significant activity performed at companies, which is understandable when 56% of adults in the U.S and Europe prioritize the workplace culture over salary (Forbes, 2020). Knowing that potential employees care more about the workplace culture than the salary puts a lot of importance on constructing a strong, steady, and honest employer brand for companies seeking talent.

This thesis will dig deeper into the role of the employer brand, because what happens when completely different industries share the same brand name?
Attracting talented workforce and employees with your employer brand might be a relatively easy task when knowing that your brand name and company is operating in a specific industry or business area, which needs to attract a particular type of professionals, so does it matter if the same employer brand is also trying to attract professionals in other fields? Fields that require different types of professionals?

Another inspiration for this thesis is Virgin. The American company Virgin has been operating in a wide range of industries since 1970. The industries and business areas include

the record label industry, the video game industry, the airline industry, the soft drink industry, and many, many more (Virgin, 2021).

All of those widely diverse and different industries are all represented by the same Virgin brand, which is highly interesting - how does it work out? How can all of those various industries share the same brand name and still manage to attract the most talented employees in their specific industry?

1.1 Research Question:

To conclude, this master's thesis will investigate the research question:

**What does talent attraction look like in non-core businesses
sharing the name of the core business?**

There will be examined what talent attraction looks like and how it works out in the non-core businesses sharing the name of their core business. Are there challenges or advantages linked to sharing the same brand and name? Lastly, why is this relevant for future research and companies?

With help from qualitative interviews with three Swedish non-core businesses, I will dig deeper into the fundamentals of this phenomenon in order to answer the research question.

1.2 Purpose:

The purpose of this master's thesis is to explore talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business.

The chosen research topic is essential to explore due to the current lack of research in the field of non-core businesses' employer branding and talent attraction in direct relationship with the brand and name they share with their core business.

As there exist many concerns and company groups around the world with a core business and a non-core business operating in different industries, this research question is highly relevant. This thesis will examine talent attraction, what it looks like, why it's relevant and if there exist challenges or/and advantages related to the shared brand. It will dig deep into what the businesses themselves think about sharing the brand and hopefully offer some kind of guidance to company groups thinking about how the shared brand affects the industry-specific talent attraction.

The purpose is therefore to help examine a field of employer branding that has yet not been explored and consequently has a lot to offer professionals working in both marketing and HR departments all over the world.

Marketing is all about creating value for the consumers, and I believe that value is created because of talented people. Extraordinary and talented people are carrying experience and knowledge that can enhance a company's current value proposition and make it even better.

To get the possibility of recruiting those talented people, the companies also need to attract them, which is done with a well-performed and innovative employer branding.

As famously stated by Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin Group, "Customers do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the customers" (Parment, Dyhre & Lutz 2017, 9).
To create value for your customers, you need to care for your employees and attract the talented workforce that is the most fitting for your company.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to offer knowledge that makes it possible for non-core businesses to understand their talent attraction better - creating a possibility for them to attract the best possible talents and extract even more value in the future.

2. Literature Review:

This literature review will guide you through some important theories and concepts chosen to help answer the research question of this thesis. Since there does not exist previous research in this specific field, talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business, I have found research related to the topic. Therefore, this literature review includes previous research in employer branding, the halo effect, brand extension, corporate brand identity and security.

2.1 Employer branding:

The concept of employer branding was established in 1996 at London Business School by the researchers Barrow and Ambler, and is defined as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". Employer branding at a company exists in order to show potential and future employees at the labor market which associations the brand is linked to, and this can be linked to many different factors such as salary, benefits, status, experiences, possibilities for climbing the career ladder and also the more emotional and soft parts of working at the specific company. (Parment, Dyhre & Lutz 2017, 7-8)
Employer branding is important for many reasons, but one of the most central ones is that a strong employer brand is linked to being an attracting employer, which is both economic and profitable - two vital things for a profit-driven company. This can be seen where highly attractive companies have the possibility to keep the salaries normal, since their employer brand is so strong that the talented workforce want to work for them and their satisfying approach anyways (ibid.).

Arachchige and Robertson (2011) explains how there is increasing evidence that employers need to give greater emphasis to attract the right employees to meet their goals of maximizing organizational value and success, and this is where the employer branding is an important focus. The organizations and companies need to develop their images as employers in order to appear attractive to the best possible workforce.

To further explain just why employer branding is important, the service-profit chain will be presented, since it explains just how qualified, uncompromising but flexible and social employees are important for organizations. The service-profit chain shows the relationship between how the employee and the customer are perceived.

At the top of the chain is the internal service quality in the organization, which is about attracting, recruiting and educating the right workforce and also offering a satisfying environment at the workplace. Having a strong internal service quality leads to satisfied and productive employees, which further leads on to a more effective value production for the customers. Satisfied customers will eventually come back to consume at the company again, or using word-of-mouth to spread the satisfaction to other consumers that are potential future customers of the company.

The final outcome of this service-profit chain is that the company is profitable and has the possibility to continue to grow. (Heskett et.al 1997, 2003), (Milliman et.al 2008). Attracting the best and most fitting workforce to your company can easily lead to growth and economic profitability, which means that employer branding is highly important and even vital for companies to work with.

Backhaus (2016) argues that all employers do have a brand, but that not all employers engage effectively in branding efforts to clearly differentiate themselves as employers. The purpose of employer branding is to present a positive and attractive image to current and potential employees, and it is also a reputational factor to add to the company's competitive advantage. The employer brand and image is there to offer a positive image of the company or the organization, but it is also a way to communicate the organization's employment personality, because the perception of an organization's employer image is actually driving the employer attraction among potential recruits (Turban & Greening, 1997).

What Turban & Greening (1997) also found was that there is a relationship between firms' corporate social performance and their reputation and attractiveness as employers. Their conclusion was that firms with a higher degree of corporate social performance also have a more positive reputation and are also more attractive employers than firms with low degrees of corporate social performance, which showcases that corporate social performance might lead to competitive advantages for companies.

Judge and Cable (1997) argues that a well-differentiated employer image enables job seekers to understand the organization's values, as well as enabling the potential employees to find similarities between themselves and the organization. The findings were that there exists a desire for a person-organization fit, which is strongly related to organizational attraction. The researcher meant that a critical function of the employment interview was the assessment of applicants' values congruence with recruiting organizations. The interviewers based their person-organization fit evaluations on the congruence between their perception of the applicants' values and their organizations values.

A person-organization fit does not have to be fixed to a certain type of organization or industry, according to Chatman et al (1991) even organizations that appear highly similar, for instance, accounting firms as a group, can vary widely when it comes to their underlying

value structure. Another finding in this study was that person-organization fit was significantly related to individual commitment and satisfaction. For an individual to be satisfied and attached to the organization, the person may need both task competency and a value congruence system with the central values of the organization (ibid.).

2.2 The Halo Effect:

The halo effect is a type of cognitive bias in which our overall impression of a person influences how we feel and think about his or her character, which can be exemplified with thinking that the overall impression of a person is that he or she is smart - which impacts your evaluation of that person's specific traits, for instance that he or she also is smart. This can take the form of thinking that a person who is kind is also more likable or intelligent, in other words, it may create biased judgements (Cherry, 2020).

Rosenzweig (2007) links the halo effect with the business world by showcasing an example; imagine a company that is doing well. The company has rising sales, high profits and a sharply increasing stock price. The tendency is to infer that the company has a sound strategy, a visionary leader, motivated employees, an excellent customer orientation and a vibrant culture - but when the same company suffers a decline, many people will be quick to conclude that the company's strategy went wrong, that the people became complacent, that they neglected their customers and that their culture became stodgy.
But in reality, things might not have changed just so much, if they even changed at all. What is concluded here is that a company's performance creates an overall impression that shapes how we perceive its strategy, leaders, employees, culture and other elements (Rosenzweig, 2007). What has been explained here is what the halo effect looks like when linked to the business world and companies on the market.

It's also possible to link the halo effect directly to employer branding. A recent trend at the career community site Linkedin is to brand yourself, as an individual person, as a, for instance, "ex-Apple" or "ex-Google" employee. It can be assumed that people are using this branding technique because they want the buyer, which in this case could be a recruiter or a hiring manager, to associate you with the companies. If the companies brand reputations are saying "innovative, driven and highly successful", you too are all of that in the recruiters eyes (Mulhall, 2020).
This means that having a good employer branding can help employees in their careers even after they have worked at the company, that's how strong an influential a well-worked and fully functioning employer brand can be. It can create a halo effect for all of the people working at the company, even after working hours.

2.3 Brand Extension:

The value of a brand name can be measured in terms of not only the advantages it provides in its present competitive arena - but also the potential advantages it offers in untapped markets (Srivastava and Shocker, 1991). Brand extension means that an already established brand name launches new products, and it is one of the most frequently used branding strategies

(Völckner & Sattler, 2006). It is assumed that brands that are already known and recognized require lower new product introduction expenses, such as for instance advertising, trade deals and price promotions (Collins-Dodd, Louviere & Tauber in Völckner & Sattler, 2006). The fact that the brand extension can profit off the mother company's good reputation might be a reason for brand extensions to have become such a popular growth strategy. Examples of brand extensions are Apple extending from computers and mobile phones to payment solutions, or Porsche extending from car manufacturing to designing sunglasses and bags.

But the fact that it might be economical to help the new extension grow with the help of an already established brand might not be enough for the brand extension to be a success. Bottomley and Holden (2001) states that the consumers' evaluations of brand extensions are determined primarily by the quality of the parent brand and the fit between the original and extension product categories. The quality of the parent brand is a significant and important predictor of how consumers evaluate the extension of the brand. It was also discovered that the evaluation of the brand extension was dependent on interactions of the quality of the parent brand with the complementarity and transferability of assets and skills between the original and extension product categories and the perceived difficulty of making the extension.

Völckner & Sattler (2006) states that the most important factors that significantly influence brand extension success are the fit between the parent brand and the extension product, the marketing support, the parent-brand conviction, retailer acceptance and the parent-brand experience. Even Aaker & Keller (1990) argues that the relationship between the original and the extension product classes, with other words "the fit", has an interactive effect on evaluation of a brand extension. They came to the conclusion that the relationship of a positive quality image for the original brand with the evaluation of a brand extension was strong only when there was a basis of fit between the two product classes.
Additionally, Broniarczyk & Alba (1994) argues strong evidence for the importance of brand-specific association. When a brand's association is relevant in the extension category, it is more preferred as an extension than a brand from its original product category possessing higher affect. The role of product category similarity in brand extension judgements is also important, it was found that a brand extension was more preferred in a dissimilar category that valued its association, than in a similar category that did not value its association.

2.4 Corporate Brand Identity:

A corporate brand differs from product brands since they have a broader focus on the whole organization behind the brand, and their communication domain is also encompassing multiple stakeholders, not only customers.
A corporate brand is also often guided by values that are closely linked to the company's culture and the personal values of its founder, where product brands are more likely to have values created by brand strategists (Tarnovskaya, 2017 p.46-47).
Corporate branding can also be explained as a mix of the values associated with the brand and which represent an informal contact between the institutional brand and its various stakeholders (Balmer, 2008).

Aaker (2004) explains the corporate brand as what defines the firm and will deliver and stand behind the offering that the customer will buy and use. An example where the master brand has a driving role in creating branded houses like, for instance, Sony, Samsung and IBM. Those branded houses have product brands which consist largely of the corporate brand plus an additional description, for instance the Samsung Galaxy phone. This shows that the corporate brand, as a master brand, has the ability to maximize the brand portfolio goals and generate leverage, synergy and clarity.

According to Tarnovskaya (2017) there has been a growing interest in corporate marketing and corporate branding during the last two decades, and one of the reasons is because international firms want to streamline their product brand portfolios and unite them under a consistent corporate brand umbrella. Yu (2021) explains umbrella branding as different from independent branding since the former is sharing the brand name with different types of products or services produced by the same firm. This means that consumers will be highly aware of the associations between the different products and services, because they are all sharing the same brand name. This umbrella branding is also called a branded house, and a model showcasing the opposite situation is called 'house of brands' instead. The house of brands can be exemplified with Procter & Gamble, the corporate brand, which carries many different product brands, for instance Gillette, Olay, Pampers and Oral B.

When discussing this corporate brand alignment, it is possible to use the Vision-Culture-Image (IVC) model by Hatch & Schultz (2003) in order to explore underlying components in the corporate brand. The model helps explain that there is a strong potential that needs to be recognized, which is that the corporate brand can actually work as a gravitation point for the organization as well as an attraction center for the stakeholders. It also helps managers analyse context in terms of the alignment between strategic vision, organisational culture and corporate image. It is explained that corporate branding is about both differentiation and belonging, and that when it works, it is because it expresses the values and sources of desire that attract key stakeholders to the organisation and makes them feel a sense of belonging with the organisation.
The IVC model consists of the strategic vision, organisational culture and corporate images, which are all interconnected with each other in the corporate branding process.

The strategic vision is the central idea behind the company and embodies or expresses the top management's aspiration for what the company will achieve in the future. The organisational culture is more about the internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embodies the company's heritage and communicates this to the company's members. The culture can be seen and experienced in the ways that employees feel about the company that they work for. Lastly, the corporate images are views of the organisation that are developed by the company's stakeholders. It's much more about the outside world's impression of the company. The conclusion for this model is that corporate brands need to be managed in relation to the interplay between these three elements, and in order to achieve this there is a

need for an effective dialogue between top management, external stakeholders and members of the organisational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

Strack (2014) explains how consumption today is led by the digitally native Millennial generation, which here is referring to people in ages between 18 and 34 years old. Those consumers are increasingly requiring holistic and authentic experiences when they interact with companies, they even think that the one way in which a company can engage with them is by having an authentic purpose.
Furthermore, brand experiences are largely shaped by the people on the front lines at the companies, the ones interacting with customers on a daily basis - the employees have become brand ambassadors for their employers.
This concept of integrated and employee-powered marketing is called 'one branding'. In order to achieve the one branding, the company's needs to have a fully functioning employer branding as well, but not even 10% of prospective employees during job interviews know the key elements of the employer's brand (ibid.).

Young employees demand their voices to be heard, and when the chief HR officer at Adidas Group wanted to build their employer branding story, she based it on how the employees perceived the company. She stated that a success factor, when building the employer brand, was that the employees could freely share their experiences with the company's culture online. It was described as winning your employees over as brand ambassador (ibid.).

2.5 Security:

Academic Work, a Swedish staffing company focusing on young professionals, has created the Young Professional Attraction Index (YPAI). The index focuses on highlighting what young professionals value when they are choosing where to work. One important aspect they value and are searching for in an employer is security. Security used to refer to secure employment conditions for the employees, but nowadays it actually refers to even more. Young professionals today want to work for employers and at workplaces where they feel secure, they do not want to be threatened, discriminated against or harassed (Academic Work, 2019).

Maslow (1943) explains how humans prioritize their behaviors, and it is depicted with help of his behavioral hierarchy pyramid consisting of five levels; physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, esteem needs and lastly the need for self-actualization.
One level does not have to be one hundred percent satisfied before the next need emerges, but human activities will be more directed towards the next set of needs when the previous one has been more or less satisfied (McLeod, 2018). The second level of Maslow's behavioral hierarchy is the need for safety, which includes personal security, employment, resources, health and property (ibid.).
The need for safety can impact your overall satisfaction with your workplace, for instance, if you are providing for your family you might not want to work for an employer that does not feel stable and secure. The safety need may also show as feeling emotionally safe and

supported at the workplace, or not having to worry about the risk of attaining an injury at work (Indeed, 2020). This means that feeling secure and safe is not only beneficial at a workplace, but much more since it is a basic and highly important human need.

Bortz (2021) states that the definition of job security is to have a job that you are not in danger of losing anytime soon and that the peace of mind coming with this security is worth as much as a pay increase. He continues to explain that having leaders at organizations that understand the definition of job security and the implications of it is critical to business success. Which means that job security is not only beneficial to the employees, but to the employers as well.

Mcfeely and Wigert (2019) reports that the cost of replacing an individual employee can range from a half to two times the employee's annual salary. 52% of the employee's that left the company or organization voluntarily say that their managers could have done something in order to prevent them from leaving (ibid.). When a companies' employees voluntarily leave, there is a huge problem for them since losing your best people also means losing talent, innovators and problem solvers.
In other words, it is extremely important for both employees and employers to have a secure and safe workplace and it is highly beneficial for every actor.

Relojo-Howell (2019) explains how feeling safe, secure and able to work without fear of negative consequences relies on feeling psychologically safe and that the employees should be comfortable being themselves. At workplaces where the employees feel psychologically safe, people are respecting each other and feel accepted themselves.
At workplaces where things such as criticism, blame and humiliation appear, the employees might be so busy being frightened or watching their own backs that they stop being creative or stop thinking strategically (ibid.).
Relojo-Howell (2019) continues to explain what to do in order to foster this psychological safety at workplaces, and starts off by explaining the importance of not supporting behaviors that are damaging to teams. He also states that promoting respect, welcoming curiosity, acknowledging ideas and offering other employees lessons you learned due to mistakes.

To conclude this section referring to security, and its relationship to employers, it can be addressed that an employer radiating and showcasing securiting for their employees has much to win. It appears to be a win-win situation where the company saves money and the employees feel safer and happier, while the company also has the possibility to bring or increase the talent attraction to their organization.

3. Methodology:

This methodology part of the thesis will explain the research approach as well as the deeper philosophical underpinnings of the research approach.
Shortly, it may be addressed that the study undertakes a relativist ontology, a social constructionism epistemology, inductive approach as well as a qualitative method.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business. In order to examine this there is a need to do research both internally at the non-core business and externally with the future talented employees. Since this is not a previously known phenomenon, deep and detailed interviews will be held with people working at the HR and/or Marketing departments. This means that one part of the thesis will include a qualitative approach. Hence, this thesis will have a qualitative method.

3.1 Research Paradigm: Ontology and Epistemology

When conducting a study it is crucial to understand the nature of reality and how to examine reality, which we conclude by stating which ontology and epistemology that will be followed in the study. How we can know and understand reality plays a huge role in research since the researcher's view on this philosophical matter will affect how the research is done and written. When the ontology and epistemology are stated, it is possible to present a holistic view of how knowledge is understood, which may be called the research paradigm.

The chosen ontology in a study tells us about the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and existence. Ontology may also be explained as claims regarding the nature and structure of being, as theories of what exists. Four different types of ontologies exist, which are realism, internal realism, relativism and nominalism. (Easterby-Smith et al, p.48; Rawnsley, 1998).
An important question linked to the ontology is what truth really is, and if it's even possible to reach any true knowledge. When questioning if it's possible to reach true knowledge, we are entering the scepticism part of the philosophy, the foundation of the relativist viewpoint. In this study, a relativist ontology will be the foundation when trying to understand the nature of reality and existence. This, since the researcher's idea of reality is that any dictum being expressed is subjective and thereby directly linked to an individual's perceptions and understandings of reality (Allwood & Erikson, 2017).

The relativist ontology suggests that scientific laws are not simply out there to be discovered, but that they are created by people, and that people plainly hold different views. There are many truths existing in the world at the same time, since the facts existing in the world depend on the individual's own perceptions (Easterby-Smith et al, p.48-50).

The relativist ontology conducted in this study creates the possibility to understand and evaluate the collected empirical data from a point of view where individuals have their own, unique opinions and perceptions of reality and existence.

With that being said, the respondents in this research study all carry different experiences and viewpoints that affect their perceptions of reality and existence as much as their answers during the interviews or the surveys. Dictums being expressed by the respondents are subjective and always a part of their view on the world, and what is true for them as individuals.

This means that the truth for the respondents in this study might not be the truth for all the professionals in the world having the same position at the same type of corporation. It might not be possible to ever understand what true knowledge is, due to the fact that the scientific laws are believed to be created by individuals.

To try to understand the world with its many phenomenons, the best thing we can do is to try to understand as many individuals' perceptions and opinions about their truth's and their reality's as possible, and this is how research can extract facts and get to know the phenomenons of the world a bit better.

Epistemology refers to the study of the nature of knowledge, and related to questions such as; how do we know what we know? Examples of processes that are included in epistemology are believing, perceiving, imagining, inferring, remembering, reflecting, constructing and corroborating. The epistemology branch of philosophy struggles with possibilities and the limits of human knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al, p.47-51; Rawnsley, 1998).

This study assumes a social constructivist epistemology, which focuses on the ways that people make sense of the world by sharing their experiences with each other, mainly with help of their language. The social constructionism is an interpretive method and the essence is that the many aspects of the societal reality are determined by people, rather than external and objective factors. The focus is to collect and interpret what people are thinking and feeling, and this might be both on an individual and a collective level (Easterby-Smith et al, p.52).

The objective of this research, since assuming a social constructionism epistemology, is therefore to understand and appreciate the different experiences that the respondents have, because the interest, opinions, values and experiences of the respondents are what drives the research study. In order to understand reality, and more specifically the studied phenomenon, we need to hear the explanation from individuals, and first then, we might construct a general understanding of the situation.

Thus, the research paradigm presents a world view where there is no single truth, since individuals do have their own experiences, opinions and values. This, together with a perspective which explains that we know what we know since individuals share what they are thinking and feeling leaves us with the combination of a relativist ontology and a social constructionism epistemology. There is never one truth existing out there, but many different truths related to different individuals who have experienced different things. This is important to keep in mind when interpreting this research, since what the chosen respondents see as their truth might not be everyone's truth. What we can do in order to understand the reality is to try to gather as many individual truths as possible and then try to generalize.

3.2 Inductive Approach:

This research study uses an inductive approach and reasoning. The inductive approach uses existing knowledge or observations to make predictions about novel cases, in contradiction to the deductive approach where a hypothesis is developed from an already existing theory (Hayes et al, 2010). In the inductive approach the research begins with data collection and then the researcher will look for patterns in the collected empirical data. Observation and collected data will transform into patterns and then generalizations will be possible to make about the phenomenon.

The reason for this study to even exist was due to observations that were made about the phenomenon of shared branding. Observations were made about companies that were linked to each other with their brand names, but they operated in completely different industries. While observing this, it just struck me that this might be a challenge for those companies. To share the same brand while wanting to attract the most talented employees in their specific industry. I started to collect qualitative data in order to understand the phenomenon more deeply and see if there were patterns and generalizations to be discovered. Thus, it has been explained that the approach is inductive.

3.3 Reliability, Validity and Generalizability:

Reliability is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out, where the validity is the extent to which it gives the correct answer and if the results really measure what they are supposed to measure. It is important to remember the fact that the reliability and the validity are not symmetrical, it is possible to obtain a perfect reliability with no validity at all. Although a perfect validity would assure a perfect reliability (Kirk et al, 1986).
Explaining reliability, with other words, is that it is the consistency of a measure. It is not possible to give an exact calculation of reliability, but an estimate of it (Heale & Twycross, 2015).
Generalizability, sometimes referred to as external validity, is important to keep in mind as well since it explains if the results of the study can be applied to individuals and circumstances beyond this particular study. Theories and observations made in one context should be applicable to other defined contexts as well, and an objective is to produce a universal theory that may be applied to many contexts because of its high degree of generalizability (Easterby-Smith et al, p.99).

Although reliability, validity and generalizability seems universal, they actually mean different things within different research traditions and design. Since it has already been stated that the epistemology and viewpoint of this study is social constructionism, that is also the viewpoint that will form which questions and criterias that will be asked, applied and linked to the reliability, validity and generalizability.
In a constructionist viewpoint, the reliability is linked to if similar observations will be reached by other observers (Easterby-Smith et al, p.103). To assure that the observations in

this study also have the possibility to be reached by other observers, it is vital to explain the methods carefully and in detail.

This qualitative study consists of interviews with Swedish companies, and more specifically Swedish companies that share their brand with a core business, which makes the interviewed companies non-core businesses. To achieve a high degree of reliability, it needs to be clear what was asked during the interviews, which position the interviewed professionals at the companies had and also what type of company it was. Since the study relies on a relativist ontology, it is assumed that the individuals carry their own experiences and thoughts, and when linked to the interview part of this study it is clear that it might not be possible to yield the same answers however and whenever the measurement procedure is carried out. The people might have new experiences that have formed new and other opinions and thoughts about the asked phenomenons. An important factor here is the time aspect, since the interviewed person might not work at the company anymore, or has different responsibilities which might make it impossible to ask the same questions or get the same answers as before. As stated earlier, it is not possible to present an exact calculation of reliability, but the method can be clear and presented in a way that makes it possible for other researchers to follow it as alike as possible.

The validity in a constructionist viewpoint is linked to if a sufficient number of perspectives have been included in the study (Easterby-Smith et al, p.103). In a qualitative research method, the validity relates to how appropriate the tools, processes and data has been. This means that the validity can be related to the number of sampled companies and also if the sampled professionals working at those companies were the right interview objects to ask those questions to, and even if the questions were appropriate to answer the chosen research question. To reach a high degree of validity in this study, many companies have been chosen in order to get a better chance of collecting data from different perspectives.
If the time and resource frame as well as the limitations of the study would have been different, an even higher validity could have been reached. For instance, this could have meant interviewing a higher number of professionals working with different tasks at the same company, in order to collect data from even more and more diverse perspectives. It could also mean including a higher number of companies in total, and even interviewing companies outside of the swedish market. Obtaining a higher degree of validity could also be linked to having longer and deeper interviews with questions relating to more perspectives linked to the research question.

The generalizability in a constructionist viewpoint asks if the sample is sufficiently diverse to allow inferences to other contexts (Easterby-Smith et al, p.103). The level of generalizability for this study needs to be discussed due to the fact that only swedish companies have been part of the qualitative interviews. Another important fact to discuss is if the sampled companies can be generalized to all swedish companies or not. There is not an easy and single answer to this. The chosen companies have one two things in common; they operate on the swedish market and they share their brand with another company that can be perceived as the core business, while the interviewed companies are to be perceived as non-core

businesses. Two of the chosen non-core businesses operate in the same industry, but the core businesses that they are linked to are not.

With all this being said and discussed, it is hard to measure the degree of generalizability for this study, but most likely it will be possible to generalize the outcomes and allow inferences to other contexts consisting of a Swedish company sharing its brand with a company operating in another industry. Those external and internal factors could relate to external happenings such as a scandal changing a company's reputation or internal changes relating to individuals personal preferences.

3.4 Reflexivity:

Reflexivity is essential and potentially facilitating the understanding of both the phenomenon that is being studied and the research process itself. Reflexivity is important because it offers the researcher the opportunity to learn to reflect on her behavior and thoughts as well as the phenomenon that is being studied (Watt, 2007).
Finley (2003) explains that reflexivity in research has exploded into academic consciousness and that researchers are keen to acknowledge the situated nature of their research. They want to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their findings, and by using reflexivity it is possible to transform problems related to subjectivity into opportunities. The reflexivity should be a thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched.

Every researcher needs to reflect on themselves as researchers and offer this self-aware analysis. Talking about the dynamics between the researcher and the researched - what did I as a researcher bring into this thesis from the beginning? Did I have any assumptions and preconceptions that need to be addressed?
As stated by Wilkie (2015); we are all human beings who hold opinions and pre-formulated ideas, and those are based on our individual experiences and what we have been exposed to in our lives. It is very important to understand that the researchers personal experiences are brought into a research study as much as the respondents experiences and opinions. As previously stated, this study assumes a relativist ontology where individuals carry their own experiences, thoughts, values and opinions which can create their own truth about reality. My understanding of the world and the reality is that all of us understand the world in our own way, I believe that we interpret the world very independently. Even if a couple of humans hear the same speech or read the same text, it is not certain that all of them interpreted it the same way, which opens up for believing that all of them carry their own truth about what they experienced.

What I brought into this thesis were lived experiences where I personally thought that a company would lose legitimacy and some kind of seriousness when linked to a brand belonging to a totally different industry. An example of this is my opinions and experiences linked to how a non-core business is perceived when operating in a highly regulated and serious industry, but sharing their brand with a company operating in a less regulated and

more of a relaxed industry. Personally, I thought that the branding from the less regulated industry affected the non-core company in a negative way. I believed that there was a spill-over effect where playfulness and non-prestige applied to the highly regulated business as well, which made it seem less serious.

This thought simply came from my own personal experience, where I was used to seeing companies in certain businesses acting in certain ways. What happened during the thesis writing was that my understanding for branding became broader and I learned that not every single company in a specific industry wanted to be perceived in the same way.

When reflecting about my own preconceived notions, I realised that I had pre-formulated ideas of what I thought the reality looked like. When conducting this research study I learned new aspects about the reality and of the studied phenomenon that I did not know beforehands, and many of the outcomes surprised me.

Although I had thoughts and opinions about the phenomenon before conducting the study, it did not affect the questions I asked or what I hoped that the study would show. No research decisions were influenced by my personal opinions, since I was genuinely curious about what the reality of this phenomenon looked like.

What I did in order to keep the research study independent was to continuously think reflexively during the whole process, since I wanted to reduce the risk of my own experiences to influence the study.

3.5 Qualitative method:

The qualitative approach will consist of interviews with Swedish non-core companies. The companies chosen to be included are characterized by the fact that their brand and name are linked to both a core business and a non-core business. The reason for this is due to the fact that the research question focuses on whether the non-core businesses have difficulties or not when it comes to attracting talented employees. Hence the need to find concerns or business groups with both a core business and a non-core business that are sharing the same brand.

The sampling method for the interviews with the companies is a purposive sampling method. A purposive sampling method means that the researchers have a clear idea of what sample units that are needed according to the purposes of the study. The potential sample members are then checked in order to see if they meet the chosen criteria and if they do, they will be used as samples in the study (Easterby-Smith et al, p.82).

In this case, there was a clear understanding of which professional individuals that needed to be interviewed, namely professionals working at a non-core businesses marketing or HR department. The sample members were found by approaching the companies by email or telephone exchange, and then being helped and redirected to the desired department or employee responsible for employer branding questions.

The qualitative method will consist of in-depth qualitative interviews and the collected empirical data that comes from those interviews. Qualitative interviews are directed conversations evolving around questions and answers about a certain topic, in this case

employer branding, recruiting and the perceptions of core and non-core businesses. The interviews should provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection and explanation and elucidate subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints (Easterby-Smith et al, p.133-134). With this said, the interview's purpose will be to extract as many subjective and lived experiences and viewpoints as possible from the respondents in order to extract qualitative data.

Before collecting the qualitative data, certain preparations need to be done, above all it needs to be decided which type of interview that will be conducted. In this case, a semi-structured interview style has been chosen. The semi-structured interview is based on a list of questions that can be addressed in a flexible manner (Easterby-Smith et al, p.139). The interviews will be based on a topic guide consisting of questions and topics related to the theories, employer branding and the possible phenomenon.

The objective is to have a predestined order of topics and questions, but at the same time offering the possibility of being flexible during the interview. An example of this flexibility could be that the interviewer has the possibility to follow the respondent in their direction of topic and conversation instead of having to proceed to the next definite question, if necessary. Since there is a danger in letting the conversations during the interview go towards "data extraction" rather than "a meaningful conversation", it's important to prepare for this by designing a topic guide that reflects on how the respondents might understand and feel about certain questions (Easterby-Smith et al, p.140). This will be prepared for by doing research on the companies beforehands in order to understand what they stand for and what might be good and not so good to talk and ask about.
Another benefit of the semi-structured interview style is that the respondent can talk more freely, which makes it possible for them to express opinions and values that might not have been expressed during a more strict interview style.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all of the interviews will be held online, either through a phone call or through a video conference, depending on what the respondents are comfortable with or have the possibility to engage in.
Most preferably is to conduct the interviews through video conferences because of the ability to see face expressions, gestures and body language while interviewing them. Being able to see how the respondent moves and acts during the interview can give important insights and help the interviewer to understand that they, for instance, think a question was hard or uncomfortable to answer. Understanding signals like that can be an answer of its own and helpful when understanding underlying reasons for an answer.

McNamara (2009) explains how important it is to prepare for the interviews and suggests following eight preparation principles in order to conduct a successful interview. These principles and guidelines will be followed when conducting the interviews for the qualitative approach. Firstly, choosing a setting that will not be distractive is important, and therefore the interview will be held in a closed and silent room with a steady internet connection. When the interview starts off, it will be clearly explained what the purpose of the interview is and all

the terms of confidentiality will be carefully expressed to the respondent. Since McNamara also states the importance of not counting on your own memory when it comes to memorizing the answers given during the interviews, they will be sound or video recorded if the respondents approves of this course of action. Then it will be explained how long the interview is estimated to last and how the respondent can get in touch with the researcher afterwards. When the interviews are finished, the respondents will be asked if they have any questions for the researcher, who will answer truthfully to those questions.

3.5.1 Topic Guide:

The topic guide is a resumé of the main areas of interest that are to be explored, and will cover the general areas of interest as well as allowing more unforeseen areas to emerge (Easterby-Smith et al, p.136). The main areas of interest are the areas linked to the research question, since the objective of the interviews are to determine the circumstances regarding the non-core businesses' talent attraction.

- Attraction of Talented Employees:
- The Employer Branding
- The Halo Effect
- The Brand Extension
- The Corporate Brand Identity

3.6 Data Analysis:

3.6.1 Analysis of the qualitative data:

The qualitative data in this research study comes from conducted interviews with four employees at three different companies, namely ICA Banken, VolvoFinans Bank and Stena Recycling. What is important to do before an analysis can be made is to prepare and organize the data in a way that will make the analytical process easier to conduct. Since there exists many different approaches when it comes to interpreting and framing qualitative data, it will be explained which one is being used in this study and why.

The data analysis part is supposed to offer the reader clarity and an easier format to interpret, since the collected data may be of a complex nature. The results will be unified and linked to earlier research and theories. The raw qualitative data consisted of recorded interviews and later transcriptions of these recordings. Since the transcriptions are written down word for word of what the respondents said, they are highly complex and therefore had to be refined and trimmed in order to fit into the empirical collected data part of this thesis.

This thesis will use the approach named content analysis. The content analysis approach aims at drawing systematic inferences from qualitative data that has been structured by a set of ideas or concepts (Easterby-Smith et al, p.188). Before starting to analyze the collected empirical data, the data needs to be organized in those sets of ideas or concepts. When sorting the collected data, there are two predefined principles to choose from; either sorting it chronologically, or thematically. For this sorting, the thematically approach has been chosen

since it offers the application of a thematical analysis by formulating themes that emerge from the empirical data (Townsend et al, 2020). The method that has been used in order to sort the material thematically is to highlight and categorize the different events and categories emerging in the collected empirical material. When all of the collected data was categorized, some categories were closely linked and related to each other, and were therefore merged into shared categories.

Townsend et al (2020) further explains that it is important to reduce the collected empirical data, in order to make it less messy. The reduction will occur automatically when the data is sorted into the chosen categories and patterns. The strategy of reducing collected empirical data can also be an analytical process of its own, since the researcher is focused on specific events, instances, quotes or images that stick out in the material. In this case, the reduction of collected empirical data made it easier to see what was important and what was not, which made it even easier to start the larger analytical process of the material.

Since all of the interviews have used the same interview topic guide, they all carry the same concepts and ideas. These concepts and ideas are the foundation of the structured sets that will organize the collected empirical data. The concepts that will form different categories of data and therefore the structure are;

- **Sharing the brand and/or reputation**
- **Talent attraction, employer branding and values**
- **The non-core business' challenges and/or advantages**
- **Internal career possibilities and shared recruitment platforms**

The four categories will be analysed one by one and with the possibility to compare the different companies' answers, as well as connecting the collected empirical data to previous research and theories. The objective is to interrogate the data for the presence, meanings and relationships of these four categories in combination with pre-existing theories (Easterby-Smith et al, p.188).

3.7 Limitations:

Every study has limitations, and this study is not an exception. According to Price and Murnan (2004) the limitation of a study is the systematic bias that the researcher did not, or could not, control and which could affect the results of the study.

The first and most important limitation of this study is the fact that only three different companies have been interviewed. I did reach out to even more companies, but did not get the opportunity to interview employees working at their HR or marketing departments. With a larger sample comes a greater opportunity to collect empirical data, and I'm truly sorry that I did not succeed in collecting a larger sample. Another limitation linked to the sampling is the fact that I did not interview employees working at both the HR and the marketing departments. For future research in this field, I would recommend to interview people

working at different departments at the non-core businesses, in order to collect more insights and wider perspectives.

There also exists a limitation linked to the interviewed respondents working at the HR or marketing departments at the companies, of course they want to show the company in a positive and beneficial way. For instance, I don't think they want to tell, or have the possibility to tell, if it would be problematic to share the brand with their core business. When conducting research, you must always think about what the respondents can and cannot say, and they are employed to speak positively about their workplace.

There might also be a limitation linked to the fact that the chosen companies have different corporate structures. All of them share brand and name with their core business, but there exists differences in how the companies themselves feel like they are related to that core business. ICA Banken, for instance, feels very close to ICA Gruppen and the rest of the companies in their concern. Stena Recycling, on the other hand, does not feel very associated with their Stena core business, since they are operating in really different industries. Stena Recycling is also not in the same concern as the core business, but in the same sphere, which makes them a bit more distant from each other.

Lastly, I do believe that a limitation is that no potential future employees are being a part of the study. In future research I would recommend interviewing, for instance, business students and ask them about how they interpret the different companies. When doing this, the talent attraction may be understood from one more perspective, offering an even deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

4. Empirical Data:

This section will present the three companies taking part in the study. The three companies are all Swedish companies that may be interpreted as non-core companies sharing the brand and name of their core business. Thereafter, the empirical data will be presented. The empirical data has been extracted with the help of semi-structured interviews with people working at HR and/or marketing departments at the companies.
The interview topic guide may be found in the appendix.

4.1 Presentation of the companies:

4.1.1 ICA Banken AB:

The company ICA Banken AB is a Swedish company offering banking services to individual customers. They offer a complete selection of banking services, for instance keeping savings in their bank, payment solutions with their own bank card, bank loans and insurances. The insurance services are offered through a daughter company named ICA Försäkringar AB.

ICA Banken AB itself is the daughter company of the, in Sweden well-known, company ICA Gruppen AB. ICA Gruppen AB runs five different daughter companies; ICA Sverige AB,

which distributes everyday commodities in grocery stores run by individual actors. RimiBaltic, which distributes everyday commodities in the Baltic countries. Apoteket Hjärtat, which is a pharmacy. ICA Banken AB, which offers banking services and lastly ICA Fastigheter AB which is a real estate company acting in the retail sector.

What is ICA Sverige AB today was founded in 1917 by Hakon Swenson, who wanted individual actors in the everyday commodities and grocery market to collaborate and create a shared purchasing platform to create economies of scales. ICA Gruppen AB was founded in 2000, but changed to their current name in 2013. The biggest stock owner in ICA Gruppen AB is Ica-handlarnas Förbund, a national organization for the individual actors who run the ICA grocery stores. The organization owns 54% of the ICA Gruppen AB (ICA Gruppen, 2021).

ICA Banken AB was founded in 2001, and currently the bank has over 800 000 customers and 450 employed (ICA Banken, 2021). The business concept at ICA Banken AB is to make every day a little bit easier for ICA's customers. They also want to increase customer loyalty and decrease the ICA stores' and ICA Gruppen AB's transaction costs. ICA Banken AB has its headquarter in Solna, Stockholm and their customer support center in Borås.

4.1.2 Stena Recycling AB:

Stena Recycling AB is a company in the sustainability and recycling industry. They are creating recycling solutions together with their customers, which corresponds well with their objective to optimize the customer's waste management locally and refine material through sorting, processing and efficient logistics. The business consists of 173 facilities that collect materials and products from over 100 000 customers, the collected products are of a wide range of materials, including ferrous and non-ferrous metals, electronics, plastic, paper and mixed waste (Stena Recycling, 2021).

Stena Recycling AB is a daughter company to Stena Metall AB, which holds a large corporate group with companies operating in several business areas, for instance recycling, aluminium, steel, oil, trading and finance. Stena Metall AB has business in nine different countries; Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and the U.S (Stena Metall, 2021). Stena Metall AB itself is a part of a larger group of companies that together are called the Stena Sphere, consisting of Stena AB, Stena Sessan AB and Stena Metall AB. A total of 19 000 people are employed in the Stena Sphere (Stena, 2021).

Stena Sessan AB is an investment company with a strategy where they strive to develop companies through engaging with help of an active ownership. The company also owns about 5000 rental apartments in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala (Stena Sessan, 2021).
Stena AB is a company participating in several maritime activities, including tanker and ferry operations, vessel charter and offshore drilling. They also have onshore activities, including homes, renewable energy and technical development (Stena, 2021).

The Stena Sphere corporate group is family owned and still in the possession of the founding Olsson family. The first company in the corporate group, "Sten A Olsson Metallprodukter", was founded by Sten A Olsson in 1939.

4.1.3 VolvoFinans Bank AB:

VolvoFinans Bank AB was founded in 1959, but was officially given permission from Finansinspektionen (the Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority) to run a banking business in 2008. The company is 50% owned by the Swedish Volvo and Renault car retailers and 50% owned by Volvo Personvagnar AB.

VolvoFinansBank AB has financial products for both private and business customers and have a specific niche with their leasing service of Volvo and Renault cars. It is also possible to borrow the money needed to buy a car, instead of leasing it.
Other services provided by the bank is the ability to open up a savings account and a payment card which collects all monthly purchases on one single invoice.
VolvoFinans Bank AB for business customers is offering car and truck leasing and as well as the Volvo or CarPay payment card. The CarPay is offered as a neutrally branded card, in comparison to the Volvo cars, since the bank is offering their products to both Volvo and Renault owners (VolvoFinans Bank, 2021).

Volvo Personvagnar AB is internationally known as Volvo Car Group or Volvo Cars, and is originally a Swedish car developer and manufacturer. The company is currently owned by Chinese Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, but the headquarter remains in Torslanda in Gothenburg, Sweden (Volvo Cars, 2021).
The Volvo Group consists of plenty of business areas, among others; cars, trucks, busses, construction machines, machines extracting raw materials, marine engines and financial services (Volvo Group, 2021). The corporate group also has stakes in strategic affiliates, such as Volvo Cars owning 50% in Polestar and 30% in the Chinese car brand LYNC & CO (Volvo Cars, 2021).

4.2 Empirical data from the qualitative interviews:

4.2.1 ICA Banken AB:

When collecting the qualitative data from ICA Banken AB, two different people at the company were interviewed. Firstly, the HR Business Partner at ICA Banken AB, and secondly the Head of Talent Attraction and Recruitment at ICA Gruppen AB.

The HR Business Partner (HRBP) at ICA Banken AB is also responsible for the HR activities at ICA Försäkringar AB, the daughter company, since it is too small to have its own HR department. This means that the answers we got from this interview could be applied to both the banking and the insurance parts of the corporate group.

The interview started off with me stating that a lot of people probably think about food when hearing the brand name "ICA", and I asked the HRBP if this is something that the HR

department at ICA Banken AB usually reflect on when trying to attract talent, or when they are recruiting. Since they are in the banking and finance industry, my thought was that there might exist a challenge in attracting the absolutely best talent in this industry. With the reason being that their brand is so closely and famously related to stores selling food and everyday commodities.

The HRBP answers that she does not think it would have been so easy to recruit people if it were not for the ICA brand. She continues to state that there is a huge win in sharing the brand, since the brand is very well-known for most people in Sweden. Although, she admits that it is not as well known that there exist banking services and insurances linked to the ICA corporate group:

"Everybody is not aware that we have banking and insurances (at ICA), so of course there might be a challenge in making this knowledge reach the specific banking competencies.
...
But on the other side; if we did not have the ICA brand there at all, well, then maybe we would not have reached those people anyway. Because that ICA-word is making us attract candidates".

We continue to discuss whether it is generally easy or hard to find the right competencies and talents at the labor market today. The HRBP says that she experiences that it rarely is very easy to find the right competencies today, it requires a solid work in order to find the right one. But once again, she states how the brand is helping the banking and insurance part of the company:

"And to just have the word "ICA" in our brand is a very big help for us. It makes it easier for us in many cases. And then we have these very specific competencies that we talked about earlier, the specific banking and insurance competencies, where it might be challenging to reach through. But still, it is to compare the strength and the challenge with ICA, and when doing that - it is most definitely a strength for us!".

I repeat what I just understood, that it seems to be a bit harder for them to reach the specific competencies related to banking and insurances, and then ask the HRBP how they then do in order to reach those competencies, in a market that I assume is very competitive between companies seeking special competencies.
She states that they might have to describe the fact that ICA consist of banking and insurance businesses as well, and that they in fact are a full sortiment bank and that they are offering "all those different insurance products" et cetera.

"So that we help them to get an understanding that we belong to their industry, at the same time as we are a part of this magnificent concern (The ICA Group)"

When I ask the HRBP if it ever happens that new people connecting with the bank part of ICA comments things such as "Oh okay, I thought ICA was about food", she admits that it comments like that absolutely occur.

The comparison between the food and the banking parts of ICA brings me into discussing whether there are differences in the amount of job applications between the two sections or not. The HRBP does not have any information relating to if the amount of job applications would differ between the two companies or not. In this example it relates to if the same type of job would be offered at the two companies. However, she starts to explain how they actually do share both an internal and an external platform for recruitment and career opportunities.

"I actually don't know (if the amount of job applications differ), since I'm mostly involved in the bank and insurance parts (of ICA). However, we recently started an internal recruitment-team, in order to utilize this situation where we may find a candidate for another ICA company.
Maybe this candidate doesn't fit for the job that we are offering, but still fits into ICA. Then a fitting job might pop up in another ICA company. That we should strive for catching those candidates, so that we won't lose them in the first process"

I ask if the possibility of sharing competency and talent between the different ICA companies brings the different sections closer together, which she agrees to and says "yes, absolutely". She then continues by explaining that this shared recruitment platform also provides the possibility to have extremely competent employees at the recruitment department, who know ICA's brand by heart and know how to sell it to potential and future employees. She explains that the internal recruitment team and their brand knowledge is important, since they are not projecting an image of ICA that doesn't correspond with the reality. Just because of this, it can be challenging to use external recruitment.

She also states that the ICA corporation has a strong driving force when it comes to offering development for their employees. Offering the possibilities to grow, develop and move between different departments and businesses inside of the ICA concern is something that lies deep inside their employer branding and is something that they want to communicate early on in the recruitment processes.

When I ask the HRBP if she would say that ICA Banken and ICA Gruppen share employer branding she says that they do.

"What characterizes (the ICA employer brand)... A lot starts with our values, simplicity, entrepreneurship and dedication. We often talk about the fact that we are an ICA Family, that you are entering a family when you start working here. We have a feeling of social cohesion. That we care about each other and take care of each other. I interpret this as very special, when hearing other companies talking or when hearing recently recruited people at ICA talking. It is the ICA spirit"

I ask if this particular ICA spirit is something that shows off even externally, or if it is only showing internally at ICA. The HRBP answers that she thinks that it shows externally too, but that it might be easy to take it for granted. She explains that they have had people quitting at ICA because they were looking for new challenges in their careers, but that the same people actually came back to ICA after a while.
She concludes that that is a delightful sign indicating that it actually felt very good working at ICA and that they can offer development as well. I ask more about why she thinks that those people left ICA and she continued;

"... I think that if you choose to quit, then you are done with your job here. You are ready for the next step, but then that next step might not have been what you thought it would be. It was not like your expectations. And if you somewhere feel like you want to go back, then your old workplace was a good place, even if you felt like you wanted a challenge"

But sharing an employer brand with the other companies sharing the same brand name might also affect in a way that people view the companies in a similar way, and I ask the HRBP if she has ever experienced that something happening in the core business of ICA Gruppen has affected the banking and insurance part of ICA.
She states that happenings in the core business, both positive and negative, absolutely affects the non-core part of ICA, *"it strikes immediately"*.
When I ask if there exists an example of a scandal that has affected the ICA concern she explains:

*"I think about, we have to look many years back, what was called 'the ground meat scandal' at ICA. It was something huge, it was in the media and we (ICA Banken) saw it immediately in our part of the business since customers reached out to us.
And then, the effect was also that our employees had to work with those kinds of errands. So absolutely, that's what it's like with a big brand. That when something happens, it hits all parts of the business"*

But in the end, she really states that they win more than they lose, when being tightly linked to the ICA brand. She explains that if they would have had their own branding for the banking and insurance business, it could never have been so strong. The ICA brand is giving their business its strength.
I ask if it is also as important for ICA Banken to keep their ICA brandin or if they sometimes loosen it up, for instance when promoting themselves at prestigious business schools where they want to attract talent.

"Always ICA, I would say! Because that is our brand. Then we might have to be extra clear with the fact that we are actually a part of the banking and insurance industry, it might be like that. That we might have to give even more information or show it in a more precise way, for instance at a place like that (a prestigious business school)"

The second interview related to ICA Banken is with the Head of Talent Attraction and Recruitment (HTAR), officially working at ICA Gruppen.
The interview starts off with me asking her what she thinks it means for ICA Banken that the ICA brand is so closely linked to food and groceries. I wonder if that affects the talent attraction and recruitment to the bank. She answers;

"That is a challenge for them, and actually for other parts of the concern as well. Since when you say "ICA", most people think and associate it with food and our grocery stores, that's what it's like. So we have worked pretty much with this during the recent years, to reposition the image of ICA as an employer."

"I know that the bank sometimes has difficulties in finding the right competencies when it comes to specific banking and insurance domains. Because you don't interpret it (ICA) as banking and insurances, so that is a disadvantage for the bank, I would say"

But she also directly states that (ICA Banken) also wins in many ways when being linked and associated with the ICA brand. She explains that it is because ICA has such a strong, not just brand, but also a strong employer brand.

"So I do not dare to say if it's more positive than negative, but I believe that it has both positive and negative effects for the bank when they want to attract (talented workforce)".

She also states that the example that always occurs, when talking about negative aspects, is the ground meat-scandal from 2007. There have not been huge scandals in recent years, but she still notes that it does not mean that something could occur again.

"Of course, if something happens within ICA, then it (a scandal) spills over to the other ICA companies as well. I'm convinced it will. Both ICA and ICA Banken rely on a lot of trust, that is our most important characteristic. People trust ICA"

This means that ICA Banken shares their reputation with ICA Gruppen and the other companies linked to the ICA brand. The HTAR explains that a bank needs to radiate even more trust and security than the food business, which means that it is even more important for the other parts of the ICA brand to keep high standards linked to trustworthiness and safety.

Since ICA also carries a line of pharmacies, Apoteket Hjärtat, in its corporate group I asked the HTAR why the pharmacies are not carrying the ICA name. Just like the banking and insurance businesses, the pharmacy business area is a rather serious industry that requires a lot of trust and security. So why not link it to the ICA brand as well?
The answer is that the pharmacy line was not created by ICA themselves, but it has been purchased by ICA. The HTAR explains that Apoteket Hjärtat is enormously concerned about their brand and that their brand might be one of the strongest ones at the Swedish pharmacy market. It would be a risk to change their brand, even if ICA signals trust and safety as well, she argues.

Since the HTAR has broad knowledge and information about the current human resources situation in the concern, she states that one of the hardest competencies to recruit at the labor market right now is people in IT. But, she explains that being a part of the ICA corporation is an advantage when it comes to this, because the whole corporate group can search and find IT-employees much broader than the individual ICA companies could have done.

She further explains that it is an advantage that the different companies and industries inside of the ICA concern have so much to offer, and if they identify a talent at one part of the concern that doesn't get the specific job that the person first applied for, this person can be offered another fitting job in one of the other ICA companies.

Just like the HRBP described earlier, the HTAR also explains that the recruitment platform, that all of the ICA businesses share together, is an important part of allocating talent. The platform together with a specialized recruitment team makes allocating external talent between the companies easier. The HTAR explains how she is part of a recruitment team that very often works with recruiting talented employees to the business areas that exist at all or many of the ICA companies, for instance software developers and IT specialists. According to the HTAR, this is a setup and approach that is beneficial for the other ICA companies, also the banking and insurance parts of the concern.

She continues to talk about why the ICA concern has chosen to keep the companies under the same ICA brand, even if they belong to different industries.

"Yes, there is really a reason, and that is because ICA Gruppen's vision is to make every day a little bit easier for the individual person. All of our businesses are built to make everyday life easier, and that is why we have businesses offering food, bank, finance and pharmacy services. Because all of that is a part of a person's everyday life"

"We have created some kind of an ecosystem, where we want the customer to feel safe with us. ICA has a very strong, personal brand that you have trust in and that is also a very good attribute for a bank to have"

Further along in the interview I understood that ICA Banken might not be looking for the exact same competency and talent as other banks on the Swedish market. We discuss that some banking companies would say that a certain kind of talent is the most attractive, but for ICA that might not always be the most attractive characteristics of future employees since the values are as important. In a podcast she attended, she described it by stating that ICA might not be looking for the rockstars, since they do not have a rock band (Techrekpodden, 2020), which makes it a bit easier to understand.

The HTAR put a lot of weight on the organization's values and described how important it is that the different business areas offer safety and trustworthiness to their customers.

ICA's values are not cheeky or confidently straightforward, the HTAR compares with the Swedish fintech company Klarna.

"If you were to compare with, for instance, Klarna or another financial company - that is something completely different. We want something completely different. Our values are about entrepreneurship, dedication and simplicity. And this entrepreneurship might show up at other companies as well, but one of the things that is imprinted in our culture are relationships and people, we call it the ICA spirit"

"The culture itself is so strong and very familiar. Pretty prestigeless, which is not very common in the banking business if I may be a little bit prejudiced. Because banking is otherwise pretty prestigious. But ICA Banken is not!"

When talking about if it is generally hard to find the competencies and talents that the company is looking for the HTAR answers that the most difficult areas, as previously mentioned, is people working in IT and pharmacists. An interesting aspect she brings up then is that the covid-19 pandemic has been beneficial for the ICA companies when it comes to attracting talent. Many employers have been forced to let their employees leave and consultancy firms have decreased their consultancy activities, which means a more unsafe labor market.

"We've had an enormous amount of job applications sent to us. For instance, many IT-consultants lost their jobs when their employers had to let them go during the pandemic. And what happened then was that people were more attracted to safer employers, such as ICA"

She states that there are challenges in recruiting fitting talent sometimes, but that, compared to others, they have a satisfying situation because of their strong employer brand. Their employer brand wants to make people feel included and be able to be themselves.
What they want to communicate is that it does not matter what title you have or how high or low you are in the hierarchy, what matters is what you can contribute with. She states that this is not very common in such a large company, but that they realize that it is something that people find very attractive.
She continues to talk about the ICA spirit.

"We've had students visiting us for a couple of days, this was about two years ago I think, to make a project. They stated that they felt the ICA spirit once they came into the office. After two days they could describe it and talk about how they felt it"

The ICA spirit is something that she says that most employees feel and can describe. Many people describe it as fellow employees being very committed and dedicated and that they are having fun, while having satisfying opportunities. But at the same time, it is not prestigious. In order to truly fit into ICA you need to have dedication but not be too prestigious.

4.2.2 VolvoFinans Bank AB:

The collected qualitative data from VolvoFinans Bank AB comes from an interview with their Head of Marketing (HOM).

The interview starts off with me stating that the brand Volvo, for many people, is linked to car and truck production and I wondered if this affects VolvoFinans Bank when they are trying to attract desired talents to their business area. This question was asked due to the fact that they are a bank and finance business that is assumed to want to attract the best competencies and talents in those areas, but they are carrying a brand that most people relate to cars and trucks.

The HOM answers that their core-business at VolvoFinans Bank is to offer financial help to customers interested in buying or leasing cars. This means that there actually is a very clear linkage between cars, trucks and the services offered at VolvoFinans Bank and she states that this is why it is not a big problem for them.
She also explains that, when it comes to attracting the very best talent in the banking and finance business area, VolvoFinans Bank is heavily strengthened by the Volvo brand.

"*The Volvo brand is very strong, it kind of creates a bigger interest for the bank. And in that way it might attract people to the bank*"

An important fact to note is that the VolvoFinans Bank is owned by Volvo Cars Sweden (50%) and the Swedish car retailers (50%) and they also finance cars of the brands Renault and Polestar. This means that even if their company name has the Volvo brand in it, they are engaged in other brands as well.

When I ask if VolvoFinans Bank sees challenges in finding the right competencies and talents she says that she is not working at the HR department herself, but that her picture is that there are no particular challenges in finding the right competencies.
As previously stated, the Volvo brand helps bring attention to the bank, but she also describes how another brand related to Volvo has the same, or even an more impressive, effect when attracting employees.

"*I have seen huge positive effects. An example is when we recruited a person that was supposed to work with the Polestar brand at our office. We then realized that there were many many people that applied to that particular job offer, just because Polestar is such a trendy brand. Even if the job offer was at our company, just the involvement with Polestar made many more people apply*"

The HOM states that she could see a very clear spillover effect, that the involvement with Polestar gave VolvoFinans Bank a positive attraction push from potential future employees.

VolvoFinans Bank has their headquarter in Gothenburg, but not at all where Volvo Cars have their offices and factories. VolvoFinans Bank resides in downtown Gothenburg while Volvo Cars resides mostly in Torslanda a bit outside of Gothenburg.

Since the bank still shares their brand with the car and truck producer, I wonder if it is common for their employees to move between Volvo Cars and VolvoFinans Bank and if they have a shared recruiting platform.

The HOM says that they do not have a shared recruiting platform and also that it is very uncommon to move between the two companies. But she does explain that one thing that they have in common with Volvo Cars is that people tend to stay for a very long time at VolvoFinans bank. Although it is very uncommon to move between the companies, she states that she herself worked at Volvo Cars earlier in her career and that she found it helpful to have worked with branding at the car side prior to working with the branding at VolvoFinans Bank.

When asked if VolvoFinans Bank shares reputation with Volvo Cars, she says that they absolutely share reputation.

"If a scandal would occur (at Volvo Cars), then I absolutely believe that it would affect our (VolvoFinans Bank) brand. But on the other hand, when Volvo Cars do really good things, especially when they position themselves in sustainability or drive electrification, then we also get the positive effects from that"

She does not recall a specific scandal or happening that occured at Volvo Cars and then affected VolvoFinans Bank, but states that she generally experiences that there is an halo-effect. When good things happen to Volvo Cars, good things happen to the bank. VolvoFinans Bank has also seen the halo-effect taking the form of more people being attracted to work for them when Volvo Cars perform well, especially in the field of marketing and communication.

According to the HOM, VolvoFinans Bank and Volvo Cars share the same values. Many people in the bank business's board come from Volvo Cars and their car retailer owners are also selling the Volvo brand on a daily basis. She calls it their ecosystem, where many brands, among others Volvo, are included.

Volvo has a stated slogan describing their values; "Freedom to move, in a personal space and sustainable way" and the HOM explains that it is about experiencing things with your car in a safe, sustainable and personal way with supporting technology. The values related to the car and truck production seems hard to apply on a bank, but the HOM explains;

"Above all, the bank shares the values relating to the fact that it has to be safe and secure. For instance, that we handle data in a secure way. But also the sustainability value, which is very important to us as well"

Although VolvoFinans Bank and Volvo Cars share values, the culture at the workplaces might differ. I asked the HOM, since she herself has worked at both the car and the bank business

areas, if there was a difference in workplace culture, and she answered by describing how different the organizations are.

"If you compare the culture… Volvo Cars is a huge international organization, and VolvoFinans Bank is a pretty small bank. There are about 200 employees at the bank in Gothenburg. And this (difference in size) is something that I think makes the culture different, because we are very few. We have a culture where the CEO (of the bank) knows all of the employees names, and that is a huge difference compared to Volvo Cars, which has thousands of employees"

Since VolvoFinans Bank and Volvo Cars are not residing in the same buildings and offices they do not feel very connected. The HOM describes it as the companies being relatively independent, especially when it comes to recruiting. But, the marketing and communication teams are working more closely over the company borders and they even have common weekly meetings, for instance, about how to communicate the brand.

Another important detail is how Volvo Cars sell their products all over the world, while VolvoFinans Bank is only offering their services at the Swedish market.
If Volvo Cars and VolvoFinans Bank would advertise the same type of job, would it differ in how many people that applied, I ask. She answers that she does not know, but that she has a hard time believing that it would be as high for VolvoFinans Bank since they are a smaller company and much more geographically fixed.

Even if she previously stated that the Volvo brand is giving such a positive influence to VolvoFinans Bank the HOM also explains how they have created a neutrally branded product as well. Since VolvoFinans Bank also offers financial services related to buying or leasing cars of the brand Renault, it could seem a little bit odd for those customers to receive a bank card named "The Volvo Card". The solution created by VolvoFinans Bank is a bank card called "CarPay", solely created in order to offer a neutral brand alongside Volvo and Renault.

4.2.3 Stena Recycling AB:

The collected qualitative data from Stena Recycling AB comes from an interview with their HR specialist (HRS), who has a main focus on employer branding.

The interview begins with me telling the HRS that I recently sat on the train and saw Stena Recycling's facility in Ängelholm, Sweden. What I specifically observed about the facility was the logo where the only visible word was "STENA". I continue by stating that for a lot of people, and especially if you are born and raised in Gothenburg, the brand Stena is very linked to the ferry and shipping business areas and the company Stena Line.
What the HRS answers was that it indeed had to do with geographics.

"I think you have a point there. I'm from Gothenburg as well and for us Stena is… Well, we grew up with Stena Line, going to The Reef and all of the trips that exist. I do think this (view

*of the Stena brand) is very locally conditioned. If you are from the west coast and even south
Sweden, where we have facilities, then I think there is a difference in the association. It's even
more visible in Gothenburg and at the west coast of Sweden, that we think about Stena Line,
and also Stena Fastigheter (Stena's real estate company) I'll have to add*"

Although Stena Recycling has facilities in many places in Sweden, and even outside of
Sweden, their headquarter is located in Gothenburg. Since the HRS had already stated that
the interpretation of the Stena brand was affected by geography, I asked whether Stena
Recycling had noticed this when recruiting in the Gothenburg area for the headquarter. She
answers that people indeed ask questions such as; "So, is Stena Recycling related to the ferry
company Stena?". Not only do these kinds of questions surface in the recruiting processes,
but also when already employed Stena Recycling employees are being asked about their
workplace, the HRS explains.
Anyhow, she believes that Stena Recycling has an easy time attracting talent in the
Gothenburg area just because of this local association with the Stena brand.

"*But absolutely, I would say that especially we (Stena Recycling), in Gothenburg, have a
pretty easy time attracting many candidates. Because people know that Stena overall is a
huge company, and a Gothenburg based company. Even if it's international, it's a sphere still
coming from Gothenburg, which is pretty remarkable. And that is just why we have an easy
time attracting (talented employees) here*"

Although there seems to be a geographical advantage in the Gothenburg area, she adds that
Stena Recycling has facilities in approximately 90 locations in Sweden, from Malmö in the
south to Kiruna in the north, and that there exists other locally conditioned challenges. For
instance, the Stena brand, linked to the ferry and shipping industry, might not be equally
strong in every single location. Instead she implies that the Stena Recycling brand itself can
even be stronger than the other Stena brand at some locations.

Another interesting topic that she raises is the fact that sustainability and recycling are highly
relevant activities in contemporary society, activities that are linked to what Stena Recycling
does everyday. She explains that Stena Recycling's core business is sustainable circular
recycling, activities that are very much caring for the future, and which Stena Recycling has
noticed that people are very conscious about these days.

"*So that is something that we notice in talent attraction. People are getting more and more
conscious, and they may want to work at a company where they can be a part of making a
difference*"

Stena Line on the other hand has suffered due to the ongoing pandemic, in March 2020 the
company announced that they had to let 950 employees go due to the circumstances related to
the covid-19 pandemic (Dutt & Hedberg, 2020).
With this said, the HRS cannot say what is what, when discussing the talent attraction
towards the brand. Some talent attraction might come from the fact that Stena is such a

known and huge brand, and some might come from the fact that Stena Recycling is acting in an industry that is very popular to be in at the moment.

She continues by stating that she believes that the Stena brand carries some kind of security. Stena is generally known as a big and secure employer, even though the pandemic brought some particular challenges due to new restrictions, laws and recommendations in Sweden. When I ask if she believes that Stena Recycling has ever met challenges because of the Stena brand, she answers that she does not believe that they really are that closely associated with each other.

"No, I don't think that we are being that associated with (Stena Line)... Of course people are talking, for instance, a year ago when many employees at the ferries were given notice of unemployment. But we work very independently in the different companies, I would say"

Although she believes that the companies are operating very independently, she does state that a scandal happening at one company in the Stena sphere would absolutely affect the other companies.

"(If a scandal would occur at Stena Line) that really goes against what we believe in, in our (Stena Recycling) business… Then I absolutely believe that it would have consequences, above all with our customers. But still, we are in very different industries and different customer segments as well"

Another important aspect of the shared brand among the different companies in the Stena sphere is the fact that they are owned by the same founding family. The HRS explains it as another potential event that could affect many of the companies sharing the brand, if the owner, for instance, would say something odd or scandalous in public.
But she continues to explain that the fact that the concern is family owned is a part of the branding itself. Keeping the Stena name and brand in all of the companies is in fact securing the association of being owned by a family, not available and public on the stock market. It is also about linking the companies to their history.

Having not only a concern, but a whole sphere of companies sharing the same brand is interesting in terms of recruitment and talent attraction. When asked if the Stena sphere shares a platform for recruitment, the HRS explains that they don't have an external, but an internal platform. It is possible to apply for internally advertised jobs in the Stena sphere, but they do not work together to collect external talents.

"It is not like you can google 'Stena career' and then get access to a collective portal offering jobs for the entire Stena sphere today. But it is much more about creating an internal mobility"

It is also not very common to move between the different companies in the Stena sphere, and the HRS explains it by pointing at the industries being so different from one another. But with

that being said, she says that it is more common to move between jobs in the Stena Metall concern, in which Stena Recycling belongs. Employees and leaders in higher positions are having forums where they meet to discuss matters, but otherwise there are not very many labor movements inside of the larger Stena sphere.

Detangling what is what in the Stena sphere can sometimes seem a little hard to understand. They all share the same Stena brand connected to their names, but when I ask if they also share the same employer brand I get another dimension of the sphere's branding.

"No, Stena Metall has a pretty all-embracing employer brand, and it is not only the employer brand but the brand itself. We talk a lot about 'It starts here' at Stena Metall"

"But, we at Stena Recycling have created the longest and biggest culture journey, and we have created a very clear employer value proposition.
We (at Stena Recycling) have a very clear employer brand, which the other companies don't really have. We are not sharing that employer brand with them (at the moment), however we would gladly share it with them"

She further explains that Stena Recycling is the largest and most visible company in the Stena Metall concern, and since they are, that also means that they are the ones driving the development of the employer brand forward. Stena Recycling has the largest resources, but also the most extensive need for a well-working employer brand for their recruitment processes.

"We work very much with our working culture and have implemented much of our values in behaviours and processes. We have a common thread, from attracting (employees) and then throughout our whole employee journey.
Then we also have very clearly formulated employee and leadership values at Stena Recycling. They are not the same as the other companies', but I would not say that they are incompatible in any way. But we (at Stena Recycling) might be talking about them the most. Since we have to do it due to our size"

She explains how Stena Recycling is describing their values with help from their blue container, which is a widely visible symbol for the company out in the country. Their values are boxed into this container and consist of their leadership values, employee values and employer value proposition. The values are supposed to ensure open, honest and perceptive leaders that put the employees at the center of attention. The employee values are made to show what values an employee needs to have in order to feel comfortable and fit it at Stena Recycling. You need to be curious, stay on your toes, spread joy, be a teamplayer as well as being a problem solver. The employer value proposition shows how safety goes first, the fact that recycling is the future and that you have a full responsibility for your own success. These three categories are together creating the foundation that Stena Recycling is relying on when recruiting future employees and are trying to attract talent.

When asked if the HRS finds it to be a challenge or not to find the right competencies and talents that they are searching for, she answers that she does not see difficulties.

"The values are highly important when recruiting. Above all future leaders, but also the employees. But I would not say that it is difficult (to find the right competencies), although there are always challenges in finding those particular key competencies, for instance, specialists in special types of waste"

"But I think that this last year, sadly it has really affected the labor market. And we (at Stena Recycling) can really say that we have noticed an increase in job applications, compared to before (the pandemic)"

The HRS believes that there is a particular reason for the increased attraction towards Stena Recycling during the unsecure times of the pandemic.

"This is just something I have picked up during interviews, but I believe that (people are attracted) partly because we are a large and secure employer, and people are looking for security. But I also think that people might have redefined what is important (in their lives) during this pandemic"

Furthermore she explains that many people have been isolated during this year, and that it has made it even more important to feel that you are contributing to something that feels important and is fun to work with. When people had the opportunity to pause their lives a bit and reflect, she believes that many people realized that they wanted to do something much more meaningful.

The meaningful aspect of Stena Recycling also lies in the fact that has previously been stated, namely that they are family owned. Stena Recycling is working actively with raising awareness for matters linked to sustainability and circularity, they also want to influence authorities and politics related to the subjects. Although their suggestions about changes are not that controversial, it might help to be family owned. Stena Recycling, and the other companies in the Stena sphere, do not have to be concerned with what other shareholders think when they make statements. A strong brand together with the owner structure offers a stable foundation for Stena when they want to take part in different debates about, for instance, sustainability challenges and solutions.

"I think, because we have such a strong brand, that gives us the opportunity to take part in many forums and debates. ... We are the market leaders in Sweden, and the fact that we are that large, I think that also attracts many people"

5. Analysis and Discussion:

For this thesis, it has been chosen to use an interlinked analysis and discussion section because of the many topics touched upon. The analysis and discussion section is divided into four categories; 1. Sharing the brand and/or reputation, 2. Talent attraction, employer

branding and values, 3. The non-core business' challenges and/or advantages, and 4.
Internal career opportunities and shared recruitment platforms.
The divisions into different categories were chosen in order to offer clarity and simplicity into
the analysis and discussion part. Each category includes both an analysis and then a
discussion.

5.1 Sharing the brand and/or reputation:

All of the three companies, ICA Banken, Stena Recycling and VolvoFinans Bank, are
carrying brands related to other business areas or industries as well. The company's owner
structures do not showcase all of them as directly linked to the more famous company with
the same brand, but they can still be perceived as non-core businesses related to those
companies. For instance, Stena Recycling is not part of the same concern as Stena Line or
Stena, but they do belong to the same sphere and are owned by the same founding family.

When discussing the shared brand, all of the interviewed stated that the shared brand, with
the company belonging in another industry, was a win for them. ICA Banken described how
they would have had a harder time recruiting people if they were not a part of the ICA brand.
For them it is simply a huge win, and they believe that they could not have become so strong
and stable as a brand if it were not for the support of the ICA brand.
Since a thought prior to the interviews was that it would maybe be difficult for these
companies to share a brand with an industry that is so far away from their own business area,

I was surprised to understand that all of the companies saw it as an advantage rather than a
challenge. VolvoFinans Bank also stated that of course their business area is primarily
financial services, but since they offer financial solutions to customers wanting to buy or
lease cars, they are actually not that far away from what Volvo Car does. VolvoFinans Bank is
stating that they are heavily strengthened by the Volvo brand and that it creates a bigger
interest for the bank. Sharing a brand with Volvo Cars also means a clear halo-effect for the
bank; when Volvo Cars perform well and position themselves as innovative in their business
area, it also gives the bank positive effects. All because of the shared brand.

Stena Recycling is differentiating themselves a bit from ICA Banken's and VolvoFinans
Bank's answers since they do not feel that they are always that associated with the presumed
mother company. During the interview with Stena Recycling I understood that the
associations to Stena's ferry and shipping businesses might be a very local concept. People
that have grown up in the Gothenburg area, or even the south of Sweden, are assumed to
associate the Stena brand much more to those business areas than the rest of Sweden.
Actually, we discussed that some locations in Sweden might even associate the Stena brand
primarily to Stena Recycling.
Even though the shared brand might be locally conditioned in Stena Recycling's case, they
still have their headquarter in Gothenburg, where the associations are more closely linked to
the ferry and shipping business areas, and it is common that people working at Stena
Recycling get questions related to the connection with Stena Line.

Following the interviews, I had a strong belief that all of these three companies were part of a larger corporate brand and not too independent. The corporate brand has this broader focus on the whole organization behind the brand, and all of the companies described how their company collaborated with the core business company in many ways. For VolvoFinans Bank the collaboration with Volvo Cars meant that they had weekly meetings with them regarding branding and communication, which I interpreted as a strong need for alignment in how they communicate the shared brand to the public.

In that way, VolvoFinans Bank is not very independent with their brand, but they are dependent on Volvo Cars thoughts and directions about the communication and branding. As for ICA Banken, I interpreted them as even more close to the core business company. They had this overall "we"-way of describing themselves as closely united to each other, with a visible and clear corporate brand. The impression was, even here, that ICA Banken was not independent in creating their own brand, but they adjusted to the shared corporate brand that is the ICA brand.

The one company that felt a bit more independent was Stena Recycling. Although they still have a clear profile showcasing them as part of this family owned sphere, I interpreted them as much more independent in creating their own branding. It was interesting to hear how they are a daughter company to Stena Metall, but that they actually are the largest company and also the company with the largest need for a well defined employer brand and employer value proposition. They seem to be driving and developing their brand much more than other companies in the Stena sphere and have even created their own vision for values that are very connected to their specific brand, and not the corporate brand.

The corporate brand is often guided by values that are closely linked to the company's culture and personal values of the founder, and this can be seen in all of the companies. Because, even if Stena Recycling are a little bit more independent, they still refer to the values connected to being a family owned business and express the importance of having a history. What is interesting is how all of the three companies carry a visible corporate brand, but they do not really look and feel the same. The ICA corporate brand feels so very unified and you almost interpret the different companies as the same, because the corporate brand is present in every single thing they say or do.

The Volvo corporate brand, on the other hand, feels much more present in the way they want to communicate themselves to the public, and not how they feel internally. They carry the same values, brand and are handling the same product in some way, but they are also very independent in what they do. Of course an important factor here is the fact that they are operating in Sweden only, where the core business Volvo Cars have the entire world as their market. This makes VolvoFinans Bank much more chained to a certain geographic area, namely the Gothenburg area, which means that they have also, in addition to the shared Volvo brand, created their own kind of culture.

For Stena Recycling, the impression is that their corporate brand is related to the aspects of being family owned, above all. They want to showcase the values related to being a family owned company, but at the same time the impression was that they were working even harder themselves to create their own niche branding. This was interesting, because they seemed to really embrace the corporate brand, while adding their own identity to it as well.

This means that three different perspectives on interpreting the corporate brand was found; ICA Banken being totally aligned with the corporate brand, VolvoFinans Bank sharing the corporate brands communication and branding, but also working quite independently, and lastly Stena Recycling embracing the corporate brand, but also adding their own identity to it. A corporate brand can work as a gravitation point for the organization and also an attraction center for the stakeholders, and I interpreted that this gravitation point was not being equal among the different companies. They seemed to be dissimilar in how close they were to this corporate brand gravitation point. Although it was clear that the corporate brand worked as an attraction center for stakeholders, the companies wanted to align with their concern and corporate brand in the way they presented themselves to the public.

Another part related to sharing the same brand as the core business is that the companies might also share reputation with each other. All of the companies stated that when you share your brand with another company, you of course share reputation as well.
It seems crazy that a scandal happening in a grocery store would directly affect a bank offering financial services - but that was just the case for ICA Banken when ICA Gruppen suffered a huge scandal back in 2007.

What happened was that four ICA stores in Stockholm, Sweden, had re-tagged ground meat with new freshness dates, showcasing them as fresher than they were. It was described in the media as systematic cheating (Vidlund, 2007), and it directly spilled over on ICA Banken's business area as well. Customers immediately reached out to the bank and the shared reputation affected them in a negative way, according to their HR business partner. Although this was a huge scandal, it also seems to be the only one and ICA Banken states that the overall consequences of sharing reputation with ICA are positive since it helps them grow.

VolvoFinans Bank and Stena Recycling have no examples to give, regarding scandals happening at the core business that would have affected them as well, but they both state that they indeed share reputation with the other companies sharing their brand name. VolvoFinans Bank believes that a large scandal at Volvo Cars would absolutely affect their brand as well, but states that it is mostly in positive ways that they share reputation. For instance, when Volvo Cars position themselves as sustainable and safe - which are attributes and values that are good marketing and reputation for the bank business as well.

Stena Recycling states that they would be affected by a scandal as well, if it would happen to another of the Stena sphere companies. The companies in the sphere are operating in very different industries, which made Stena Recycling explain how they have not really met challenges because of what the other companies have done or said. Although they did not

have a specific event exemplifying a negative shared reputation, they claimed that there would be a huge difficulty if one of the other Stena companies acted in a way that went against what Stena Recycling stands for. For instance, if one of the other companies sharing the Stena brand would get caught polluting the environment, which would totally go against every single value Stena Recycling has.

This shared reputation that all of the companies are showing that they have with the core business,and also other companies sharing their brand, can be explained with help of the so-called halo effect. The halo effect showcases a cognitive bias where people's overall impression of, in this case, a branded company influences how we think and feel about other characteristics about the company.

All of the companies are showcasing how they are affected by the halo effect since all of them state that the non-core businesses immediately would see, negative or positive, effects due to actions done by the core businesses. As previously states; a local ICA grocery store in Stockholm has nothing to do with the ICA Banken financial services, they are not even operating at the same geographical place. But, ICA Banken still had to handle the negative consequences because of some individual actors' actions.
This is the thing with the halo effect, people are quick to judge due to some actions, but things rarely change that fast in reality. Sometimes it has not changed at all, which is very likely in the ICA Banken case since the bank did not have anything to do with the ground meat scandal at all, apart from sharing the brand.

Both ICA Banken, VolvoFinans Bank and Stena Recycling claim that the shared brand and reputation are bringing more positive effects than negative. VolvoFinans Bank actually stated that they share a halo effect with Volvo Cars and described how their driving development towards sustainability is affecting the bank positively, but what is a positive reputation today might as well be a negative reputation scandal the other day.
The halo effect is all rose-colored glasses until it's not, and that can be dangerous for companies that might have to face scandals in industries they are not operating in themselves. If VolvoFinans Bank is happy about Volvo Cars sustainability development, don't they think that Volkswagen Financial Services was thinking the exact same thing before having to face the Volkswagen emissions scandal in 2015? All over the world countries started to question the legitimacy of Volkswagen's emissions testing and 8.5 million cars were recalled in Europe only (Hotten, 2015), a formerly respected brand was now ruined and had no legitimacy left. The lesson learned; sharing a brand is all positive until it's proven not.

5.2 Talent attraction, employer branding and values:

What is important to organizations is to find the best possible employees that can help drive the business into success, or keep the success. Behind every successful company stands hard working, fitting and engaged employees, but how do companies get those attractive people to play in their teams? The answer is: by having a well defined and fitting employer branding to attract and collect the best possible talent.

The employer brand should showcase the values and associations linked to the company and in that way attract people that feel like they would be a perfect fit at that particular workplace. The employer brand should therefore show potential employees similarities between themselves and the companies, since it is highly desirable to reach this person-organization fit.

When the Swiss banking and financial services company UBS made a video about stereotypes related to working in finance, stereotypes such as having to wear suits to work, everyone is unfriendly, there is no diversity and they never have fun at work are presented (UBS, 2017).
The stereotypes presented are what many people might think of when thinking about working in banking or finance, which made it even more interesting when ICA Banken described their values and ideal employees as the total opposite. They want everybody to feel included, being a part of their ICA family and also genuinely caring about each other.

One of the stereotypes in the UBS video was "no diversity", which really is not the case with ICA Banken and its daughter company ICA Försäkringar, both sharing the same HR administration. Because, ICA Försäkringar's CEO Caroline Farberger is the first major business leader in Sweden to openly tell her story about her gender correction surgery and the journey going from a man to a woman (Sveriges Radio, 2019).
Employer branding has increased in popularity in recent years, and in the same way as green washing can make customers or potential employees doubtful about trusting what the company says and does, so can the employer brand.
Although, in ICA's case you can really feel how they legitimately care about the "everybody can be themselves and will be included "-value, which they want to use when attracting talent. Caroline Farberger helps to bring legitimacy and authenticity to their values, but she is not the only reason why.

Because, when ICA Banken say that they want to attract talent, they don't refer to what other people would refer to when it comes to the most attractive talents in banking and finance. At least not the stereotypes presented at UBS. ICA Banken wants their employees to be prestigeless, since their organization is prestigeless. Their employer brand surrounds values linked to entrepreneurship, dedication and simplicity, where the simplicity part is not always what you think about when hearing "financial services and banking".
Since the purpose of an employer brand is to present a positive and attractive image to current and potential employees, ICA Banken's workplace might also not be attractive to everyone looking for jobs in banking and finance since everybody is not looking for a prestigeless bank to work for. This means that ICA Banken is trying to attract a very specific type of bank and finance employee, not just anyone with the right education and experience - they certainly need to carry the right values as well.

This person-organization fit was also visible when taking a look at Stena Recycling and their employer branding with appurtenant values. Stena Recycling claims to have one of the most

well defined and elaborate employer value propositions (EVP) in the Stena sphere. It is not that their employer brand and EVP is not compatible with the other companies in the sphere, but Stena Recycling might be more vocal about what they stand for.

In order to fit in at Stena Recycling, an employer needs to be curious, on their toes, spread joy, be a teamplayer and a problem solver. Many values surrounding Stena Recycling are linked to sustainability and the fact that recycling and sustainable development is the future, and with that said it also feels like you need to have this worldview in order to fit in as an employee at Stena Recycling.

It is clear that there exists a perfect fit, or at least an ideal employee, at Stena Recycling. It seems like they don't want to attract old, lazy and comfortable people, instead they want curious people that are always on their toes. They certainly don't want to attract climate change deniers or people that do not care about sustainability, they want problem solvers and people caring for the environment. When talking about this thesis, and the companies that I was going to interview, to my former classmate at the business administration program I got the comment; "Oh that is so much fun, Stena Recycling is actually one of the companies on my list of attractive companies I would like to work at". I would not say that I was surprised about her comment, but it struck me that a recycling company might not have been on a business students attractiveness top list a couple of years ago. But of course, the values that they stand for are super attractive for the generation that grew up with emerging sustainability movements, recycling bins and now praising veganism and Greta Thunberg. Times change, and which values that are attractive today might be unattractive tomorrow.

VolvoFinans Bank's values are linked to the Volvo Cars slogan; "Freedom to move, in a personal space and sustainable way". It has to do with experiencing things with your car in a safe, sustainable and personal way with supporting technology. For the bank, the security and sustainable aspects are the easiest to apply to their business area. They want to offer security when handling sensitive and personal data, and also doing their activities in sustainable ways. During the interview I didn't get a clear picture of the bank's ideal employee, or what kind of talent they were trying to attract. But, their website states that they are a workplace filled with specialists, and they do not have any traditional hierarchy, but high ceilings (VolvoFinans Bank, 2021).

Compared to ICA Banken, which is operating in the same business area, they seem more focused on competences and specialists, but they still want to highlight the fact that they don't have an old, traditional hierarchy at their workplace. Is this something that banks need to showcase to talented potential employees these days? A thought is that these traditional hierarchies and stereotypes, that have been very closely linked to the finance and banking sector for a long time, are not at all attractive anymore. It seems like talented workforce in the banking and finance sector have had enough of the previously preferred Wall Street aesthetic and the stereotypes explained by USB.

In addition to the values presented by the companies, there was one thing that they all had in common when it came to discussing their shared brand and talent attraction.

All of them share their brand with a company belonging to another industry or business area, and when asked if and how that affected their talent attraction ability, they had the same statement to give; sharing the brand provides us with a sense of security and safety.

ICA Banken stated that the shared brand made them attract more candidates, and that the brand relies heavily on trust. Trust is the ICA brand's most important characteristic and during the interviews they highlighted how important it is to offer safety and trustworthiness to their consumers and employees.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs the safety level is the second most important for humans to fulfill, we need to feel safe and secure, which can show up in different ways. To link the safety need to talent attraction, I think this last year of covid-19 pandemic has shown some good examples. Many companies had to let employees go in order to survive, and many people became unemployed unexpectedly fast. The need for safety can be applied to feeling stable and safe on a daily basis, there needs to be food on the table and the rent needs to be paid for. Without employment this is very hard.

ICA, as an organization, stated that the covid-19 pandemic and an unsafe labor market has been beneficial for their talent attraction. Since the start of the pandemic, they have had an enormous amount of job applications sent to them, which they believe has to do with them being a safe and secure employer. Because of the pandemic, they could attract and hire hard-to-find talents that were reaching out to ICA because of the need for a stable and secure workplace.

In the same way, Stena Recycling explains how the latest year of crisis and pandemic has been beneficial to their talent attraction. They explain how they have noticed an increase in job applications due to the pandemic, and that they believe that the reason is that they are perceived as a large and secure employer - and people are reaching for the feeling of security. VolvoFinans Bank also states that the shared brand makes them attract more talented candidates and that the Volvo brand is very strong and filled with values relating to safety.

It is clear that the security and safety aspect is attracting talent and potential employees to the companies, and maybe that is more visible than ever before. The last year has been bewildering and shocking for the entire world since a crisis such as the pandemic has not been experienced for the majority of people living on earth today. Most people have lived through financial crises, but this has been something completely new and different, has that made the security and safety value more important than ever before?

Young professionals today are highlighting secure employment conditions as one of the most important values when looking for their ideal employer - they want to feel secure, accepted and included at the workplace. But, as previously stated, to feel secure is not only a want, but a human need. The interviewed companies in this thesis showed that radiating security and a safe workplace attracts, especially in times of crisis.

Apart from attracting talent, a safe and secure workplace is a win in other aspects as well. It is said to be critical to business success to have leaders understanding the definition of job security. When employees feel safe at their workplace, they can relax much more and focus

on their work instead. The cost of replacing an employee that chooses to leave the organization is high, since the organization loses talent and has to pay for the replacement.

With all this being said, it is not hard to understand why the companies perceive a shared brand with the core business as a positive factor. The core business' status as a secure and safe employer spills over to the non-core businesses as well, and it seems to be one of, if not the most, important factor when people are looking for a future workplace and employer.

5.3 The non-core business' challenges and/or advantages:

To the part concerning how the talent attraction may also be a difficult process for the non-core businesses. When I first started to develop this thesis I was quite convinced that it must be difficult to attract talented employees to a business area that is much more serious than the industry that is mainly linked and associated with the brand. For instance, I believed that it would be hard to attract talented banking and finance specialists to ICA Banken, just because the brand is so heavily associated with food.

When talking to the three companies about potential challenges they have met in talent attraction to their non-core businesses they did not reply alike.
VolvoFinans Bank did not see any difficulties in finding the right competencies and talents, but explained how being a non-core business associated with Volvo gave them attraction instead. As previously stated, the bank believes that the association with the Volvo brand makes them attract much more talented employees than they would have done without the brand connection, but there is actually one more dimension to it.
Volvo Cars, the core business, own stocks in other high profile companies as well and most known are the 50% share in Polestar and the 30% share in LYNC & CO.

VolvoFinans Bank described how they recently advertised a job at the bank, but the job description for the job offered involvement with the company Polestar and its brand as well. VolvoFinans Bank saw huge positive effects in their talent attraction when using the Polestar brand, a huge increase in people applying for the job, which is very interesting. The Polestar brand has always been associated and linked to Volvo and early on in their history the cars were under the Volvo brand, named Volvo S60 Challenge. In 2005 they officially renamed the company to Polestar (Polestar, 2021). With all this being said, it is not to be assumed that most people know that the Polestar brand is associated with the Volvo brand. Even if it is not clearly associated with Volvo, it still helps VolvoFinans Bank with positive spillover effects related to Polestar being a trendy and innovative company. This means that being a non-core company with close connections and relations to other companies in the concern or company group is highly beneficial. It is also not impossible that it is beneficial to the core businesses as well; since they have banking and financial services knowing their brand and what they stand for, which creates less friction.

ICA Banken states that they find it to be a challenge in recruiting fitting talent sometimes. Some competencies and talents are harder to find at the labor market and it requires solid

work to find the right competencies today. Some challenges are actually related to the fact that ICA Banken is a bank carrying the ICA brand.

When ICA Banken is looking for specific banking and insurance competencies they sometimes meet difficulties and challenges because of the fact that, for a lot of people, it is not very well known that the ICA brand is also associated with banking, finance and insurance services. Instead many people think of food and grocery stores, which forces ICA Banken and ICA Försäkringar to be even clearer and really showcase what they do and that they in fact are a full sortiment bank. Since comments such as "Oh okay, I thought ICA was about food" are still happening, they have a challenge in front of them to enlighten both customers and potential future employees about their ICA banking business. They are very aware of this challenge and are actively working on distributing this knowledge to people with the desirable and fitting banking competencies.

In Stena Recycling's case, they too are getting comments such as "So, is Stena Recycling related to the ferry company Stena?", but it is much more locally conditioned and in some areas Stena Recycling might even be the most known brand in the Stena sphere.

When discussing if it is generally hard to find the right competencies and talents at the labor market, Stena Recycling states that they don't think it is hard. They are very aware of the fact that they belong to an industry that is highly relevant and trendy at the moment, and they attract a lot of talent that want to make a difference in the world.

The three companies and their products and services may be interpreted as brand extensions from the core businesses, since an already established brand name has launched new products or services. This in its core is a branding strategy which traditionally means lower product introduction promotions, since they are already operating under a known brand name.

Brand extensions can profit off the core business' reputation, which we have seen proof of in this thesis. ICA Banken claims that they may not have reached out to that many people if they were not a part of the ICA brand, and VolvoFinans Bank absolutely states that the Volvo brand helps bring them attraction.

Although much research presents brand extensions to be successful, there are also theories presenting how the consumers evaluations depend on the fit between the parent brand and the extension product categories. Another important factor is the quality of the core business or parent brand and if assets and skills could move friction free between the original and the extension product categories.

This is very interesting since, for instance, grocery stores are very far away from banking and financial services. Is it an odd fit between the two business areas? It seems like the pharmacy business is a better fit as a brand extension since it belongs to the retail business area as well. Maybe the banking business is an odd fit compared to the grocery stores and the retail business, but the quality of the core business and parent brand is so strong that it does not matter. As ICA Banken stated; they share this security and safety value in the ICA concern, and that is what's important for them. In this case I don't think that an odd fit in the brand extension affects the concern at all.

The brand extension fit seems more obvious at VolvoFinans Bank, since a large part of their business and services are related to financing cars. Since they are not just a regular bank, but specialized in leasing and financing of cars, you don't really think that it is an odd brand extension. In Stena Recycling's case it is actually not an odd brand extension as well, since they are the daughter company of Stena Metall and business area has been in their Stena sphere's DNA since the very start. The Stena founder started to collect iron, metal and crape and then resell it, as early as 1939 (Stena Recycling, 2021).

Since some research finds the relationship between the original and the extension product class, the fit, to have a direct effect on the evaluation of the brand extension, the fit needs to be thought about. Is it maybe harder for ICA Banken to attract talented employees to their banking business because it is not the most obvious fit with the other business areas linked to the ICA brand? VolvoFinans Bank saw less challenges linked to being a banking business linked to the brand of a car business, but at the same time the fit between the original product and the brand extension was better since their banking and finance products were associated with the original product, the cars. Stena Recycling did not see many challenges as well when it came to talent attraction to their business area, and their fit is understandable as well since their business area has been a part of Stena's history since 1939. Not an odd fit, and that might lead to an easier time attracting talent, since it affects the evaluation of the brand extension in a positive way.

5.4 Internal career possibilities and shared recruitment platforms:

The last aspect that will be discussed is the fact that the non-core businesses are in fact a part of a company group, concern or sphere of companies. They are not individual, singular companies, but part of a family. Talent attraction means attracting fitting, competent and engaged employees to your business, and in this section I will discuss if being a non-core company in a larger group of companies may be beneficial or not.
Volvo Cars, Stena and ICA Gruppen are large companies and employers. Inside of those companies, a whole lot of talented and engaged competencies are employed, is it possible for these competencies to move across the borders to the non-core businesses as well?

The complementarity and transferability of assets and skills between the core business and non-core business is said to affect the evaluation of the brand extension, or in this case the non-core business, and therefore I investigated how common or easy it was for skills to move inside of the company groups or concerns.
Interestingly enough, the three companies presented three different levels of skills and employee movements between the non-core business and the core-business.

The company presenting the most friction free and well defined plan for movements of skills between the companies was the ICA concern. The ICA concern has both an internal and an external platform for recruitment and career opportunities. An important part of their employer brand is the opportunity to career climb inside of the concern and being able to try

different industries and business areas within the same brand. This internal career possibility has existed for a long time and is a huge benefit, especially for the non-core business.

However, ICA recently developed an external recruitment platform as well. This platform was made in order to not lose talent that was attracted towards the different companies in the concern. For instance, I asked which competencies that are the absolute hardest to find at the moment, and got the answer IT-specialists. Competencies and talented employees in the IT field are very much needed in the banking and finance business, and they can profit off this shared recruitment platform.

For instance, if ICA Gruppen attracts talented employees with competencies in IT, but do not have any job to offer at the moment, they can redirect this talent to another company in the ICA concern, maybe ICA Banken. This is beneficial because they don't lose talent that is attracted to them, every company in the concern can help in attracting talent and then distribute it to where it is most needed. Allocating talent is key for the ICA concern, and they also state how important it is for them to have an in-house recruitment team that truly knows the ICA brand and what it stands for.

Stena Recycling is part of the Stena sphere, which is a much larger group of companies, but part of the Stena Metall concern. The whole Stena sphere does not have a shared recruitment platform where they can advertise jobs for the whole sphere, as stated in the interview; "It's not like you can google 'Stena career' and then get access to a collective portal".
This means that they do not have the possibility to redirect talent in the same way as ICA could. For instance, if Stena Recycling is looking for talent in a field that exists in Stena Line or Stena Sessan as well, they do not have a system helping them to redirect the talent instead of losing it. But, they do have a platform for internal career opportunities.

The internal career platform applies for the whole, large Stena sphere, but although it's possible to move talent and skills between the different companies in the sphere, it is not very common. Stena Recycling explained how it's not really common that skills move between all of the Stena sphere companies, because they are so very different in what they do and which industries they belong to. But, it is much more common with movements of skills and labor between the companies inside of the Stena Metall concern.
This means that Stena Recycling has the opportunity to profit off the different internal talents and competencies inside of the larger Stena sphere, although they seem to use it most frequently with their own concern, Stena Metall.

Lastly, VolvoFinans Bank is quite independent from their core business, Volvo Cars. They have their headquarter in Gothenburg as well, but not at all in the same area. VolvoFinans Bank resides in downtown Gothenburg, where Volvo Cars have their large facility in Torslanda, a bit outside of Gothenburg.
VolvoFinans Bank does not have a shared platform with Volvo Cars, and they even state that it is very uncommon that people move between the different companies. People tend to stay at VolvoFinans Bank for many years, which also is the case with Volvo Cars.
Instead, VolvoFinans Bank has their own career site where they advertise available job offers.

However, a shared recruitment platform is not something new in the world of Volvo. The Volvo Group, for instance, have a shared platform for their different brands, among other Volvo Penta, Volvo Trucks, Volvo Buses and Renault Trucks. The difference, in this case, is that the brands sharing the recruitment platform are all in business areas and industries quite alike to each other.

Although VolvoFinans Bank is in another industry than Volvo Cars, they are still very closely associated because of their shared interests in cars. When interviewing the head of marketing at VolvoFinans Bank it appeared that she used to work with marketing at Volvo Cars, before heading to the bank. In her opinion, it was very useful and valuable to have that experience, but she also stated that it definitely applied mostly for jobs in marketing and communication.

6. Conclusion:

This section will present the conclusion of the thesis. Let us revisit the research question and the purpose of the thesis once again;

The research question was said to investigate what talent attraction looks like in non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business. The purpose of this thesis is to explore talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business. In this conclusion, the key takeaways from the study will be presented and help explain the phenomenon of talent attraction in non-core businesses.

This thesis has investigated the talent attraction in non-core businesses sharing their brand with a core business operating in another industry. We have been presented with qualitative empirical data from interviews with three companies; ICA Banken, VolvoFinans Bank and Stena Recycling. Three companies belonging to larger concerns or spheres of companies, but acting in their own industries.

In order to analyze the collected empirical data, four different categories have been used;
1. Sharing the brand and/or reputation.
2. Talent attraction, employer branding and values.
3. The non-core business' challenges and/or advantages.
4. Internal career possibilities and shared recruitment platforms.

The chosen categories all appeared in the interviews with the three companies and slowly, patterns started to take form. As previously stated, this thesis has a relativist ontology and a social constructionism epistemology. This means that many truths are assumed to co-exist and that facts depend on individuals' own perceptions. The truths spoken by individuals in this study are their truths, and must not apply as truths for other individuals in similar positions or professions.

The key takeaways from this study will now be presented:

- All of the non-core businesses believed that the shared brand with the core business was *predominantly positive* for their *talent attraction*. The core businesses bring attention to the non-core businesses and give them *possibilities* they might not have had without the shared brand.

- When sharing the well known brand, they received a sense of *security and safety*. This appeared to be the most important outcome of this thesis. Feeling safe and secure is not only important, but a *human basic need*. Especially in times of crisis and uncertainty, for instance during the covid-19 pandemic, people are *attracted towards companies with this sense of security and safety*. ICA Banken and Stena Recycling both had significant increases in job applications sent to them during the pandemic.

- Negative aspects related to the shared brand related to a *negative halo effect*. The non-core businesses all believed that they not only shared a brand with the core businesses, but also *reputation*. What's positive to be associated with one day, might be negative another day. However, none of the non-core businesses were concerned about this matter.

- Don't presuppose that the non-core business always is being associated with the core business. In Stena Recycling's case it emerged that the *presumed associations with Stena Line and the ferry/shipping industry was probably locally conditioned*. It is assumed that people in west and south Sweden associate Stena Recycling with this industry, but it might not be like that in other parts of the country.

- The non-core businesses relationships to the *corporate brand* might vary. It appeared that all of the companies had *different relationships to their core businesses*. ICA Banken was very closely linked with the ICA concern and it's brand - they felt like one unit. VolvoFinans Bank shared branding and communication with Volvo Cars, but otherwise felt very independent because of their size and geographical limits. Stena Recycling felt very close to the corporate brand, but they have also developed their own ambitious employer branding and values.

- As previously stated, a feeling of security and safety seems to be a highly important aspect of talent attraction these days. Since two of the companies in the study are operating in the banking and finance industry, it was discovered that this industry might want to *appear even more down to earth, inclusive and familiar, because of traditional stereotypes linked to working in that sector*.

- ICA Banken showcased an interesting aspect of talent attraction: *person-organization fit*. They don't want to attract the stereotypical "finance guy" that is too confidently straightforward - they want prestigeless employees with the right values for their organization. Stena Recycling also showcased how they preferred a specific person-organization fit. The companies' employer brands helped them to attract their ideal employees carrying the right values.

- There might be difficulties for non-core businesses when they want to *attract industry specific competencies*. ICA Banken showcased how it is sometimes hard to find the particular banking and finance competencies because *some people don't know that ICA has a bank*. Because of this, ICA Banken and ICA are working actively on spreading this knowledge, that they in fact are a full sortiment bank.

- Not only the core business with the shared brand brings talent attraction to the non-core businesses. VolvoFinans Bank experienced a huge increase in people applying for a job when they used the brand Polestar in their job advertisement. Therefore, *positive spillover-effects* exist with other brands in the same concern as well.

- The *fit between the core business and the non-core business* might affect how the non-core business is *evaluated and how much talent it attracts*. For instance, the fit between ICA's grocery stores and ICA Banken's banking business might be interpreted as odd, compared to VolvoFinans Bank who shares the associations to cars with Volvo Cars.

- Although the core business/non-core business fit can affect how the non-core business is interpreted, it also depends on the *quality of core business*. If the quality is strong, the fit matters less, as in the case with ICA Banken.

- Being able to *move or share skills and talent between the companies in a concern is a good opportunity for the non-core businesses*. ICA Banken, for instance, has a *shared external recruitment platform* with the other companies in the concern. This makes it possible to catch and use even more fitting talent. At Stena Recycling, it is possible to *move talent internally* in the larger Stena sphere.

To conclude, the non-core businesses in this thesis do see more positive aspects related to sharing a brand, with a company operating in another industry, than they see negative aspects. All of the companies see the shared brand as a great opportunity to take part of a safe brand with good values, that they too feel like they can connect with and stand for. The non-core businesses see the shared brand as a positive halo effect, which predominantly offers them a positive and well-renowned reputation.
However, what they seem to want to forget about, but should be highly alert for, is the fact that a positive halo effect can switch over to a negative halo effect in a couple of seconds. Even if the non-core businesses are not operating in the same industry or business areas as the core businesses, it will spill over to them in a couple of seconds anyway.

What might be a problem is when the non-core businesses are not as known as other companies in their industry. Being a non-core business, with a brand related to another industry, might lead to them having to show themselves and spread knowledge about who they are and what they do even more than other companies in their industry.

With this being said, the shared brand with the core business might also mean that they have different fundamental values than other, more independent, companies in their industry. For instance, ICA Banken who does not want to attract the stereotypical finance people, but people that stand for their corporate values. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that a non-core business is missing out on talented employees because of their shared brand. It is not guaranteed that they want to attract the same competencies and talents as independent companies in the same industry. All companies do not want rockstars, since they do not have rock bands. This also means that non-core businesses might be a little bit different, compared to independently branded companies operating in the same industry.

Also, the non-core businesses have very much to gain from being just a non-core company in a concern or group of companies. The very best is if the concern has a shared recruitment platform, since all of the companies together help to attract and catch the best, possible and most fitting talent to where it's needed within the concern.

Lastly, my interpretation of the talent attraction situation for non-core businesses is that they are valuing the shared brand very much, just because it helps them so much in attracting talented employees. There exists challenges related to being a non-core business, but they are not as prominent as the advantages.

6.1 Theoretical Implications:

This study has offered findings to a formerly unexplored research area, namely talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business. The findings from this study therefore open up a door to a completely new field to study, and I really do hope that further research will be made in order to dig even deeper and learn more about the phenomenon.

The findings suggest that non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business find both advantages and challenges related to the shared name and brand, therefore is it important to further investigate those concepts. This thesis has explored talent attraction in a completely new angle, which makes the findings relevant.

The findings are new, but many concepts used in the study are not. For instance, there exists plenty of research about the halo effect and how a feeling of security is important at workplaces. However, those concepts are new in this context of core and non-core businesses sharing the same brand and name.

Previous research has not explored talent attraction and employer branding related to non-core businesses, but since there exists many companies in Sweden and worldwide, it is highly relevant to continue to research. I believe that this study will offer theoretical implications to research in strategic market management and human resource management.

My research contributes to theory by highlighting some new findings that would be interesting to dig deeper into with further research:

1. Showcasing the importance of trust, security and safety in a brand. It does not matter that the brand is closely associated with a totally different industry, because the brand helps assure the feeling of trust and security, which attracts both potential future employees and consumers.

2. Non-core businesses are looking for the most fitting talented employees. However, the shared brand and name with the core business also means that they share their values. This means that the non-core businesses might not want to attract the same type of talented workforce as other companies in their business area.

3. There exists a halo effect, which makes people interpret the non-core business as the core business. They do share reputation, which can be both positive and negative. A scandal happening at one of the companies has a direct effect at the other company, even though they are not operating in the same industry.

4. It seems to be highly beneficial to have a shared recruitment platform covering many or all companies belonging to the same concern or group of companies. The shared recruitment platform enables talent and skills to move friction free between the different companies. It is also assuring that less talent is lost due to one company not needing that employee at the exact moment, instead, another company in the concern needing that talent can offer the attracted talent a job.

6.2 Managerial Implications:

The findings of this thesis can help both non-core businesses and core businesses to understand the underlying structures of talent attraction better. When conducting this study, my thoughts were always directed towards the desire to reveal knowledge that could help companies with talent attraction, employer branding and their marketing.

The thesis has focused on the non-core business talent attraction, but that does not mean that the findings are applicable on non-core businesses only. I really do believe that most companies can benefit from the findings relating to person-organization fit, values and employer branding. However, since there has not existed much research about talent attraction in the context of non-core businesses sharing the name of the core business, this study can really shed some light on knowledge that non-core businesses can use in order to understand their talent attraction better.

The managerial implications are divided into what they can offer to different departments of companies. Employer branding is interesting because of the mixed nature of the concept, it is as much marketing as HR. This makes employer branding unique, since many different departments need to collaborate in order to make it as great and well defined as possible.

Therefore, let me introduce how the findings in this theses may be helpful for companies:

Managerial implications for the HR department:

1. The study has shown how deeply important it is to show trustworthiness and security in companies' employer brands. Values overall have been stated as the most important part of the talent attraction process. Companies are looking for talented employees, but not just anybody, but very specific talented employees. There exists a person-organization fit, which the HR departments want to attract to their workplace. The employees need to be talented and have relevant knowledge and experience, but it is as important that they carry the same values as the organization does. Therefore, HR departments can learn from this and start thinking about what their ideal employee should be like. Which values are the most important to your particular organization? Type that down, and then formulate your employer brand with the intention of attracting just that person. By adding elements showcasing how the company has a secure and safe workplace, you will attract even more talent.

2. Know your advantages! As a non-core business being a part of a larger group of companies, there is a lot to benefit from when advertising jobs. For instance, VolvoFinans Bank saw a huge increase in people applying for a job when they stated that it was associated with Polestar. Polestar is seen as a trendy company, and therefore helped the bank to attract a talented workforce. Therefore, create collaborations between the non-core business and other companies in the concern, you can help and learn from each other!

3. An important finding in this thesis was that concerns using a shared recruitment platform could benefit hugely from it. The ICA concern uses a share recruitment platform, both for external and internal recruitments. If non-core businesses are having a hard time attracting a specific competency or talent, the shared recruitment platform can help pick up talents reaching out to other parts of the concern, and redirect them to the non-core business. By doing this, you are assuring that talent will not be lost, just because the company that the talent reached out to did not have a job to offer. Another fantastic feature is that a shared internal recruitment platform enables talents and skills to move friction free between the companies in the concern. This is another thing that the non-core business can benefit from. Therefore, my recommendation is to create a shared recruitment platform, both internal and external, in your concern or group of companies. Make it easier for all of the companies to attract and catch external talent, and enable talent to move between the companies.

Managerial implications for the strategic marketing department:

1. All of the companies interviewed in this study believed that the shared brand and name with the core business was predominantly positive for their talent attraction. This is an important finding that can help guide strategic marketing departments at the core businesses when they are deciding how to brand a future brand extension. The findings in this thesis suggests that by branding the non-core business or your brand extension with your current brand, there is much to win. Not only do the company save on costs related to creating a completely new brand, but they will also benefit

from the feeling of trust and security that will follow with the core business' brand name. Many companies choose to rebrand their brand extensions, but this study highlights the advantages of not doing so.

2. The strategic marketing departments at both the non-core business and the core business also need to be aware of the fact that they have a shared reputation. All of the companies partitioning in this thesis saw the shared brand and reputation as positive, but it mustn't be forgotten that a positive halo effect can turn negative in a couple of seconds. If a scandal occurs at one of the companies, the halo effect will make sure that there is a direct negative effect at the other company as well, even if they are not even operating in the same industry. With this being said, it is vital for the strategic marketing departments to have a crisis plan ready if a scandal would occur at the other company. I would recommend sitting down and writing a list of things that could occur at the other company and would then turn into a scandal. A scandal affecting all of the companies using the same brand name. Create a list of different scenarios, and then think of how your company would respond to the scandal in the best possible way. By being prepared, the negative halo effect can be less harmful.

3. Since it has been shown that there exists a halo effect connecting the non-core business with the core business, it should be used in strategic marketing processes in order to enhance the reputation of the brand. The halo effect works from both sides, therefore, please let me introduce a suggestion related to this topic. Imagine that the core business is large and secure, but it is just not seen as very innovative and forward-thinking anymore. What may be done in order to enhance the reputation and image is to create a non-core business carrying the same brand and name, and let that non-core business operate in an innovative and future relevant industry. For instance, in the sustainability sector. If the non-core business is successful, this means that it can help the core business to gain some innovative reputation because of the positive halo effect.

Managerial implications for both the HR department and the strategic marketing department:

1. Don't presuppose that the non-core business is the one in the shadow of the core business when working on your employer brand! Instead, have the same mindset as Stena Recycling. They indeed used and stood for the values associated with their core business, or the concern, but they also created their own additional employer brand. By doing this, a non-core business can benefit from the safe and trustworthy values associated with the core business, but they can also create something of their own that can differentiate them from the core business. In Stena Recycling's case, I do believe that their highly relevant sustainability profile together with their reputation of being a large and secure employer created the perfect combination of corporate brand, innovative employer branding and strategic marketing. Which means that what can be

learned is; dare to be innovative, even if you share your brand name with another company, there is much to win!

2. There are challenges related to being a non-core business sharing the name of the core business operating in another industry. As in ICA Banken's case; many people relate the brand ICA to food and grocery stores, not banking services. This is something that both the HR department and the strategic marketing department need to acknowledge as a challenge. It is vital that they create a unified branding and employer branding that showcases that the non-core business is a serious company operating in its particular industry or business area. For instance, ICA Banken believes that they need to be extra clear and really describe to people that they are a full sortiment bank. The challenge for non-core businesses is that they might need to explain what they do and stand for even more than other companies operating in their industry. I recommend using a simple and clear marketing strategy that makes people understand what your company offers and that you are as legitimate as your industry competitors.

6.3 Further Research:

In this section I will make suggestions for future research in the field of non-core business talent attraction. In order to do so, I will once again present the limitations of this study. The limitations offer guidance to how future research can be made. With that being said, the findings themselves have also been used in order to make suggestions about future research.

1. Firstly, since it has been addressed that this study is limited to interviews with three companies only, I suggest doing similar research but with a larger sample. It would also be interesting to interview not only Swedish companies, but international companies as well. In this future research study I also suggest interviewing future potential employees to the companies, which could be business students. Also, it would be beneficial to the study to interview many people at different departments of the companies, since it would offer more different perspectives and insights. It is possible that people working at the HR department and the marketing department have different views on employer branding and talent attraction.

2. I suggest doing further research covering how companies can form or create an employer branding that showcases how secure and trustworthy the company is in the best way. How do you make your company seem secure and trustworthy in the best, easiest and most effective way?

3. Lastly, I suggest doing research about the benefits of having shared recruitment platforms in a concern or company group. By doing this, we can achieve knowledge about how talent may be collected in the best possible and effective way.

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8. Appendix:

8.1 Interview Topic Guide:

The interview topic guide consisted of questions concerning five topics;
1. Attraction of Talented Employees
2. The Employer Branding
3. The Halo Effect
4. The Brand Extension
5. Corporate Brand Identity

Pre-formulated questions existed, but since the approach was semi-structured it was possible to move beyond questions and topics, depending on what direction the respondent wanted to move towards.
The pre-formulated questions were:

- What is it like for (Company X) when you want to attract talented employees or when you are recruiting? You want the most fitting and talented employees for your specific industry to be attracted to you, is the shared brand with the core business affecting the talent attraction because of the associations to another industry?

- Is it generally hard or easy to find the best possible competency for (Company X)?

- Do you know if the situation is different for the core business?

- If the same type of job would be advertised at the core business and the non-core business, do you think there would differ in how many people applied for the jobs?

- What is it that (Company X) would like to present or show with its employer brand?

- Do (Company X) share the same employer brand as the other companies in the concern?

- Would you think that external and internal people differ in what they think that your company's values are?

- Have (Company X) experienced that your company has been affected by something that happened at the core business? Positive or negative?

- Would you say that the core business and the non-core business share a reputation?

- Is it positive, negative or indifferent to be associated with the core business or the other companies that also share the brand and name?

- Is it easy for talents, skills and competencies to move freely between the different companies in the concern?

- Do you have a shared recruitment platform for the concern? Internal or external?