Coopetition as a Cultural Phenomenon

A qualitative, ethnography-inspired case study on the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition

Authors

Wattengaard, Lucas

Westman, Alice

Supervisor

Paulsen, Roland

Examiner

Müller, Monika

Abstract

Title:	Coopetition as a Cultural Phenomenon – A qualitative ethnography-inspired case study on the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition
Authors:	Lucas Wattengaard and Alice Westman
Supervisor:	Roland Paulsen, Lund University Sweden
Course:	BUSN49 Degree Project in Master's Programme Managing People, Knowledge and Change, Business Administration, 15 ECTS
Submission Date:	May 21st 2021
Purpose:	Our purpose with this study is to examine the employee perception of the organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition within a multi-brand organization. Through this investigation the study aims to unveil the concept of coopetition in the light of cultural assumptions, focusing on the interrelation between organizational culture and coopetitive practices.
Methodology:	This study is referred to as an ethnography-inspired case study. Through an abductive, interpretivist approach we investigated the cultural assumptions and coopetitive practices at the case company as experienced by the employees. We conducted 13 interviews and participated in four virtual observations to collect relevant empirical data.
Theoretical perspective:	Our theoretical framework mainly outlines previous research on coopetition, which is combined with a review of organizational culture research. Furthermore, Schein's (2010) three-level model of culture takes the role of being the theoretical perspective throughout the study.
Contributions:	Our study contributes to the literature by giving deeper insights in how intra-organizational coopetition could be seen as a cultural phenomenon and not just a concept that refers to a specific structure within an organization.
Key words:	intra-organizational coopetition, multi-brand organization, multi-unit organization, organizational culture, recognition

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to thank our phenomenal supervisor, Roland Paulsen for the dedication and support he has provided us with throughout the thesis. His advice and passion should not be underestimated in relation to the value of the study. Thank you, Roland!

Furthermore, we would also like to thank the respondents who took their time to be interviewed. Their friendly, outgoing attitude provided us with very insightful interviews. Moving on to the case company that has been investigated, we would like to thank you and wish the best of luck in future challenges and aspirations.

To conduct this thesis has been both a challenging, insightful and educative experience. We hope that the reader finds the study as meaningful.

Happy reading!

Lucas Wattengaard & Alice Westman

Lund 21st of May 2021

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This section gives an overview and background to the research phenomenon coopetition. We problematize the lack of research on the topic and discuss its relevance for intra-organizational relationships, as well as its connection to organizational culture. Lastly, we present the purpose and research questions of this study, along with an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background

Historically, economic relationships have been regarded as a trade-off of being either competitive or cooperative, which could be seen as a continuum, where a shift towards one side results in a move away from the other (Knein, Greven, Bendig & Brettel, 2020). However, Luo, Slotegraaf and Pan (2006) argue that this trade-off is a simplification of the much more complex organizational reality, where they claim that cooperation and competition to a high extent can take place simultaneously, in what is called coopetition. When the concept is defined, coopetition is described as a cooperation to make a market grow, while simultaneously competing to divide it up, which allows organizations to achieve economies of scale and access strategic resources (Luo, 2005; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016).

Coopetition has traditionally been discussed on an inter-organizational level (Knein et al. 2020), where it is described as an important part of the corporate strategy, to cope with both faster business dynamics and a more uncertain environment, in terms of market globalization and aggressive economic competition (Bouncken, Gast, Kraus & Bogers, 2015). However, Knein et al. (2020) argue that coopetition also can be highly present on an individual, team and unit level in an organization, which is referred to as intra-organizational coopetition. Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) state that coopetition within organizations tend to create highly noticeable tensions, which has encouraged further research, for example where competing brands or units within the same organization also must cooperate. When organizations nurture intra-organizational coopetition, it is said to enhance organizational performance, creativity and organizational learning (Bendig, Enke, Thieme & Brettel, 2018; Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019).

Since mergers and acquisitions as well as multi-brand organizations are becoming more common, this in turn also creates further situations of both inter- and intra-organizational

coopetition (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). In academic research, intra-organizational coopetition is a younger and less explored phenomenon than inter-organizational coopetition (Knein et al. 2020; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016; Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005) and in 2016, Bengtsson, Raza-Ullah and Kock (2014) stated that only about 5% of the coopetition literature is concerned with the intra-firm level. This has presumably changed slightly over the last years, but it still clarifies the shortage of academic research on the topic. This scarcity in research does however mismatch with the interest in intra-organizational coopetition, since two out of the five most cited articles on coopetition up until 2014 concerned this level (Czakon, Mucha-Kuś & Rogalski, 2014). With such an interest in intra-organizational coopetition it is of great interest to further look into what has been discovered up to this day and investigate the potential gaps, which are still to be unveiled.

1.2 Problematization

According to Chiambaretto, Massé and Mirc (2019) internal coopetition, or intra-organizational coopetition, is defined as the situations where there is joint occurrence of competition and collaboration across functions within a firm. Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) further argue how intra-organizational coopetition among units is more likely to occur in multi-brand, multi-channel organizations in which distinct units compete for market share. Therefore, it can be seen as beneficial to investigate the concept in such a context, whereby the case company in this study is the multi-brand organization TopSale Nordic. According to Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) the most prominent tensions in multi-brand or multi-unit organizations lie in how management on different levels compete for internal resources from the parent firm. However, if the tensions are handled properly, coopetition in any context is argued to generate synergy effects, by possessing the benefits of both a competitive and collaborative environment, which finally will improve organizational performance (Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019).

Among the many available factors that explain the organizational environments' importance for intra-organizational coopetition, organizational culture has received very scarce attention (Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005). Klimas (2016) examined the relation between organizational culture, cooperation and competition in an intra-organizational context, and other research has found that organizational culture influences whether coopetitive relationships between firms are adopted and successful (Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005).

6

Knein et al. (2020) theorize that organizational culture directly influences coopetition within organizations, but these findings focus mainly on the implications of national culture in relation to the concept. Therefore, questions remain to be answered, regarding the inter-relation between intra-organizational coopetition and the organizational culture. Deshpande and Webster (1989, p.4) define organizational culture as "a pattern of shared beliefs and values that helps individuals to understand the organizational functioning and thereby provide them with the behaviors and norms that are advocated in the organization". Song, Lee and Khanna (2016) express how internal competition between business units can enhance organizational flexibility, encourage challenging of the status quo, and motivate greater efforts from employees. Both the research of Song, Lee and Khanna (2016) as well as Deshpande and Webster (1989) acknowledge that their respective concepts are expressed in behaviors, which could imply that there is a connection between the concepts. Knein et al. (2020) further strengthen this possible connection by distinguishing how strong organizational cultural values tend to be influential for the coopetitive behavior.

Literature on intra-organizational coopetition has often studied the phenomenon from a managerial perspective, where emphasis is put on the specific, strategic actions management should take regarding the structure and coordination of coopetitive practices (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016; Song, Lee & Khanna, 2016). Studies on intra-organizational coopetition seldom examine the concept from an employee point of view, and when this perspective is investigated, it is not done with the organizational culture in mind (Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019). Hatch and Schultz (2001) argue that employees' perceptions and feelings around the company culture should be considered, to make sure that these are aligned with the vision from top management and to preserve employees' well-being. Considering the lack of prior insight regarding employees' perceptions of intra-organizational coopeting culture, a study in this area would therefore be crucial from both a scholarly and managerial point of view, resulting in an improved understanding of how to accomplish a balanced interplay of coopetitive behavior within organizations. As both coopetition and organizational culture refer to employee behaviors and include the occurrence and willingness to engage in collaboration and competition, we want to problematize coopetition as a simply strategic tool or structural phenomenon, and instead explore the concept as a possible cultural phenomenon. Therefore, we see a need to fill empirical gaps in existing research and take employee perceptions into account, however this study will also follow

Alvesson and Sandberg's (2011) advice, where we aim to challenge and question the assumptions that underlie existing research and theory on intra-organizational coopetition.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

Our purpose with this study is to examine the employee perception of the organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition within a multi-brand organization. Through this investigation the study aims to unveil the concept of coopetition in the light of cultural assumptions, focusing on the interrelation between organizational culture and coopetitive practices. Through such an investigation we aim to give an answer to the research question:

> *How does intra-organizational coopetition interrelate with organizational culture within the multi-brand organization TopSale Nordic?*

1.4 Research Outline

In this introductory chapter we have presented the concept of intra-organizational coopetition and introduced how cultural aspects and an employee perspective are often not included in previous research. In the second chapter we provide a literature review of the theoretical framework relevant for this study. The chapter presents the history and different perspectives on the concept of organizational culture, followed by previous literature regarding coopetition. The third chapter explains the research approach of this study, including our philosophical groundings and qualitative methodology, as well as the process for data collection and analysis. In the fourth chapter we present our empirical material, which is categorized into four themes that were considered prominent and relevant to give a full picture of organizational culture and coopetition. Consequently, in chapter five, we discuss and analyze the empirical material in relation to the theory presented in the second chapter, to detect patterns and problems relevant to answer our research question. Finally, in the sixth chapter we answer our research question and finalize our conclusions of the study. This is followed by our reflections on managerial implications, limitations with the study and future research.

2. Literature Review

In this section we present literature regarding the topics for the thesis. Firstly, we present an overview of organizational culture, the roots of the phenomenon in academic research, how culture can be detected in organizations and different perspectives on the topic. Thereafter we present literature and research on coopetition on an inter- and intra-organizational level. The section is finalized by connecting the topic of culture and intra-organizational coopetition, stating a theoretical gap in the coopetition research.

2.1 Organizational Culture

The topic of organizational culture has been central in both organization studies and amongst practitioners since the 1970s (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016), where managing culture traditionally has been seen to enhance organizational performance through focusing efforts on employee commitment (Willmott, 1993). Peters and Waterman (1982) early on argued that a strong set of shared values was a very important factor in organizational success and described culture work as a way to bring out motivation and commitment, emphasizing the human nature of employees. The view of culture as a key factor in organizations have later been revised and problematized, but there still is a consensus in organization studies that culture plays a central role in building successful businesses (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). Organizational culture is commonly seen to have both internal and external purposes, where the organizational culture can be seen as a tool to integrate the firm with internal stakeholders and employees, as well as adapting externally to its environment (Daft, Murphy & Willmott, 2017; Schein, 2010). Furthermore, organizational culture can be a way to foster innovation and collaboration (Hislop, Bosua & Helms, 2018), competition (Coombs, Knight & Willmott, 1992) and employee commitment (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016) since the values it consists of can guide the behaviors and attitudes of employees (Daft, Murphy & Willmott, 2017).

There are several ways to describe organizational culture, where one influential framework is Schein's (2010) three-level model of culture. This model divides the concept into three correlated levels, which are basic underlying assumptions, espoused values and artifacts. The underlying assumptions are described as the taken for granted, unconscious beliefs that underlie everyday thinking and determine behaviors in organizations. This level is what Schein (2010) argues constitutes the actual culture, as these are the assumptions that guide an organization's

or group's members in how to react emotionally, how to make sense of reality and how to act in various kinds of situations. Espoused values are the more outspoken norms, beliefs and ideals of how one should behave, think and act in the organization, which may be more or less congruent with the behavior. Schein (2010) states that espoused values can become underlying assumptions if the members are convinced and eventually start acting accordingly.

Lastly, Schein (2010) depicts culture in artifacts, which are the most superficial and visible level, where values, norms and underlying assumptions are expressed in observable manifestations (Schein, 2010). Artifacts that express the underlying culture can be rites, ceremonies, stories, language and physical expressions, but also the observed behaviors of employees (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016; Schein, 2010). Culture is therefore widely connected with symbolism, where artifacts are symbols representing deeper meanings and values shared by the members in the organization (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016; Schein, 2010). Furthermore, artifacts can be used to establish and strengthen the culture (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). Myths and stories within an organization reveal an organization's history and is highly influential in its members' understanding of company values and beliefs (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013). Moreover, Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013) emphasize language as an important focus in culture research, both in terms of form and content, as it reveals the thoughts and assumptions of people. They also acknowledge how language works as an identity marker, regarding for instance occupational subcultures in organizations.

Organizational culture can be seen as an organizational identity project since it provides a social identity for its members (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). Organizational members form their identities through the reflection of their own identity in relation to the cultural values of the organization they belong to and the image perceived by others (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Early on, Peters and Waterman (1982) noted that many successful companies expressed a belief in themselves as better, superior, or more successful than other groups, as a way to separate the "we" as the organizational culture and identity from "them", as the outsiders. Peters and Waterman (1982) also expressed importance in building organizational systems that produce, highlight and celebrate their employees as "winners". In later research, organizational members have been seen as more likely to identify themselves with a set of shared values if these are perceived as successful, unique, and distinct compared to other groups (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). The connection between organizational culture and organizational identity

could therefore be related to Peters and Waterman's (1982) early observations to why "winners" cultures might be a factor for business success. Furthermore, a stronger collective or shared identity is said to create benefits, since it increases collaboration and the willingness to participate in knowledge sharing activities within organizations (Hislop, Bosua & Helms, 2018).

2.1.1 Culture Management

It is often said that culture can be managed, both through institutionalizing corporate values in the observable aspects of culture, artifacts, such as rituals, ceremonies and symbols, but also through integrating the values and vision in formal procedures and structures (Daft, Murphy & Willmott, 2017). Hatch and Schultz (2001) stress that management's vision should be aligned with the organizational culture, whereby companies should also incorporate the values they promote in practice. Furthermore, Willmott (1993) states that management uses the company vision, along with symbolic action and recognition, as a means to strengthen the corporate culture and govern corporate behavior. Corporate cultures can then be seen to systematically recognize and reward employees, both on a material and on a more symbolic level, for identifying and acting accordingly to the espoused values in the organization (Willmott, 1993). Socialization is commonly seen as an important culture management practice, where newcomers are socialized into and adjust themselves to the organizational culture and the company's history and values (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013, Wilson, 2001). Wilson (2001) emphasizes that both management practices and formal socialization processes, as well as informal socialization processes occurring on an everyday basis, are important in establishing and strengthening an organizational culture. This goes in line with Schein (2010) who states that espoused values can become the actual organizational culture, as management can propose values that then have to go through a transformation process where the group or organization tests, validates and reinforces these in a social context.

This previous paragraph on culture is often referred to as an integration perspective, which assumes that management can shape and manage culture (Wilson, 2001). According to this perspective, the goal is to have a strong, unified culture based on consistent consensus, whereas conflicts, inconsistencies and subcultures signals that an organization has a weak or bad culture (Alvesson, 2002; Wilson, 2001). However, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016) state that there are many perspectives on whether management can have a strong, intentional and systematic impact on the organizational culture. Alvesson (2002) criticizes the integration perspective,

arguing that it gives a rather idealistic depiction of culture. He states that different people attach different meanings to concepts, phrases and values whereas for example the notion of "high quality" can symbolize different things to different members of an organization. This in turn can make management's communication of broad values insignificant for the meaning-making of individuals within an organization, having little effect on their actual shared values (Alvesson, 2002). Schein (2010) lifts this phenomenon, explaining that espoused values might only reflect desired behaviors, instead of observed ones. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016) also state that corporate culture is often only addressed and expressed during certain occasions, where it becomes ceremonial talk, decoupled from the organizational reality. The fact that official corporate cultures are often expressed in ideal and grandiose phrases on a more general level brings it even further from the organizational reality it is supposed to address (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016).

In contrast to the unifying integration perspective on organizational culture, many researchers instead interpret culture as differentiated or even completely fragmented within organizations (Wilson, 2001). Alvesson (2002) states that there inevitably will be variations, or subcultures within organizational cultures, which can either be a source of conflicts, or exist in harmony with one another. Wilson (2001) refers to this viewpoint on organizational culture as the differentiation perspective, where there can only be consensus within subcultures. According to this perspective, a unified perception about shared values cannot be achieved on an organization-wide level, whereby what is unique about an organization's culture is the particular mix of subcultural differences within the given organization's boundaries (Wilson, 2001).

Moreover, Alvesson (2002) stresses the need to investigate subunits and subcultures on a local level instead of trying to grasp the essence of a unitary organizational culture. Literature on organizational culture states that one must take subcultures into account, since organizational culture rarely is uniform throughout an organization (Alvesson, 2002; Daft, Murphy & Willmott, 2017; Eriksson-Zetterquist, Müllern & Styhre, 2011; Wilson, 2001). Additionally, Schein (2010) states that subcultures mainly form around functional units in organizations, often derived from shared occupational, educational or social backgrounds. Eriksson-Zetterqvist, Müllern and Styhre (2011) state that problems arise when it becomes obvious that the subcultures do not align with each other in terms of expectations, attitudes, and norms. However, if cultural differences between units are managed properly, they do not have to

interfere with the operations in a negative way (Eriksson-Zetterqvist, Müllern & Styhre, 2011). Therefore, it is important that organizations set values and visions that can inspire all of its subcultures (Hatch & Schultz, 2001).

2.1.2 Organizational Culture as Control

Academic literature has described culture as a medium for control whereby it can replace other controlling ways of organizing, such as control systems, rules and formal policies (Daft, Murphy & Willmott, 2017; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Thompson, 2011). Culture management has been criticized for being an extension of management control and a tool for manipulation, also referred to as normative control (Müller, 2017; Thompson, 2011; Willmott, 1993). Compared to rational or bureaucratic modes of organization, corporate culture directs its effort to the affective domain (Willmott, 1993). Thereby, the moral dilemma is that culture management focuses on managing the insides of employees, such as their thoughts, emotions and attitudes rather than their behaviors (Thompson, 2011; Willmott, 1993). Unlike Peters and Waterman (1982), who emphasize culture work as a way to give freedom and meaning to employees, other researchers argue that it is a way to make employees' behaviors more predictable and calculable (Thompson, 2011). The company vision, outspoken values and the recognition that comes with them becomes a control system which suppresses critical reflection, since it prohibits the individual to reflect outside of the framework of cultural beliefs formed by the company (Willmott, 1993). Furthermore, Willmott (1993) argues that corporate culture deceives employees into thinking they are autonomous, even though they are controlled by the norms and frames that cultures set up for them.

Fleming (2005) states that modern organizations often encourage their employees to "be themselves" and have fun at work. The existential empowerment that is preached in these companies is a form of control mechanism, where employees' non-work identities are evaluated and where poor work performance is seen as a matter of poor personal values or identity (Fleming & Sturdy 2009). Although these types of cultures often provide a sense of commitment in employees, the normative pressures and feeling that one's identity is evaluated, can also lead to stress and anxiety (Barker, 1993). Normative control can also appear as a team-based control where groups in a collaborative environment create a normative consensus, often based on official cultural visions. This consensus in turn acts as a guide or framework of control for employee behaviors in the workplace (Barker, 1993)

Coombs, Knights and Willmott (1992) also take the concept of control into account as a factor when discussing organizational culture and further explain the role of competition in and around organizations. They describe how competing is a cultural phenomenon and how it can only exist when it is supported and promoted by the culture. While Peters and Waterman (1982) state that culture can be seen as a key factor for corporate performance, Pettigrew (1988: cited in Coombs, Knights & Willmott, 1992) declares how its rigidity could be seen as a factor in the failure of organizations to innovate and compete properly in the marketplace. Coombs, Knights and Willmott (1992) explain how there is a prominent tendency in the organizational culture literature to treat artifacts of culture as expressions of a world which is shared and consensually derived. However, it is important to also acknowledge that organizational culture in reality is more complicated, where issues of control and competition over scarce and valued resources are factors which need to be taken into account (Coombs, Knights & Willmott, 1992). Furthermore, competition does not only exist outside the organization as a market condition, as it is also connected to internal relations between divisions, departments and individuals within an organization. This competitiveness could be connected to internal resources and career advantages whereby culture could be seen as the primary tool for control and competition (Coombs, Knights and Willmott, 1992). Moreover, a shared unified culture can still lead to tensions, if an organization has strong collective ideas regarding for instance self-interest, or fierce internal competition (Alvesson, 2002).

2.2 Coopetition

The ideas of competition within unified, cooperative organizations, mentioned by Alvesson (2002), are discussed more comprehensively by other researchers. Luo (2005) describes the phenomenon of combining competition and collaboration in and among organizations, as a concept called coopetition. The concept is described as cooperating in order to make the business or market bigger, while simultaneously competing to split it up (Luo, 2005). Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) describe the cooperative aspects of internal coopetition as creating scale effects, sharing databases as well as sharing competencies to increase efficiency. Some of the driving factors that foster internal collaboration are expressed to be recognition, goals, leadership and organizational structure (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). Moreover, the benefits of internal cooperation have been described as knowledge sharing, organizational cohesion and innovation, while some drawbacks from cooperation can be a decreased efficiency, groupthink and a limited ownership (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). In terms of

competition as a part of coopetition, Luo (2005) describes it as a fight for internal resources, external market share and system position, referring to the position in the value chain of the organization. Naidoo and Sutherland (2016) describe how internal competition increases motivation, performance and efficiency in the organization. Furthermore, competition is argued to arise when subunits or brands are interested or active in common markets and provide the same categories of products to shared consumers (Luo, 2005). Through the aspiration of being acknowledged, benefitted and influential within the organization, brands or units are encouraged to improve their performance (Luo, 2005). Naidoo and Sutherland (2016) also bring up rewards and performance measures as motivational factors for competition and further argue how the internal competition could be triggered by recognition from management. However, risks and potential drawbacks with a strong internal competition is that it can lead to hoarding, decreased knowledge sharing and unethical behavior (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016).

2.2.1 Intra-organizational Coopetition

Coopetition has mainly been investigated on an inter-organizational level, referring to different companies within the same industry, who compete against each other but collaborate to make their position in the industry stronger (Knein et al. 2020; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). On an inter-organizational level, coopetition is argued to give companies opportunities of achieving benefits such as economies of scale, access to strategic resources and creation of synergies (Luo, 2005; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). However, academic research on the concept at an intra-organizational level, within a company, is very limited (Knein et al. 2020; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016).

According to Chiambaretto, Massé and Mirc (2019) internal coopetition, or intra-organizational coopetition, is defined as the situations where there is a joint occurrence of competition and collaboration across functions within a firm. Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) elaborate on this definition by considering coopetition as situations where organizations compete in some markets, products and activities, while simultaneously collaborating in other ones. Knein et al. (2020) argue that intra-firm coopetition can be present among people, groups, and subunits in organizations. Furthermore, internal coopetition between business units has been argued to motivate greater efforts from employees, encourage challenging of the status quo and enhance flexibility in the organization (Song, Lee and Khanna, 2016). Nurturing intra-firm coopetition is also said to improve employee creativity and enhance organizational learning (Bendig et al. 2018).

According to Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) there will be obvious tensions when coopetition is occurring between organizations, but they emphasize that the tensions are even more noticeable in an intra-organizational context, where competing units or brands within the same company also need to cooperate. They argue that the most dominant source of tension in intra-organizational coopetitive relationships, lies in how managers compete for the obtainment of technological, financial and human resources from the parent firm. However, if the tensions are handled properly, coopetition in any context is argued to generate synergy effects, by possessing the benefits of both a competitive and collaborative environment, which finally will improve organizational performance (Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019). Moreover, Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) argue that multi-unit and multi-brand organizations are present in many sectors, whereby a clear necessity for managing cooperative and competitive relationships in and among the different units is prominent.

According to Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) there is a prominent importance of applying effective management principles and procedures in order to succeed with coopetitive strategies. Simultaneously they raise questions of how to apply these principles and argue that coopetition is a topic that lacks thorough research. In terms of intra-organizational coopetition, a case study by Song, Lee and Khanna (2016) highlights how reward and promotion systems with a financial performance base in each unit enhance coopetitive behavior. Moreover, Bendig et al. (2018) suggest that managers should implement efficient routines and formal procedures to make sure that intra-firm coopetition leads to organizational learning. Aligned with Bendig et al (2018), Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) state that companies should implement formal coordination mechanisms, such as interunit projects, control procedures and regular meetings, to succeed with coopetitive relationships. Notwithstanding, internal coopetition is normally managed horizontally and through decentralized coordination, which allows management to flexibly integrate central decisions through local strategies, creating a sense of informal coordination. Therefore, formal coordination is often combined with informal coordination, where informal networks, interactions and trust play an important role in creating successful coopetitive environments (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016).

2.2.2 Coopetition and Culture

Previous research on intra-firm and cross-functional coopetition further discusses its relevance for innovation, performance and learning (Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019). However, there are few studies regarding coopetition and culture (Knein et al. 2020). In an exploratory study,

Klimas (2016) describes how coopetition on an inter-organizational level is related to culture, both in terms of cooperation and competition. In line with Klimas' (2016) study, Knein et al. (2020) theorize that organizational culture also could be applicable and play a significant role in relation to coopetition within organizations. In their comprehensive study on intra-organizational coopetition and culture, Knein et al. (2020) found that strong organizational cultures in general could be linked to internal coopetition, as organizational values often relate to competitive and cooperative behaviors. However, this study mostly emphasized national culture and it did not take subcultures and organizational identity into account. They argued that coopetition strongly depends on the willingness of organizational members to compete or cooperate. Moreover, they explained how individualism is a critical cultural contingency by highlighting the degree to which individuals take care of themselves compared to taking care of their unit, group or organization (Knein et al. 2020).

When examining the scarce literature on intra-organizational coopetition, it is often studied from a managerial perspective, regarding actions to decrease tensions (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). Furthermore, most research uses top managers and executives as the key informants (Knein et al. 2020; Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). However, no significance is put in how culture and coopetition is perceived by the employees (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016; Song, Lee & Khanna, 2016). Considering the lack of insights in employees' perceptions of intra-organizational coopetition and a possible connection to organizational culture, it would be beneficial from both a scholarly and managerial perspective to study this topic. Such a study would result in a better understanding of how to achieve a balanced interplay of coopetitive behavior within an organization.

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the chosen research methodology of this thesis. Firstly we describe our philosophical groundings and research approach, which is followed by an introduction of the case company. Subsequently, we explain the data collection methods and collection process we have adopted, which is followed by the data analysis process, where we acknowledge how our theoretical perspective has helped us to present focused empirical findings. Lastly we present ethical considerations and limitations of our study.

3.1 Philosophical Groundings

Our study has an ontological approach where we base the empirical material on social constructions, meaning that the findings do not aim to present a definite reality, but rather different perceptions of it (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019; Prasad, 2018; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This approach is referred to as social constructionism, and we find it suitable for the study since our aim is to examine the subjective reality and perceptions of individuals. We follow Bryman, Bell and Harley's (2019) standpoint around social constructionism, which argues that occurring situations and entities are socially constructed, where they are non-existent and unestablished before they are made real by the actions and understandings of humans. Reality is, in other words, something that is said to be created and shaped by social actors, which we argue is an appropriate point of view since our interviews are qualitative, where the respondents explicitly describe their experiences based on open questions. Furthermore, social constructionism advocates that the ways people categorize to understand the social and natural world, are also considered to be social products (Bryman, Bell and Harley, 2019). With this point of view in mind, we stay humble to the fact that such categorizations also have affected the way we as authors have interpreted the findings of the study.

In terms of epistemological assumptions, we use interpretivism to highlight the subjective perceptions of a phenomenon, which is in line with a social constructionist ontology (Prasad, 2018). Following how Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019) describe interpretivism, our study is concerned with the understanding of human behavior regarding 'how' and 'why' social action is happening. Prasad (2018) states that social practice limits subjectivity, where interpretivists often aim to study intersubjectivity, which refers to the common, shared agreements and understandings about reality. As organizational culture refers to the shared assumptions in a certain group (Schein, 2010), the interpretivist tradition and studying the intersubjectivity was

considered highly relevant for this study. The interpretivist tradition notes how researchers can never be fully separated and objective when studying a social phenomenon (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Prasad, 2018). We therefore bear in mind that it is not just the perceptions of the employees that will be highlighted in the study, but that we as researchers interpret and treat the empirical material according to our perception of reality (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019).

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

The most suitable research design depends on the kind of answer and contribution one attempts to give as a researcher (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Since this study does not aim to give a definite answer or depiction of reality, we found it most appropriate to follow a qualitative research methodology, which aims to analyze, interpret and describe social phenomena in a specific context (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). We have chosen to conduct a qualitative case study, inspired by ethnography, where we believe that observations and interviews will give a comprehensive, nuanced picture of the perceptions and understandings of the culture as well as intra-organizational coopetition at TopSale Nordic. Ethnography is commonly used to describe intensive fieldwork that aims to study natives in their own culture, trying to capture the experiences of people in their everyday lives (Prasad, 2018). We see this methodology as relevant, as we are interested in studying employees' experiences of organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition. However, since the study is conducted virtually and in a limited amount of time, we interpret this study as insufficient to be called ethnography (Prasad, 2018) whereby we refer to it as ethnography-inspired.

Ethnographers aim to generate insights, rather than predictions of reality (Prasad, 2018). Furthermore, ethnographic texts and studies are designed to convince and clarify, regarding a reality of events that goes on in a certain situation (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Accordingly, this study does not aim to give answers to the ultimate truth about reality but instead to provide insights and perceptions of reality at TopSale Nordic, in line with the interpretivist and social constructionist research traditions (Prasad, 2018). Ethnographers aim to grasp cultural embeddedness, local meanings and identity formation (Prasad, 2018). Thereby, we expect that this choice of research method will also allow us to view the topics of organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition in different settings, and find a broad scope of meanings regarding them. Bowen (2009) argues that qualitative research preferably should include more

than one data source of evidence in the study of a phenomenon. We have chosen to collect our research in line with this advocacy, by including both observations and interviews, in order to conduct a more comprehensive ethnography-inspired study. According to Styhre (2013) the use of both interviews and observations is beneficial to thoroughly capture the thoughts and beliefs of individuals. We see this thoroughness as essential in order to reach the in-depth understanding of people's perceptions, which is the aim of qualitative studies (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Schein (2010) recommends researchers to spend a lot of time with an organization or group to understand their culture, but also suggests talking and asking insiders about the meaning behind observable artifacts. We followed these recommendations in our choice of research method, where we through observations could detect cultural artifacts and build an understanding of the organizational context, while the interviews gave us an understanding of the meanings and assumptions that the employees attach to them.

3.2.2 Abductive Approach

Our ethnography-inspired case study is based on an abductive way of working which fits well with our choice of a qualitative study, with observations and semi-structured interviews. In the study, we initially had coopetition and organizational culture as two predetermined, broad topics to investigate, but we let the answers of the interviews and the results of our observations guide us in which specific kind of theory we found applicable. This way of working is further justified by Styhre (2013) who describes that you cannot be sure what you will find when you enter a field of study, whereas an abductive approach gave us the possibility to adapt and evaluate the chosen theory. In practice this meant that we identified our findings by sorting and reducing the collected empirical data into different themes and subsequently relating and evaluating them to appropriate theories. Thereby, we used an abductive approach to let the empirical findings steer the study within our broad predetermined topic, rather than adapting them to already established research (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). Through using an abductive approach, we did not only adapt existing theory to our empirical findings, but we could be reflexive and question the assumptions that lay behind these theories, as suggested by Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018). Lastly, an abductive approach also gave us further possibilities to problematize and question existing theories and research (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

3.3 Case Study Design

We chose a case study for our research, which is a commonly used methodology for research within organizational culture, since it focuses on an in-depth understanding of cultural processes in organizations (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013). Furthermore, a case study design gave us the possibility to collect rich and detailed data through various qualitative methods (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019), such as observations and semi-structured interviews. Before conducting the study, we had identified how TopSale Nordic would be an interesting case of coopetition, as the two brands within the company sell the same type of products on the market. We therefore had a specific interest in the unique aspects of a particular case company, which Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) refer to as an idiographic approach.

3.3.1 Case Company

Our case company is TopSale Nordic, which is a fictional name of the Nordic sales branch of a global organization in the manufacturing industry. Our study object within this branch consists of employees on different hierarchical levels and departments at the head-office of the branch. TopSale Nordic is a multi-brand organization that provides a wide range of technological products, which means that their products belong to several different brands. In the Nordic branch there are two main brands in terms of revenue. The two brands provide similar types of products, but they differ slightly in quality and price-range. We will call these brands TopReg and TopPro and throughout the study the relationship between these two will be central, to discuss the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition.

The Nordic head-office consists of departments which only represent one brand respectively, such as marketing and product, but it also has functions that the brands share between each other, such as HR, customer service, finance and managers on higher hierarchical levels. Both the Nordic branch and TopSale in general, are growing rapidly and have been doing so for the last decade, which means that new employees are hired consequently. As of now, the Nordic branch consists of around 250 employees, where around 25% of them work at the Nordic head-office. The last two years, annual culture surveys have been conducted at the head-office where the results have shown a prominent challenge regarding communication and collaboration between departments. Since collaboration and communication are argued to be elements of organizational culture (Schein, 2010), our interest in examining the organizational culture was further justified to be the main focus area when investigating the relations between employees

in the Nordic office in general. In our study we chose to focus on the relationship between the two brands specifically, TopReg and TopPro.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Observations

We were not able to attend physical meetings to collect empirical data, due to the covid-19 situation. Thereby our study is conducted in a virtual setting, also referred to as a digital ethnography (Akemu & Abdelnour, 2020). Akemu and Abdelnour (2020) state that there are several interesting aspects to observe, interpret and register when conducting digital observations. They recommend researchers to assess power dynamics between participants and hosts, potential barriers for member participation and how the functionality and technical attributes enable or prohibit employee voice, which can be seen as cultural and hierarchical manifestations. A risk with digital ethnography is however that the researcher cannot observe interactions that happen outside of the official meeting, such as chat rooms between individual participants and background conversations when microphones are muted (Akemu & Abdelnour, 2020). This is something that was taken into account in our observations, where we mainly assessed the content of discussion, how the content was talked about, as well as employee voice in these meetings.

For this study, in an ethnography-inspired role, we started with conducting four observations of virtual meetings at TopSale Nordic. We identified how the observations would be a useful tool in order to inductively find interesting topics which our interviews subsequently could focus on. We took roles of being complete observers, meaning that we did not interact with participants during the meetings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). As a complete observer there are rules, such as not answering questions, not entering arguments and not appearing anxious to overhear (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In this regard, we argue that the virtual context was beneficial since we did our observations with our camera and microphone being turned off. We thereby avoided the risk of participants interpreting and adjusting themselves towards the reactions of us researchers. Both researchers took field notes during the observations, where both the factual content and how this was talked about was taken into consideration, as advocated by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). One researcher had a stronger emphasis on taking notes of the content, while the other one noted how this was talked about, as the process of analyzing both simultaneously is a difficult process (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

The first out of four observed meetings consisted of an introduction meeting for new employees, which gave us an understanding of culture management efforts, and the outspoken shared values in the company. During this meeting the CEO and HR Manager held presentations about the company, values and mission, for nine new employees at both brands. Furthermore, we also conducted two observations of TopPro's and TopReg's respective weekly team meeting, where their respective teams participated. Lastly, we observed a one-day sales meeting for TopPro, where product managers, sales representatives and the CEO participated.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Empirical material was also collected through semi-structured interviews with employees at the case company. Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019) advocate semi-structured interviews when conducting qualitative research, since it gives the opportunity to collect answers which are rich in details, but also implies flexibility to ask follow-up questions and adapt to the ongoing conversation. Furthermore, the respondents were given the opportunity to freely formulate their answers, since the questions are open-ended (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). We wanted the empirical material to be the main focus in our research, which strengthens the choice of semi-structured interviews, whereby we otherwise might have led the respondents in a specific direction with our questions.

For the study, a total of 13 semi-structured interviews were held. The interviewees were contacted through email, where they were asked if they wanted to participate and the terms for participation, such as confidentiality and anonymity. It was also communicated that the interviews would take place virtually, and that they would be recorded. Recording the interviews was essential in our study, to be able to more thoroughly examine the data collected, as suggested by Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019). Recording also gave us the opportunity to take into account not only what was said, but how it was expressed, without having to put focus on taking notes (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019).

We wanted to avoid potential language barriers and get as rich and elaborative perspectives as possible from the interviewees, whereby the interviews with employees that were native or dual Swedish speakers were held in Swedish. A total of eight interviews were held in Swedish while the remaining five interviews were held in English. The interview guide was separated into different themes which were divided among the two researchers to lead. Through this division we attempted to achieve a structure and calmness during the interview, which also made it convenient for the researcher who was not in charge of the main questions of the theme, to take

the lead in terms of follow-up questions. We saw this structure as very important in order to receive as rich material as possible, which is why we set the goal to assure that both researchers participated in all the interviews.

The interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, where the length varied due to the length of the responses from the interviewees and amount of follow up questions asked. The interview guide consisted of five different themes, where the first of them was background questions, to get an introduction of the interviewee, and the remaining four themes; culture, identity, relationships within the company and coopetition, regarded the topics researched in our study. All the themes were structured so that broader, general questions were asked first, and more specific questions were asked in the end, since we wanted the interviewees to reflect independently and unfiltered, before leading on to certain topics within the themes.

3.4.3 Sampling

For the study, four meetings were observed, and 13 people were interviewed in total. The sampling we conducted in this study can be described as a purposive sampling, meaning that we chose participants that we assumed had special insights to the investigated topics (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). We spoke to the CEO as a pilot-interview before we picked the employees to interview, since he was able to give us full access to easily participate in meetings we wanted to observe and contact whoever we wanted to have a conversation with. However, we also saw great value in initially speaking with the CEO, to grasp the structure of the branch more comprehensively. Thereafter, we conducted an interview with a HR Manager of TopSale Nordic to get an overview of the culture, subculture management and coopetition activities, which we perceived as highly valuable for our empirical data. Furthermore, we selected six interviewees from TopPro and three interviewees from TopReg, to make sure we had a sample group of individuals representing both brands, as these are of interest for the study. Preferably the division between the employees in the brands could have been more even, but because of accessibility this was difficult to achieve. However, we argue that the answers we received were more than sufficient. In addition, three interviews were conducted with employees who work in brand-overarching departments, since we wanted to have a comprehensive understanding of how employees perceive the culture and the relationship between the two main brands of the organization.

Except for using a purposive sampling, we also had a sequential approach when conducting our interviews, which means that we decided who to interview successively in an evolving process

(Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). We considered this approach appropriate, since we gradually could identify which types of employees whose perceptions would benefit us in answering our research questions in the best possible way. In our study this meant an extension of company departments included in the research, since we initially had not recognized the need to interview employees working with both brands. This way of working is common since it may become apparent that groups who need to be interviewed were not anticipated at the outset (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). We also argue that this contributed to a reflexivity, where we questioned our initial assumptions of only interviewing employees that worked with the specific brands. In terms of sample size, we followed Bell, Bryman and Harley's (2019) advocacy that the researchers should conduct interviews until they find a saturation. For us this meant that we conducted interviews and observations until new data did not stimulate new theoretical understandings anymore, in regard to the topic of the study. Thereby we followed the concept of grounded theory, by sampling in terms of what was meaningful and relevant to our theory (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

3.5 Analytical Process

3.5.1 Sorting

When sorting the empirical data, we chose to categorize and sort the quotes and insights from the interviews and observations respectively. We began with sorting quotes according to the initial themes we had prepared to investigate when conducting the interviews. However, we added some categories that we had not forecasted but successively realized were prominent during the data collection process. Thereby, the empirical material was initially sorted into 16 different categories, which then was combined and successively reduced down to four key themes. The themes were consequently put in a specific order, to give an initial structure of what the empirical section of the study was going to look like, before starting to write the empirical analysis, as advocated by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). We saw this sorting method as beneficial in order to assure that the study would contain a straight line in its structure. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) state that there is a risk with sorting data, where one of the challenges for researchers is to successfully interpret the collected material in a justified way to prevent the data from being led towards wishful thinking. However, Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) argue that this risk is worth taking since the collected descriptions of reality must be sorted. We followed this recommendation and sorted our data, in order to give the

fairest, best possible result for our study. Notwithstanding, we continuously considered and reflected upon the risks of bias throughout our analytical process.

3.5.2 Reduction

After the sorting and categorization of our empirical material, we reduced it with the purpose of not presenting all the aspects and perspectives that were found, since the data was leaning towards many different themes. We argue that to present all of them would be overwhelming for the reader and moreover, the study would lose its focus. Instead, we reviewed the data in order to pick out the empirical material that would be best suited to help fulfill the purpose of the study. This way of approaching the data goes in line with what Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) consider appropriate. Our reduction of the empirical material consisted partly of choosing the relevant categories to examine further, but also a reduction of the quotes within those themes, in order to present the most important and telling aspects for the study, which is also suggested by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). Practically this process meant that we reduced the material down to the quotes that clearly could be related to the purpose of the study, which thereby constituted the empirical findings. Other quotes from non-prioritized themes were thereby left out since they were no longer relevant for the study.

An important aspect which we considered when we formulated the empirical analysis was the attempt to split the comments among the interviewees as equally as possible, without losing any valuable content. We did this in order to justify the findings and indications we claim to have found in the material, but also to nuance our analysis with the perceptions of the different individuals. The absence of quotes from some of the interviewees in our presentation of empirical material, does not mean that we did not take their answers into consideration, but in many cases the interviewees expressed similar answers. Thereby, we chose to highlight the quotes which were presented in the best way in terms of richness, which made some interviewees who were less elaborative in their answers, unpresented. In our reduction work we also needed to work backwards, which is inspired by Sjöberg and Wästerfors (2008), where our focus had to be that the collected empirical data should answer a question, our research question. By working in this way, we realized that our initial question did not completely match the indications of our collected empirical material and therefore, the research question was also modified slightly several times in the process of conducting the study. Worth noting is how it is common that the research question is adapted when conducting qualitative case studies, as it is often adjusted to the particular case in question (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). It was important

for us to conduct a study where we clearly could argue for our empirical findings and confidently connect them to the purpose. Thereby a significant amount of time has been dedicated to reducing the empirical material to make it tangible and relevant, which Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) explain as highly important in order to make a good study.

3.5.3 Argumentation

As the final step in processing the empirical data, Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) describe the importance of arguing for the chosen data which the empirical findings will consist of. Some of the useful components for such an argumentation are the ability to use, nuance and complement current theories and concepts (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). We attempted to follow this recommendation by using Schein's (2010) three-level model of culture as the main theoretical perspective in our analysis. We used this model as a blueprint for how to identify artefacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions, which we argued gave us a structured tool in order to nuance and complement other theoretical concepts. Through the theoretical perspective we could interpret concepts such as coopetition, control and the different perspectives on organizational culture. In other words, by using Schein's model to identify culture, it gave us support in order to interpret the collected empirical data, which Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) argue is beneficial. This way of working with and presenting the empirical data encourages a dialogue with current theories, which they argue that researchers should have. Furthermore, by having only one theoretical perspective there is a more obvious focus when conducting dialogues with other theoretical or empirical material (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). Additionally, Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) describe that the conducted analysis should formulate a general message, even if it might only be a small piece, added to or questioning current literature. In our case this small piece regards a new, cultural way of interpreting intra-organizational coopetition.

3.6 Limitations and Reflexivity

The evaluation criteria for qualitative research is argued to be different from traditional criteria of reliability and validity that is used to assess quality of quantitative research with a positivist scientific approach (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Instead, Guba and Lincoln (1994; cited in Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019) suggest assessing qualitative research according to their trustworthiness and authenticity, which is the framework we validate our study within. Trustworthiness is divided into four different criteria, which are credibility, dependability,

transferability as well as confirmability (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016) and we argue that all of them are relevant to consider in our study. For example, we attempted to assure a strong credibility, by basing the empirical analysis on common perceptions that the respondents expressed. Furthermore, we strengthened it since we used both observations and interviews, which gave us the possibility to triangulate several of our findings (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016).

Considering the methodological choices of the study, with emphasis on the ontological approach, it is clear that the credibility is also depending on how it is perceived, which means it could vary between different individuals (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). As researchers, we can therefore only argue for the choices that have been made, since the study is based on a social constructionist perspective, and thereby based on perceptions. Considering this approach, the same arguments could be presented in the other three criteria, as well. To have a clear communication with our supervisor during the research, regarding the trustworthiness of the study is an attempt to improve its dependability, as the second criterion. Schaefer and Alvesson (2020) argue that when studies are based on people in the same context, but with different backgrounds and perspectives, it is easier for the reader to feel trust in the study, because of the richness it provides. We took this argument in consideration, which contributed to why we interviewed and observed such a wide range of employees, including both team leaders and subordinates from different departments and the two different brands. However, we identify the dependability criterion as the weakest, which goes in line with how Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) describe that qualitative studies are often only reviewed by the authors.

Transferability is a criterion which we aimed to fulfill by thoroughly describing our case company, with its context and characteristics, in order to be able to conduct a similar kind of study and reach a similar kind of result. With our thorough, detailed case description and empirical findings, we aim to give other researchers the possibility to determine whether the results are applicable in other contexts, which is referred to as providing a thick description (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019; Prasad, 2018). Considering that transferability is more difficult to achieve in a qualitative context compared to quantitative studies, we acknowledge that another result than we found, likely could be claimed if the study was conducted in another organization (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Confirmability as the last criterion was a focus area where we have aimed to assure that the empirical material and the interpretations of it should not be biased towards the desired direction of the study. In this case, it was prominent that we needed to be reflexive by occasionally taking a step back and questioning our own assumptions. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) describe how reflexive researchers see the risk of

being biased as a concern, where they try to force themselves to find something of value in contrast to current theoretical research. We identified this risk and therefore, to strengthen the confirmability and trustworthiness of the study, we recorded and transcribed the conducted interviews and took thorough notes during our observations. In both cases the material was reviewed afterwards by both authors to minimize the risk of misunderstandings and biased interpretations of the presented data. During the analytical process, we were very careful with not letting any findings be unseen and acted reflexively before sorting and reducing our data. Using an abductive approach also allowed us to be more reflexive and critical, since we did not have to fit our findings to a theoretical framework but could reflect and interpret in a flexible matter (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018).

Considering the philosophical groundings and the structure of the study we argue that it is very difficult to achieve complete objectivity and thereby the goal has been to argue for how both authors have acted in good faith. It is often claimed that complete objectivity in social science research is not achievable (Prasad, 2018), whereby it was important to prove how we as authors have not consciously put our own individual assumptions into the work. We argue that these guidelines have been followed and claim that this methodological section has helped us strengthen this argument.

3.7 Ethics and Confidentiality

In terms of ethics, information regarding the research project was given to all employees at the case company via email, where we expressed our intentions with the study. Furthermore, we clearly explained that the participation was both voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Beforehand we also informed and received acceptance from the interviewees regarding that they were going to be recorded in order for us to cite them correctly and analyze their answers. Additionally, the participants in the meetings we observed, were informed about our participation beforehand. By stressing the anonymity of the study, we aimed to create a trust, where the participants would feel comfortable enough to give us credible and honest opinions and perceptions. As a part of anonymizing the participants, the brands and the company, we have used fictional pseudonyms, with the purpose to protect confidentiality. However, we still acknowledge that despite this effort, the use of comments and quotes makes it difficult for us to guarantee complete anonymity.

4. Empirical Analysis

In this chapter of the study, we analyze empirical findings by following Schein's three-level model of culture, as our theoretical perspective for interpreting the data. The empirical findings are categorized into four topics that were prominent during interviews and observations. The first topic is organizational culture at TopSale Nordic, where we present findings regarding the organizational culture, along with interpretations and implications of what this entails in the organization. Consequently, we consider that it is clarifying to divide competition and cooperation into two separate themes to understand them as respective components of coopetition. Thereby, the second theme of our findings is cooperation between the two brands, whereby the third theme presents findings of competition between the two brands. In the last theme we present findings regarding the two brands' relationship, which connect to both the organizational culture, and the cooperative and competitive practices we have detected.

4.1 Organizational Culture at TopSale Nordic

Culture Management at TopSale Nordic

During the interviews the respondents were asked questions about the culture work at the company, how they work with organizational culture, and in what context culture is discussed. Several employees highlight the annual conferences as important forums to address the organizational culture, which could be seen as rituals or artifacts that lie on the most superficial level of culture. Samuel, a team leader at TopReg reflects on the bigger events as important in establishing an organizational culture:

> It is often on the bigger occasions, the bigger meetings [...] where they push [culture] on that level. It doesn't feel that natural to sit down with a team of four and start to talk about those broad aspects, even if there often of course are parallels to what we are doing, we are usually more focused on the tasks. (Samuel)

From the comment, we note that the bigger occasions are used to communicate the company culture and espoused values. It is interesting that he mentions how the culture is "pushed", on a certain level and how it does not feel natural to discuss it in smaller teams. This perception could be an indication that the company has some convincing to do, regarding the connection between their espoused values and everyday organizational life, even if Samuel still recognizes that there are connections to their daily work. Furthermore, this quote might indicate that he

sees it as more natural for the communication of, and discussion around culture to come from the top management, rather than from the employees and teams. Many other interviewees also mention the bigger occasions and meetings and identify that the CEO and other top managers are important actors in establishing and communicating the company culture.

The introduction meeting that we observed can be seen as a good example of a ritual and one of these bigger occasions that are mentioned during interviews. What was first noticed by us as observers during the meeting, was how physical expressions distinguished and divided the two brands from each other. The three newly employed TopPro co-workers that were participating from home all had branded virtual backgrounds, which the other participants could see. Furthermore, the TopReg employees that were sitting in the office, all wore TopReg branded fleece shirts. The clothing and branded backgrounds could thereby be interpreted as a means to separate the two brands from each other. Additionally, the CEO was instead dressed in office wear, without any brand association, something that could imply his neutrality when it comes to the two brands.

The CEO's role in communicating the espoused values and company culture became very clear for us by observing this introduction meeting. Throughout the CEO's company presentation, we interpreted how he aims to integrate the new employees from both brands into one unified culture. We interpret that he wants them to understand the company journey that the new employees will be a part of, where he continuously refers back to the start of the Nordic branch. When displaying the overall goals of the company, the CEO seeks acceptance from a TopReg sales manager, who participates in the meeting, and states that the sales manager has been with the company for 13 years, since the "kick off" of the two major brands in the company. He refers to the company as a "small player" back then, who had already realized the key focus for future success.

In this story we identify signs of how the company successfully has been growing and following the same path since it was a "small player". Furthermore, the CEO pinpoints how long the TopReg Sales Manager has been in the company and seeks his acceptance regarding the company's overall goal. By doing so, we interpret that the CEO aims to bridge the two brands and the new employees into one unified history and direction.

To further exemplify the advocacy of a unified organizational culture, we identify how the CEO presents values and norms for the employees to communicate the mindset of the attitude that

they should have. An initial statement from the CEO in the introduction meeting is to highlight how the company is "on a race without a finish line". As the meeting goes on, the CEO also keeps referring back to the history of the company and the Nordic branch, implying their mindset of aiming to be "number one" in the industry. He tells a story of how the company had a winning mentality and an attitude of being market leaders already in 2008, stating how "that is pretty bold when you have no business". The story from the CEO is followed by a slide of the company values and again a lot of emphasis is put on attitude, which is the first depicted value. The CEO states that "we can all learn things, but we want the attitude. We want to be very, very clear towards everybody that we want to be number one. We can't demand that we are number one, we cannot take it for granted but we can act towards it". As the CEO starts to wrap up the introduction, he asks the TopReg Sales Manager if he has anything to add, whereby he responds, "It is important to think number one in everything we do!"

The CEO's story, and especially his choice of language to describe the espoused values and mission of the company, can be seen as artifacts that have some clear patterns. The CEO's statement of how the company is on "a race without a finish line" is followed by many expressions in this pattern, such as wanting to "win" their customers and end-users and creating a "winning sales culture" where the team has a "passion to win". The metaphor of seeing the business as a race and promoting a winners' attitude could have several meanings for the individual, however it implies that management wants to establish a result-oriented mindset and culture in the company, regardless of brand. The statement of being on a "race without a finish line" underlines the journey the company is travelling, and somehow indicates that the company wants competitive employees with a winning attitude who support this journey. However, one could interpret how the absence of a "finish line" also creates a sense of non-achievability, where nothing except for being number one, will be good enough.

The Winners' Culture

Through questions about the culture and values in the company, several interviewees mention being number one and the winners' attitude, in line with what the CEO advocates in the introduction meeting. We notice that many of the interviewees mention some of the company values, when they are asked about the work culture, but they vary in how and to what extent they can see a connection with their daily work. Victor, an employee at TopPro mentions two of them:

Well I can say that we have these four key values ehm… what they are I don't really remember but I know that to be easy to deal with is what we push on a lot ehm… [...] and well this is talked about a lot like a form of decision basis [...] if you are put in a situation where you don't know how to act, you are often encouraged to reason that there is an intrinsic value of being easy to be easy to deal with... to solve the problem. [...] It is also spoken a lot about striving for a winners' culture, which I think is really seen everywhere in the organization, that we have a very strong confidence, and we believe in what we are doing, like "we are so damn good, and everyone else sucks" and all of that. So that's basically the two things we talk about. (Victor)

This statement is interesting in many aspects, where the first is the initial response of the interviewee, to state the official values despite that the question is his description of the workplace culture. What is also worth reflecting upon is how Victor can only talk about two of them, while he has forgotten the two others, stating that they basically don't talk about them in the company. This could be an indication that the two values he mentions are the ones prioritized in the company and therefore might be interpreted as most important by the employees.

His definition of easy to deal with, is "to solve the problem" and he exemplifies it in a clear way as if he knows how to act and think accordingly or at least he is "encouraged" to, which refers to that this is an espoused value in the company. He continues to describe the winners' culture, as a strong confidence and belief in what you are doing, which we interpret as a feeling of intrinsic motivation and sense of purpose in one's daily work. Furthermore, Victor's quote gives an indication that the winners' culture involves a comparison with TopSale Nordic's competitors. However, during several of the interviews, many employees stress the importance of humility when discussing the winners' culture, where their success and customer relations are handled without being arrogant. There seems to be a consistency with the interviewees that mention this, where the language of becoming "number one", and stating that competitors "suck" like Victor phrases it, is not something that seems to be expressed to the outside world but acts more as an internal jargon.

When the interviewees were asked about the winners' culture, regarding its visibility in their daily work and interactions in the company, many choose to express it in similar choices of words, in how it is about "doing something extra", "to always strive to be better", "going the extra mile" and to "take it up a notch". The story that the CEO tells in the introduction meeting

about how TopSale Nordic have become a winning organization from being a small player is also addressed during some of the interviews, where two interviewees express that the success they have had over the years also supports their culture. Kai, a team leader that works with both brands, refers to it as a "snowball effect", where winning is "becoming a part of our DNA, slowly but steadily".

Many of these descriptions can still be interpreted as rather vague in what they entail in the daily work. "Doing something extra", and "going the extra mile" is mostly exemplified for the salesmen, where Nathan who works at TopPro gives examples of arriving early and leaving late when meeting clients, as well as using more branded clothing and material than competitors on events. However, from these descriptions one could argue that it is not very clear what the goals are and how to exceed expectations for the people working in the office. The "snowball effect" described by Kai, implies that being successful breeds the winners' culture, which leads to questions about what would happen if the company, one brand, a department or an employee would not succeed. Furthermore, we notice some aspects of the winners' culture that gives more clarity to what it can entail in an everyday setting. The will to deliver and be better is continuously addressed during the interviews when discussing the winners' mentality. Amanda, an employee at TopReg describes that to be easy to deal with is a way to show and act according to the winners' culture, and described how this can be seen internally in TopSale Nordic:

> Everyone is very focused on pushing things, through not leaving anything hanging. There are many [employees] that are very persistent, that if you get an assignment, you should solve it, and you go after someone if they don't answer you when you need an answer. [...] It's not that much "I do my job, I don't care about that", people really care and well… don't let things hang or fall between the cracks. We have many rather pushy people. (Amanda)

This quote from Amanda goes in line with what Victor mentioned, about making sure that you solve the problems that come up. Not leaving anything hanging might not be seen as something out of the ordinary, but it is interesting that Amanda describes it as being "pushy", which one can argue says something about the interactions in the company. In both the observations and the interviews, it is stressed that the company is "aggressive" in their market expansion. This type of language is not used to describe the internal culture at TopSale Nordic, as many employees describe the work environment as friendly. However, being "pushy" might imply that when it comes to getting things done, people are not afraid to push their co-workers, in

order to solve problems. One might also argue that being easy to deal with externally, and solving the problem, might be prioritized over being easy to deal with internally at TopSale Nordic.

A Focus on Results

A theme that we have detected in TopSale Nordic's culture, is a result focus, which we have noticed both in observations and interviews. This could be exemplified both through the advocacy of solving problems that come up and through the goal-oriented attitude of becoming "number one". Simon, an employee at TopPro, states how the culture has always been very "sales driven", which we interpret as an advocacy of delivering results and a focus on external stakeholders and customers. During the observations of the sales meeting and the two team meetings, we could also see indications of a result-orientated culture. Generally, we notice an emphasis on results by reaching targets and deadlines, rather than describing the process of how to get there. In the TopPro sales meeting we noted how most activities and tasks had goals and targets, often set in numbers or figures, but with less emphasis on how to achieve them. Targets were excluded in one presentation during the sales meeting, whereby a participant interrupts and asks for a presentation of the results and numbers regarding the matter.

The results and products featured in the sales meeting were often compared, both externally with competitors and internally, between countries, products and units. An instance where we saw that this comparison created some tensions specifically was on a quarterly sales report figure, during the sales meeting. We identify how the sales department of a country had not achieved as great results as the other countries, and they were lower than their forecast. The results are met by a silence from all meeting participants, whereby an employee from the country starts to explain himself about what circumstances had led to these results. In this example we can detect a sense of individualism, as the country's representatives are met by silence. One could argue that the country in question is put against the wall by the rest of the participants who wait for their explanation and we interpret a perceived need from the country's representatives to explain themselves, which could be connected to the winners' culture. Even though it is not explicitly stated, a winners' culture might also assume that there are losers, which could be a comparison towards outsiders, but also within the company. One could interpret the need to explain the circumstances to be a way to deflect the role as the loser of the group, as their sales department had not succeeded as well as the other countries. Results and targets could also be seen as cultural artifacts, whereby the focus that is put on these results also

could have further meanings. In this example we see an indication that the employees and teams to some extent identify with their results. In a company that values winners, one would presumably not want to have bad results, as this could imply that you or your team are not as valued in the company as other employees or groups.

The connection between identity and the result orientation in TopSale Nordic could also be seen in the interviews, where several interviewees reflected on their position in the company as a cost. Amanda from TopReg states that her brand had been seen as an "internal choke" for the company, since they for long had been costing more than they were generating. Along with these lines, Ann, a customer service employee, calls her department an "expense" since they do not directly earn any money for the company. Both these two statements can be seen as more explicit examples of when employees in the company identify with how much money they generate to the company. The statements arguably indicate that the employees themselves compare their units or brands with other parts of the company. It might not be in the nature of the customer service unit to generate profit to the company, hence it is even more interesting that Ann calls her unit an expense and attach this label of their role in the organizational system. One might again interpret that the winners' culture also implies that there might be losers in the company, who do not achieve very high results. Moreover, these descriptions further exemplify the general result focus in the company culture, where the departments are identified with their costs and profits.

Freedom with Responsibility

During a presentation in the sales meeting, an employee ended with saying "You know your market best, so you take your self-ownership and do the best you can". In the interviews and observations, we notice how employees are given and express a feeling of flexibility and freedom in their work processes, as long as they complete their assignments and reach their deadlines. One thing that is mentioned when the interviewees are asked about the work culture is freedom and empowerment. Generally, the employees express that they are trusted to do their work, where one Samuel, in TopReg, stresses freedom with responsibility at the company:

> Well, we get extremely much freedom with responsibility, no one sits there and peeks over your shoulder, you are expected to do what you're supposed to do [...] you just get it done, and it might not be explicit but sometimes there are long evenings, and sometimes… it's just in that way, you get things done. (Samuel)

In this quote Samuel states that employees have freedom in their jobs, without much surveillance of how this is performed. The freedom that he and several other interviewees describe could also imply a perceived sense of trust from management that he and his co-workers will perform their jobs as expected. However, once again, the process of getting there might not be that well defined, although he states that it is implicitly also expected that they should work overtime if that is needed to get your job done and the results that are expected from you. The earlier indications that the winners' culture is about "doing something extra" in your work, could be connected to the quote from Samuel, whereby the "extra" in some cases might refer to extra time put in work tasks. During many of the interviews people stress that they have a lot to do, which also gets in the way of collaborating and sharing knowledge in the company. The fact that employees are responsible for their own deadlines and results, along with a flexibility on how they achieve them, might lead to a high work-burden, and could also contribute to a higher sense of individualism. A high work ethic was mentioned by Amy, an employee who works with both brands, as a characteristic for the workplace culture. Victor, from TopPro, stresses that people often talk about how busy they are, no matter how much they are actually working, which he refers back to the stress a winners' culture can create:

> One evident thing is that people talk very much about how they are working so damn much, while they in reality don't work that much, it is something I know I have thought about [...] It's not really optimal since it is the perceived stress that is the actual stress level [...] It has become some kind of… unofficial... You are encouraged to work hard and do your best and we are a team of winners and all of that and if we succeed to implement that, it can be a winning strategy, but I think that it can have long term backlashes when people perceive that they work harder than they actually do. (Victor)

The phrase that working hard is "unofficially" expressed, goes in line with what was stated by Samuel earlier regarding the long hours and indicates that this expectation might be connected to the espoused values on how to act, or possibly have something to do with underlying assumptions. Victor's statement implies that the high work ethic might be a consequence of the winners' culture, where people do not only work hard but feel an expectation that they should work hard. Furthermore, the quote indicates that it might not only be the behavior of employees by working a lot, but a way of talking about the work you do and a narrative that you give your everyday work and workload. The quote also implies that the winners' culture could be a "winning strategy", but that it could also create stress which would harm the company long term.

4.2 Cooperation between the Brands

During the interviews, we asked questions about the relationship between the TopReg and TopPro, and whether the two brands cooperate with each other. Interestingly, several interviewees start with saying that the two brands do not collaborate with each other that much and work very independently from each other. Ingrid, who works at TopPro explains her view on the cooperation more in detail:

> No actually no, it [cooperation] is totally random, I think when it's needed then it comes ASAP on your email, so no. I mean, when I started, we used to actually have, like a joint marketing meeting, there weren't two different teams. But yeah, obviously we are so big now so we needed to split up, but now it is totally random, there is no… scheduled communication. [...] I would say we [the two brands] mostly do our own thing. (Ingrid)

In this comment we note how the brands do not seem to cooperate in a formal or planned way. Ingrid also discusses how this has changed since the employees in her department were divided between the brands, into two different teams. It seems as if she perceives this split as necessary, as TopSale Nordic has grown, but she also explains that structured collaboration somehow has gone lost in this process. She finishes off by saying that the brands mostly do their own thing, which implies an independence between them in their daily work. That cooperation between the brands is "random", is also expressed by several other interviewed employees, where a prominent perception of the cooperation is that it occurs most often on an informal level. However, several interviewees give clear examples of cooperative situations, which we see as slightly contradictory towards their own statements that the brands have very little collaboration. Samuel, a team leader at TopReg, expresses the convenience of having the two brands sharing the same office, since it is an easy option to communicate and exchange knowledge:

> Well, we and TopPro, we have some [cooperation], it is not that much but when we were sitting at the office, we are located so close to each other. [...] Then of course you can just stop by and ask "hey, I have thought about this, what is the name of this product?". In other words, you can get help quickly instead of using Google for 30 minutes and search, when you could just borrow their [TopPro's] catalogue or speak with that person, so absolutely there are cases like that. And then one of the TopPro

team leaders and I cooperate quite a lot since he has been a team leader for a long time and thereby he has more routines and processes, so often I can get basic material from him which I can just "TopRegify" and kind of copy. It saves me some time, so absolutely we have cooperation. (Samuel)

When considering the way Samuel is formulating himself and the example he brings up, we acknowledge the sense of informality that seems to be present around how he cooperates with employees of TopReg. We identify how the things he refers to when acknowledging the collaboration mainly consist of smaller mundane tasks as well as sharing process-based templates which he can adapt to his brand. The quote indicates that it is easier and more efficient to cooperate and ask the other brand than going to other sources of information, like Google, and that this is something positive, as it saves time for him in his role. However, several other interviewees mention that they do not have time to collaborate or look at what the other brand is doing. From this notion, we perceive that the time aspect and perceived efficiency is crucial in whether and how the two brands cooperate. Furthermore, it is interesting to acknowledge that Samuel describes the cooperation with a team lead from TopPro, since he himself is a team lead for the same unit at TopReg, which could indicate that the employees mostly cooperate with people of the respective position in the other brand. This assumption together with the informal way of collaborating is further strengthened by how Emma, an employee at TopPro and Erica, her counterpart at TopReg, describes the cooperation between the two brands.

If someone has created an ad for a product recently, then absolutely you hear "Yes I'll send it, check it out, if you want it then it's on the server", there is nothing strange about that, but we don't… We don't have our fingers in other people's cookie jars [business]. (Emma)

Indirectly we have collaboration because if we receive a product that the TopPro already sells then I can take a look at what Emma has done and in that way I can learn what they are doing, and absolutely it happens that you ask "How do you solve this problem? Does this happen to you? How do you structure or organize this?". However, like I said earlier, there is a difference between the customers, which means there is often a difference between the issues. (Erica)

In both examples, we detect the informal, indirect cooperation they have between each other and between the brands in general. Mainly, the cooperation seems to be about sharing information and knowledge, in order to get inspiration or save time for their own work and respective brand. During the interviews we also notice that the two brands share the same systems and databases, where they can see each other's work, like Emma mentions. However, it is interesting to acknowledge how Erica highlights the fact that the brands are focusing on different kinds of customers and therefore have different kinds of challenges. It gives an indication of to which degree it is possible to collaborate between the brands. Furthermore, Emma's comment about not putting your hands in other peoples "cookie jars" gives an indication of an independence between the brands, and it also sheds light on a culture where people mind their own business. Moreover, we detect signs of individualism and freedom with responsibility, which other interviewees also describe.

When we asked about the cooperation, several of the interviewees describe that they "could" import ideas from the other brand and that they have "tried to" or "attempted to" share knowledge and best practices between each other. This way of phrasing indicates that the employees perceive possibilities to cooperate more than they do today, but that these might not be fully taken advantage of. One employee emphasizes the efficiency of cooperating by saying that "We don't need to reinvent the wheel again". In the interviews generally, the cooperation is described as informal knowledge sharing, but the employees from different brands do not seem to work together on common projects. The fact that several employees stated that there is not much collaboration at all, might refer to the fact that two brands do not share tasks, goals or projects, but work independently from each other, with separate daily challenges. In the interviews we see that several interviewees mention that they cooperate less and less. This is further elaborated on by Richard, a team leader at TopPro, who states that the two brands are slipping apart from each other because the company has grown during the years. He states that most of the cooperation is sharing material where the two brands learn from each other:

> If somebody has done something really great that's worked really well or whatever then we share it with each other [...] let's say, I have an example that I did a project for TopPro, which was then sent out to the team, and I copied in a few TopReg people on that, and then the TopReg team saw it and they say "okay, this is something we should do for TopReg as well" and they could use more or less what I did and just kind of added to another color and other products and so on. [...] So I think we help each other quite a

lot, but I also see that in the daily work when we are working... the split is getting bigger between us. (Richard)

Richard emphasizes that the cooperation successively has declined, but that they still share material between the brands and help each other to be more efficient in that way. This quote further strengthens the picture of how the employees cooperate between the brands on an informal level regarding smaller tasks and how that attitude towards each other is an advocated component of their culture. Furthermore, on a more comprehensive level we see that they interpret the sharing of material and systems as a way to make their respective work more efficient, but that they otherwise are working quite independently from each other. Richard's comment further highlights how it is common for the brands to show and share successful material that has been produced. This sharing of material was further noticeable in our observation of a weekly team meeting at TopReg, where a team leader shares a solution that TopPro had started to implement. An empirical finding to highlight from this meeting is not only cooperation, but the sense of internal competition and rivalry between the two brands, which we could interpret through how the department are speaking about themselves and the other brand.

4.3 Competition between the Brands

At one of the departments at TopReg's weekly team meeting, a team leader finishes off by talking about a solution that TopPro had started to implement. This is immediately replied to by one of the employees, who sarcastically asks if the team leader has started to work for the other brand. The reply is expressed in a humorous way and the team leader answers in the same tone by jokingly saying "Yeah, sometimes you have to collaborate with them". He further sarcastically expresses how TopPro might not always come up with the best ideas, but that the described solution is nice, whereby the employees in the meeting agree.

The humorous and sarcastic comments, such as whether the team leader has started to work for the other brand, could indicate a competitiveness between the brands. Despite belonging to the same company, we detect somewhat of a tension between the brands, which the employees seemingly express as well. However, the humorous way of talking about it indicates that it might not be a serious competition, but more of a banter. Furthermore, it is interesting that the employees of TopReg approve, learn and probably will adopt the solution that TopPro is using.

However, the competition of who performs better is referred to many times during the interviews, where Richard at TopPro, states that the two brands have always had a bit of internal competition:

> It's always been like, we want to be better than the TopReg team, so they want to be better than the TopPro team, even though we are one company, and everybody knows that we're working towards the same goals. Then there is a kind of internal competition, but in a good way [...] It's kind of more driving people for what to do better. […] and I think that you can see that in sales, you can see that in marketing, where the split is. Otherwise, if you see finance or customer service, you don't have a spirit like that. So there, you'll see this as one company. But for sure, if we do something cool on TopPro, then you know, it's kind of nice to show that to the TopReg team. [...] And it's just that we are helping each other in that way. (Richard)

Through Richard's elaboration on the relation between the two brands we can distinguish how there is a noticeable internal competition. There seems to be a feeling of how both the brands want to perform better than the other, especially in the departments that are more brand-oriented. Furthermore, we identify how Richard perceives this relationship as positive, describing it as a "spirit" that exists which seems to motivate the employees to perform better and show their work. We interpret how he sees that this competition is a way for the two brands to help each other, and how the brands still have a sense of unity, in that they are working towards the same goals. That the competition is something positive and triggering and acts as a natural part of the company culture is stressed by several interviewees. Samuel, at TopReg, further exemplifies this, in a story of the relationship between the brands at a conference:

> I guess it [the competition] has created a couple of good memories at conferences and stuff throughout the years. So, the TopReg gang created a song at the dinners where they sat and sang Top-Reg-Reg-Reg-Reg, kind of swinging back and forth in a butch way [...] Everything to trigger a sort of atmosphere. [...] I think it was good that it stayed there. If you just keep on going, I don't think it would benefit us, but that the competition is present between the brands and sales departments I think is important. A kind of us against them, "Now we are going to show them", I absolutely think that is triggering and raises the level. (Samuel)

Through Samuel's story we acknowledge a ceremonial activity in a conference that gives a telling image of the culture and the relationship between the brands. We identify how there seems to be a clear identification of which brand you belong to and how people attempt to trigger a certain atmosphere in the organization, which the singing at conferences exemplifies. Conferences are again mentioned here as an important forum in building an atmosphere, where both the event itself and the behaviors there could be seen as artifacts symbolizing underlying cultural values. However, we interpret that Samuel is pleased that the relation between the brands is not more competitive, since that would not benefit the atmosphere. On the other hand, he finalizes by highlighting the importance of the internal competition as a motivational trigger that improves the performance. Furthermore, we notice that the phrasing of "raising the level" is similar to other phrases that participants have used to describe what the winners' culture means. It is interesting to look at the implications beyond the fun part of the competition which Victor, at TopPro, makes us identify with his interpretation of the internal competition.

> Well, a part of the jargon is a bit like for TopReg at least in Sweden, they are like "We at TopReg are bigger than TopPro" and then TopPro laughs at it and says that the TopReg people are working with toy products. And then the TopReg people laugh and say "Yeah, well look at our numbers". So that kind of comparison exists. (Victor)

From the comment we can detect a sort of banter between the brands, but also a kind of power relation, where TopPro thinks that TopReg are working with toy products, probably since the quality of their products is not as advanced as the ones that TopPro are selling. We get the impression that the banter is held in a playful tone, similar to our observed TopReg team meeting, when they are discussing the other brand in a rather humorous way. However, there are still meanings and opinions that can be interpreted behind the jargon, whereby the banter and joking could possibly be a way to hide more obvious power balances. Later in his interview, Victor emphasizes that there is no envy or conflicts between the brands, but he also states that there is a "positive jealousy" where you sometimes talk down the other brand's results. Comparing results and revenues as a part of the jargon, is also brought up by other interviewees. Samuel at TopReg pinpoints that it is good that the competitiveness stays on a friendly, fun level, whereby we assume that this sort of comparison between the brands could possibly also have negative consequences for the relationship between the brands. In another comment from Samuel, he highlights the importance of celebrating and recognizing the success and improvements of the brands:

I can say that if the case would have been that TopPro was not performing as well for a period and that TopReg would have performed better, there would not have been any sense of "Now we are doing great and you are not" attitude, but instead it is more of a pure celebration of what is going great [...] you don't bring up that "you are not doing so well", instead we just celebrate the success and do not put salt in their wounds. [...] For us it is more about hyping our success, so there is no such attitude. On those occasions the competition is not that much of a focus, then it's just fun to work. (Samuel)

In this quote there is a sense of humility, which could be a sign that the competitiveness between the brands does not go too far. This further strengthens that the competition is mostly just fun "banter", whereas if there were to be serious differences in performance, there would not be a comparison between the two brands of who is better. In the comment we identify a unity at the company and the importance of celebrating achievements and successes within the brands or within the organization. In comments from several other interviewees, we see that people from opposite brands also highlight their happiness for the opposite brand when they are performing well, as the results also contribute to the success of the company as a whole. Thereby we can see an awareness among the employees that the whole organization is working together in the end, even though there is a noticeable fun rivalry between them as a part of the culture. Richard states that the internal competition helps "pushing" each other, "sharpening" the competitive way of doing things and "raising the bar". The rivalry seems to be an important part of the winners' culture that the company advocates, which Richard at TopPro, elaborates further:

I think again it gives us this winning mentality and you know, sharing success stories and all that [...] And I just think that when people see that somebody within the company is doing well and you know, something is being highlighted, the employees that we have, they just want to take it up a notch and give it something extra and become that person who gets the success the next time. So, I think it's really helpful for the atmosphere as well and [...] it's kind of the fun competition I would say, and it's with that blink in your eye. It's always fun and nobody is angry or anything with each other. It's good competition and the good thing is that we are not targeting the same customers and if we were, that would have been something completely different. Then I don't think it would be good for the atmosphere. So, it's really a positive thing for our atmosphere that we have two brands and I think that it's actually just helping us. (Richard)

The quote from Richard summarizes a lot of the opinions and viewpoints that have been brought forward in the interviews regarding the internal competition at the company. It is interesting in several aspects, where he states that the competition has a positive effect on the performance of both brands. These positive effects of the internal competition are described in phrases that have also been used to describe the winners' culture and winning mentality at the company, such as "pushing" each other, and doing "something extra". Furthermore, it seems that sharing "success stories" is very important in enabling the winning mentality, where Richard implies that employees in the company want to be noticed and highlighted for their success. The competition is presented as something fun, where people have a rivalry with a "blink in their eye", which also is said to contribute to the atmosphere. Along with several other employees, Richard stresses the importance of not targeting the same customers in the company's market, which we identify as a perceived key factor to maintain this "positive" competition between the brands, and to keep a good "atmosphere" as he calls it. This division of the market is further described by Emma, from TopPro:

> We are exclusive at TopPro to only work with the professionals of the market. It always becomes difficult for us when we are asked… by a retailer who says that "we want to start selling big amounts of your products." Yes, but you are already selling TopReg as well, and therefore we will not work with you, because you are working towards the consumer part of the market and that's not where we are at. And we don't have any intention or vision to be there either as of now. It is our strength and thereby it once again becomes so clear, so simple, that we don't have to compare ourselves with the other brand. (Emma)

When analyzing Emma's comment, we identify how she perceives it as positive that the brands do not target the same customers and rather reject offers when they realize this might occur. What we did not know when we started interviewing is that there is this clear division of the market, which another employee refers to as an "outspoken prohibition" to work with each other's markets. From Emma's quote we see that this expressed exclusivity creates a simplicity which she seems to regard as positive. She seems to perceive it as a strength for the company and as several other interviewees have pinpointed, the balance of the internal competition can be kept as long as the brands do not interfere with each others' parts of the market. Furthermore,

it is interesting that she states that the two brands do not compare themselves towards each other, even though we have detected several examples of this.

4.4 The Relationship between the two Brands

Even though it is expressed that the brands do not have to compare themselves towards each other, we still see prominent empirical findings of a comparison, in how the relationship between the two brands is expressed. Several of the interviewees describe TopPro as the "main brand" of the company, which could be referred both to the fact that the brand has been a part of the company longer, and that it has historically had the biggest revenues. One employee describes that the TopPro has the "lion's share" of the company's revenues, and another one states that "it has always been TopPro driving the business, to be honest." Several interviewees also stress the difference between the brands in their revenue and profit. As previously mentioned, Amanda from TopReg calls her brand an "internal choke" in the company, where she describes how the TopPro employees have joked about the costs that TopReg has had in the company, throughout the years. A result orientation and tendency to compare the two brands is noticed in the other themes, and we interpret that this creates a power balance between the two brands, where TopPro is seen as the main brand in the company. Furthermore, the comparison between the brands could lead to tensions, if one brand is given more recognition or resources.

All of the employees from TopReg that were interviewed note a difference in recognition between the two brands. Amanda at TopReg exemplifies this by saying that she usually has to "scroll and scroll and scroll" before her brand is even mentioned in the annual financial report, where emphasis is largely put on TopPro. She also expresses how she feels that the TopPro brand was prioritized, and that the managers at her brand often have had to fight for internal resources. Erica, from TopReg, notes that the two brands' budgets are different in a humorously put, but rather vivid example:

> What is obvious is that the budget for TopPro is much higher, and what we get is often not as good, hehe [...] That probably depends on the budget, but sometimes I am like "what the hell, can't we also get all that cool stuff, like what the hell, I am working just as hard and my customers would have been just as happy" why can't they, hell. [laughs] They have lots of, like, merch, they sprinkle it on them, it's completely crazy. And we

don't even have a keychain, I'm just like oh please [laughs]. But this is not something that sets up for conflicts, I would not say that. (Erica)

Even though the comment is humorously expressed, it is still an interesting example of how an employee in TopReg has clearly noticed how they are not given as many branded products as TopPro. From the statement we can also see that Erica perceives a quite prominent difference between the brands' budgets. Moreover, from stating that she is also working hard and has important customers, it seems that the frustration could also stem from how her brand and the work she does is not as recognized or rewarded as it should be. Even though she states that this does not create conflict, we think that the difference in recognition and budget creates some kind of tension, or at least a difference, in the power balance between the two brands.

Another thing that we noticed during both interviews and observations is that the employees continuously use the phrase "we" for their brand, and "them" for the other brand. Interviewees also refer to the two brands as the "Reg side" and the "Pro side" as well as to the different colors their brands represent. What is interesting with these choices of words, together with the observed branded clothing, is how it emphasizes a division between the brands and an independence they have from each other. In turn this could also imply a feeling of self-identification with the brand instead of identifying with the whole organization. One employee also states that one of the biggest challenges for the company is to not make the differences between the "we" and "them" too obvious, but to unify the employees in that they are working together for the same company. A clear, overall perception when interviewing the employees who worked for the brands, was that they identified with their respective brand more than TopSale Nordic, even though many added that they are one company in the end. This sheds further light on the fine line between having two independent brands and being one company in the end. However, many interviewees mention that the balance between the brands has changed during the last years, and especially during the recent pandemic, where TopReg showed great results. A TopPro employee describes that TopReg "pulled the company through the crisis" whereby Amanda, at TopReg, describes the reactions from the organization:

There are many that have been very happy for real, like "you have been working hard for so long and now your job has become something" so I have gotten many, very sincere, warm comments from there [TopPro] as well. So, it's not that they haven't

wanted us to succeed, but maybe that they have been a bit frustrated that it has taken so long. (Amanda)

This quote goes in line with a general view from the interviewed employees at TopReg, regarding how their good results have led to more recognition both from management as well as employees from TopPro. Considering how Amanda describes the comments as sincere and warm, we see a further sign that the brands celebrate each other's success, seeing themselves as one company in the end. Another thing that is interesting in both the quote from Erica and Amanda is how they talk about working hard in relation to recognition and rewards, which could be connected to the high work ethic that is associated with the winners' culture. Erica describes how TopReg are working hard and should get more recognition, while Amanda describes that they have received recognition when their job has become something, after working hard. Once again there seems to be an emphasis on results, where one can interpret that it is not until your hard work shows results, that you get recognized and rewarded.

Another interesting narrative to consider regarding the relationship between the two brands, is that several of the interviewees use a metaphor of calling the brands brothers. It seems that many employees choose to relate the relationship between the two brands with a sibling relationship, where TopReg is the younger "little brother" to TopPro. This metaphor could be a way to emphasise a difference in maturity, which is addressed a few times during interviews, whereby TopPro is described as a bit more formal, structured and mature than TopReg. One interviewee describes the relationship as "sibling love" and states that there is a comparison, but without any grudges since you are happy when the other brand succeeds. However, this metaphor presents the relationship as a bit more harmonious, whereby Samuel, at TopReg, express how his brand has rejuvenated TopPro:

> It [TopReg] is sort of [laughs] the little brother that kind of grew up and has outgrown, or at least caught up. The little challenger that came from nowhere and showed this… well a bit tired established one [TopPro] that well, this you can do better. I think that we actually… we played a big part in that TopPro took off, they had been there for many years when we came into the market [...] they were so cautious in their sales, while they now have become rejuvenated and have gone forward rather forcefully... I think along with that TopReg has grown and become almost as big in terms of revenues, that they [TopPro] have taken in a few tricks and come along on that train and have grown

48

themselves because of that. So, it's kind of the little brother that came from nowhere and grew up, and now they are going out conquering together. (Samuel)

The story is interesting, since it paints up a picture of how TopReg has had a positive effect on TopPro, even though they might not have been seen as the "main brand" of the company. Even if the financial results might have been compared during the years, this story gives the impression that TopReg has played a part in rejuvenating and challenging TopPro during the years. "Conquering together" also gives a sense of unity and warmth, where the brands are now more equal and working together towards the same goal, as one company. Furthermore, our interpretation is that describing the two brands as brothers who learn from each other, sheds a more positive light on the relationship than some of the previous stories, where we interpret how TopReg is described more as an underdog.

A final empirical finding from the interviews highlights how the employees perceive the context of being two brands in one company. Partly the arguments are about how it motivates the employees to perform, but several interviewees also mention the financial security as a good thing of being two brands, where the company has "two legs to stand on". Furthermore, Emma, at TopPro, expresses how the financial success of the two brands is important in having this sort of structure:

> I am sure that if the scenario was that we did not reach our results to the extent we are doing, then of course that would have been a terribly complicated situation. If TopReg would have done negative results year after year and our department simultaneously grew and got more resources, maybe in terms of people, hours, budgets and so on… of course it would have been another situation then. But we are thankful that we are not in that situation. (Emma)

The quote from Emma is interesting in several different aspects, where it is prominent that the positive financial results of the two separate brands are perceived as a prerequisite in order to continue with the current structure. However, the insights we can see from the comment represent a sort of culmination and understanding of the other key findings as well. For example, the winners' culture and aiming to be "number one" in the market, which is the common goal for both brands, could arguably be affected if one brand is not performing like a "winner" anymore. In terms of image, it could affect the performing brand, since it will be

related to the unsuccessful brand and the allocation of resources could thereby also be more uneven. One could question how such a scenario impacts the relation between the brands, since the competitive spirit among them would probably decline. Furthermore, the present cooperation and knowledge sharing would arguably not be as well-functioning as it has been before. Of course, it is difficult to speculate in a possible future, but as Emma emphasizes, she is thankful that the company is not in that situation presently.

5. Discussion

In this chapter, we present our discussion, where we relate our empirical findings to previous research on the topics of this study. The chapter begins to discuss culture management practices at TopSale Nordic together with the underlying assumptions and characteristics that constitute their organizational culture. Secondly, we reflect on coopetition at TopSale Nordic, along with the cooperative and competitive aspects of the phenomenon. Lastly, we discuss the interrelationship between intra-organizational coopetition and culture and consider tensions that might arise from this.

5.1 A Result-oriented Winners' Culture

In our study, the observed introduction meeting can be seen as a formal socialization process (Wilson, 2001), where we interpret how the CEO uses stories and language to socialize newcomers into the organization and bridge the employees of different brands into one shared direction (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013). Through such actions, we argue that the management of TopSale Nordic attempts to shape the organizational culture in line with an integrative perspective, where the aim is to unify the company and its brands under one culture, with a shared set of underlying assumptions (Wilson, 2001). We note how the CEO uses repetitive and coherent language to socialize the employees into the espoused values, with a lot of focus on "being number one" and having a "winning mentality" as well as emphasizing focus on results. According to Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013), stories and language are a highly influential tool to increase employees' understanding of the organizational culture, whereby Alvesson and Sveningsson (2017) describe how these artifacts often work as symbols for the actual culture. The employees generally also put emphasis on management's communication of the culture through ceremonies and rituals, during the bigger events and occasions. Therefore, we also detect an underlying assumption from the employees that management should be a key actor in communicating and working with the culture and other "broad aspects", which is further implied by how an employee expresses it as unnatural to talk about these topics on a team level.

A Winners' Culture

We argue that the winners' culture is one of the most prominent espoused values at TopSale Nordic, where the continuous talk about a "winner mentality" and being "number one" in

observations and interviews, are phrases that emphasize this label. Describing employees as "winners" has previously been described as a concept for success, as it distinguishes and fosters employee motivation (Peters and Waterman, 1982), an outcome that well-managed coopetition is also said to give (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). Furthermore, we see the winners' culture with the stories and language that it includes, as an attempt to strengthen the collective organizational identity. This observation aligns with Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2016) arguments that employees are more likely to identify with a culture that is seen as successful, distinctive and unique. Therefore, we see the language from top management as an attempt to unify and integrate the employees into one culture, but also to create a strong organizational identity.

Despite the integrative attempts to unify the employees under espoused values (Wilson, 2001), we noted how employees use computer backgrounds and wear clothes with the logotype and color of the brand they work for in the observed digital meetings. Furthermore, in our conducted interviews, a majority of the interviewees could be interpreted to identify more with their brand than the company itself, through their answers. With this brand identification we detect an apparent division and possibly subcultures between the employees. We could thereby also look at the culture management efforts from a differentiation perspective, where management to some extent encourages subcultures and differing group identities to arise within the organization, as the brands are distinguished from each other through physical expressions (Wilson, 2001). In this case, it would be important to see to that these distinguished collective identities or subcultures would live in harmony, and not conflict with each other (Wilson, 2001).

Schein (2010) describes how espoused values can become underlying assumptions through testing, validating and reinforcing them in everyday organizational life. Thereby, to clarify to what extent the espoused values are adopted, we followed the suggestions of Schein (2010) and asked the organizational members about the meanings of artifacts and espoused values. The answers we received regarding the winners' culture at TopSale Nordic were expressed rather vaguely where it is difficult to distinguish their meaning, with examples such as "doing something extra" and "go the extra mile", which were prominent within both brands. This vagueness could mean that the espoused value of the winners' mentality is more of an ideal, than a part of the actual cultural assumptions, which both Schein (2010) and Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016) argue is often the case.

The Result Orientation

However, something we can detect from the examples is that employees validate and argue for how the winners' culture is expressed in a competitive manner, in their daily work. For instance, the employees emphasize that they are encouraged to solve the problems that come up, and that employees are "pushy" if this means that they can get things done and solve the problem. This way of phrasing is presented when the employees refer to "easy to deal with", as one of the espoused values beside the winners' culture. The interpretation we make of the underlying assumption that lies behind this behavior is how employees aim to get things done and solve external problems no matter what, even if it requires for them to be pushy towards their co-workers. One could argue that this behavior is connected to how the interviewees express the culture as sales-oriented, where we interpret that the culture is more focused on managing the external environment, rather than integrating internally, mentioned by Daft, Murphy and Willmott (2017) as two equally important purposes of culture.

From this problem-solving and pushiness, we identify that the espoused winners' culture is rather individualistic (Knein et al. 2020) and result-oriented, where we interpret that an underlying assumption among the employees could be that results are valued over the processes of how to get there. We further note how this result orientation is encouraged by management in the observation of the TopPro sales meeting, where management seems to recognize and validate employees and groups who are result-oriented and achieve their targets. This goes in line with arguments from Willmott (1993) who states that organizational cultures are used to recognize culturally desired behaviors. One might therefore argue that the emphasis on achievements and results that is communicated in the winners' culture also is encouraged, and seemingly integrated in the organizational culture. This notion implies that the vision and goals are aligned with the culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2001).

It is prominent that the interviewees of the study refer to how culture is communicated by management, however we interpret that this expression of culture refers to espoused values, and not the actual culture (Schein, 2010). In terms of the deepest level of Schein's (2010) model, the employees arguably have created underlying assumptions on how to behave within the espoused winners' culture, which is evident from how they speak of internal competition and informal cooperation. Furthermore, we can identify how the employees themselves create forums where the cultural focus on results is validated and manifested. This finding aligns with

both Wilson (2001) and Schein (2010) who state that organizational cultures are established informally in group settings where the members collectively establish the culture through validating and recognizing desired behaviors. We find this especially interesting, since coopetition is also said to be managed horizontally on a decentralized level, to steer behaviors (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016).

"Freedom" with Responsibility

Another underlying assumption that is prominent, is how the employees describe a freedom with responsibility as a part of the organizational culture, where they emphasize how they are trusted to do their job, without much control or surveillance. This freedom can be connected to the result-orientation we have noticed, whereby the results are regarded as more important than the processes of how to get there. However, one could argue that the norms of being result-oriented and having a competitive spirit, also creates norms of having a high work ethic which seemingly also lead to stress. In line with these expressions of freedom, Willmott (1993) argues that employees are often deceived by corporate cultures to think that they are autonomous. We pinpoint how the employees express how much freedom they have, even though they are bound to achieve, or even exceed expectations. Moreover, the winners' culture can be seen to act as normative control, since it substitutes traditional forms of control or surveillance, in how it guides the employees to still deliver and achieve high results (Thompson, 2011; Willmott, 1993).

In our findings we can see that the espoused winners' culture might not only have a positive impact on organizational identity and culture, like Peters and Waterman (1982) argues. What can be seen is that the winners' culture with systems that value and recognize "winners", as Peters and Waterman suggests (1982), also might lead to distinguishing the winners, as people who achieve high results at TopSale Nordic, from the people or groups who are not winners in the company, by costing the company money. As Barker (1993) mentions, normative pressures often lead to stress because of the feeling that management evaluates one's identity, rather than work performance. The stress that employees experience might therefore be connected to a feeling that they are jeopardizing their identity within the organization by misaligning with the norms of being the "winner" that the winners' culture advocates. Such misalignment can be seen as highly complicated, especially if certain groups experience it, since it in turn could lead to disharmony or conflicts between the organizational subcultures (Eriksson-Zetterqvist, Müllern and Styhre (2011).

5.2 Informal Knowledge Sharing and a Competition for Recognition

The Cooperative Aspects of Coopetition

To have a result-oriented, individualistic and competitive culture, where employees have a strong identification with their respective brands, could both encourage and have implications for an intra-organizational coopetition. We have noted that the cooperation between the brands at TopSale Nordic is limited to the informal interactions that teams and individuals have with each other, often related to an individual's or team's counterpart in the other brand. This could be seen as informal coordination mechanisms, where informal networks, interactions and trust foster cooperative practices between the two brands (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). The type of cooperation that is identified as most frequent in our empirical findings is knowledge-sharing, which is one of the primary benefits of intra-organizational coopetition (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). We also note that the brands cooperate through their shared databases and servers, which goes in line with Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau, 2016, who argue that shared common systems enable internal cooperation.

Nevertheless, researchers suggest that coopetition should also be coordinated through formal coordination, as for instance structures (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016), procedures and routines (Bendig et al. 2018) as well as inter-unit projects and regular meetings (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). We note a lack of formal coordination of the coopetition between the brands, which could be a possible reason why the two brands do not cooperate more. It could also be a reason why many of the interviewees state that the two brands do not cooperate at all, or that it is "completely random" or "indirect". Our findings suggest that the employees at TopSale Nordic identify possibilities where they could share knowledge and cooperate more, but it seems as if these possibilities are not taken advantage of to a full extent. Furthermore, we acknowledge how the two brands have previously tried to cooperate more, but why this has been unsuccessful remains unanswered, at least explicitly by interviewees. One could argue that insufficient formal coordination inhibits the brands' cooperation, but as Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau (2016) state, coopetition is often decentralized and managed horizontally. Even though TopSale Nordic does not manage cooperation through formal coordination mechanisms, there is still decentralized cooperation between the brands, in the informal and irregular knowledge sharing that have been identified. One could argue that these cooperative

activities are based on assumptions and norms on how and when to cooperate, as there is no formal structure that guides them in this matter.

The most obvious situation where the two brands engage in coopetitive activities is when employees from one of them get the opportunity to present new achievements for the other brand. In these situations, we acknowledge how both TopReg and TopPro seem motivated to show their work, in order to receive recognition and establish themselves as contributing to the organization. These practices arguably generate cooperative implications as well since the brands can learn from each other by sharing knowledge. These findings go in line with previous research, as recognition drives both cooperation and competition (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016), and the positive outcomes from coopetition are said to be motivation (Song, Lee & Khanna, 2016) and learning (Bendig et al. 2018).

The Competitive Aspects of Coopetition

We further acknowledge how the competition between the two brands at TopSale Nordic is said to sharpen them both and motivate them to perform better than their opposing brand, which strengthens previous research arguments on how coopetition leads to motivation (Song, Lee & Khanna, 2016) and increased performance (Chiambaretto, Massé & Mirc, 2019). Furthermore, the employees express the situation as a positive, important competition between the brands, where they humorously mock each other, for example by chanting the name of their brands at conferences to "trigger an atmosphere". Even though the competition is described as fun and friendly, we note some implications of tensions between the brands. Luo (2005) describes that internal competition often is influenced by the strive for internal resources, external market share and system position within the organization. We detect some tensions in that employees from one brand perceive that they must fight more to receive financial resources, which Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau (2016) state is the most common source of tension. However, we argue that there are bigger tensions in striving for recognition and acknowledgement, which might be a result of how well the brands, and thereby the company, are performing financially.

Furthermore, it is interesting that the brands have a jargon of expressing each other as two different "sides", as well as "us" and "them", where we further detect a noticeable comparison, and possible tensions between them. Such a comparison and striving for recognition could be seen as a clear indication that the system position and status within the organization is perceived as important, and highly relevant for the brands to compete for, like Luo (2005) suggests.

Moreover, Naidoo and Sutherland (2016) emphasize that recognition is a motivating factor in internal competition, whereby we argue that management's recognition might also trigger the competition between the two brands at TopSale Nordic. An absence of recognition, as expressed by one of the brands, could accordingly be seen as a demotivating factor, whereby the positive advantages of internal competition might decrease (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016).

Furthermore, a prominent factor in literature on coopetition is that tensions occur when brands or sub-units compete for market share and simultaneously have to cooperate (Luo, 2005). In TopSale Nordic's case however, we identify a clear division of the market, where the two brands are prohibited by management to go into each other's areas of the market. One could therefore argue that competing for market share, one of the primary reasons for tensions in a coopetitive relationship (Luo, 2005), is not fulfilled. To not compete over the same customers is argued to be one of the reasons why the interviewees state that the competitiveness between them does not lead to conflicts. Without this clear source of tension, one could wonder if the coopetitive incentives remain and how TopSale Nordic could then utilize the competitive advantages that coopetition is said to generate (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher and Gurau, 2016; Luo, 2005). However, we still note some tensions and a highly noticeable competitiveness between the brands, where we argue that organizational culture can give an explanation.

5.3 Intra-organizational Coopetition and Organizational Culture

Intra-organizational Coopetition as More Than a Structural Phenomenon

When we take earlier literature regarding intra-organizational coopetition into account, it is expressed as a mix of competition and cooperation that arises in organizational structures where brands and subunits are directed towards the same customers (Luo, 2005). However, the intra-organizational coopetition is also said to exist because there is a fight for internal resources (Luo, 2005) and influence within the organization (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). In this case, competition for influence and internal resources could be seen exclusively as incentives to become more competitive on the market, and indirectly also towards the other units or brands of a company. However, such an argumentation might be slightly narrow-minded, and one could instead see influence and internal resources as independently attractive to the respective brands, whereby these factors of internal competition help them to increase their own recognition within the organization (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016).

We can conclude that some structural aspects can be connected to the competition between the two brands, such as a slight competition for resources and more prominently a desirable position in the organizational system. However, we argue that the internal competition at TopSale Nordic could be seen as more of a culturally embedded phenomenon. These findings are aligned with Coombs, Knights and Willmott (1992), whereby we argue that the competition between the brands can only exist since it is supported by the winners' culture. To reason in such a manner would imply that the competitive advantages of coopetition, such as motivation, collaboration, performance, speed, innovation and efficiency, would remain even without a competition for the same customers at the market. The empirical material strongly argues for this, where we can thereby explain how the result orientation, individualism and winners' culture interrelate with the coopetitive incentives. Thereby the competitive "spirit" in the organizational culture, replaces the competitive conditions that a more structural coopetition would redeem.

The Interrelation Between Organizational Culture and Coopetition

To further explain and justify the interrelation between culture and coopetition, we would like to highlight how the described competition in our study mostly refers to a "jargon" and an "atmosphere" that plays out in rituals such as meetings and conferences. Moreover, we note that importance is put on "sharing success stories" as a coopetitive practice, as the brands prominently compete over who is the most successful, but simultaneously share knowledge (Luo, 2005). We argue that these examples are cultural artifacts that symbolize and express the winners' culture, and the underlying assumption of valuing achievement and results (Schein, 2010). In other words, the culture at TopSale Nordic is expressed through a competitive jargon where the brands in a humorous way compare themselves towards each other.

Moreover, we notice that the employees consider the competitiveness between the brands to be "fun", whereas an actual competition for market share would not benefit the atmosphere. This further strengthens the notion that the competition at TopSale Nordic is a cultural phenomenon and not a structural matter (Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016). Furthermore, we acknowledge that a formally managed competition would imply a higher risk for tensions in the coopetitive relationship, as the competitiveness would not be seen as "fun" or beneficial anymore.

In order to explain the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition further, it is also important to consider cooperation as part of the latter concept. We argue that the cooperative practices at TopSale Nordic can be connected to the organizational culture, whereas the lack of cooperation could be a consequence of a cultural assumption that management should be a key actor in communicating broad aspects, concerning culture and perhaps also regarding cooperation. The limited cooperation between the brands could be related to how the winners' culture and result orientation unconsciously sets norms of individualism, where people and groups focus on their own achievements, looking away from the opportunity to cooperate with each other. Our findings furthermore suggest that it is culturally assumed that people should mind their own business, which also inhibits the two brands from cooperating with each other. Considering that one of the key benefits of internal cooperation is a feeling of organizational cohesion (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016), one might argue that the lack of advocated cooperation in TopSale Nordic also inhibits the cohesiveness and generates a higher independence between the brands. This lack of cultural advocacy for cooperating further implies an interrelation between organizational culture and coopetition.

Some employees also state that a high work burden inhibits their efforts to cooperate with the other brand, which we argue goes in line with how Naidoo and Sutherland (2016) claim that a backlash from cooperating between units can be a perceived inefficiency. In an organization that highly advocates efficiency we can therefore understand how it is an underlying assumption among employees that cooperative activities must generate efficiency, in order to be prioritized. Such a way of resonating is clearly tangible in the answers from the interviews. To strengthen this argument, our findings also suggest that the two brands do in fact cooperate, when it is seen as efficient and timesaving for them in their work. We see that sharing of knowledge and databases are some examples of such cooperation, which we can connect to the cooperation part of internal coopetition, as ways of collaborating between brands (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016). In other words, the type of cooperation that exists could be connected to the result orientation we have detected in TopSale Nordic's culture.

Culture as a Control Mechanism for Intra-organizational Coopetition

Another aspect to discuss and take into account when examining the interrelation between intra-organizational coopetition and organizational culture, is based on how Willmott (1993) suggests that culture is used to recognize and encourage desired behaviors. We note how management communicates a winners' culture, where they also recognize employees who act

accordingly to this. As recognition is said to be a key factor that enables coopetition (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016), one can argue that when management recognizes a result orientation and competitiveness, this might lead the two brands to compete internally, rather than cooperate. In this sense the organizational culture encourages competition between the brands, and to some extent inhibits employees' cooperative behavior.

With a critical perspective upon this situation, we note how TopReg and TopPro seemingly are normatively controlled and steered by management, through the culture and norms that are encouraged and recognized. We note that the main incentives for competition in TopSale Nordic are internal recognition and to achieve a good system position (Naidoo & Sutherland, 2016; Luo, 2005). Our empirical findings strongly suggest that a need for recognition is what drives the brands to compete, whereby we see this as one of the strongest arguments to why the nature of their coopetitive relationship is interrelated with the organizational culture. In this way we argue that TopSale Nordic's organizational culture works as a medium of control as described by Coombs, Knights and Willmott (1992), that produces competitive and cooperative behaviors.

Balancing a Winners' Culture with Coopetition

As a last reflection to take into account when describing the intra-organizational coopetition in TopSale Nordic as a culturally embedded phenomenon, we would like to discuss and reflect upon the balance between the organizational culture and the coopetition. From the empirical findings we interpret that the employees see importance in how their brands show positive results, consequently stating that the situation would be more complicated if one was performing much better than the other. The employees further portray the two brands as two successful siblings that earlier have been seen as little and big brother, which goes in line with Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013) who state that language often is used as an identity marker that can show occupational subcultures. However, we argue that this description implies a balance in the brands' respective system position, whereas management's recognition has evened out successively now that they are both successful. A prerequisite for intra-organizational coopetition is that brands both compete and cooperate with each other (Luo, 2005). We have identified how the organizational culture encourages a more culturally embedded coopetition instead of a more distinctive formally coordinated coopetitive relationship. If the brands become too uneven, financially as well as symbolically in terms of desired incentives such as recognition and system position, this could possibly lead to a

decreased sense of being a winner, which would misalign the underperforming brand with the winners' culture. In other words, the underperforming brand would have more difficulties to identify with a successful culture, which also could weaken their sense of a shared identity (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). Furthermore, the competitive advantages that coopetition is said to bring could arguably decrease, as the competition becomes less motivating, and the cooperation becomes less mutual. Of course, we are humble to the difficulty of speculating about the future, but as the employees express, they feel lucky that they are not experiencing this type of organizational imbalance today.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Research Contributions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition, since we had discovered a gap in current academic literature. This gap refers to how intra-organizational coopetition has been portrayed as a structural and strategic phenomenon, whereas we problematized this definition and wanted to explore the cultural implications that could be related to the concept. Through a qualitative ethnography-inspired study, we conducted interviews and observations at the multi-brand organization TopSale Nordic, with the aim of answering the following research question:

> *How does intra-organizational coopetition interrelate with organizational culture within the multi-brand organization TopSale Nordic?*

Intra-organizational coopetition has previously been portrayed as a structural condition, which creates a situation of competition and cooperation internally between units or brands. Through our findings we explain how coopetition can still exist within an organization, despite a lack of structured and coordinated coopetition through formal inter-unit projects and a competition for market share. We argue that intra-organizational coopetition additionally can be seen as a cultural phenomenon, because of its interrelation with the organizational culture, which the employees identify, relate and act upon. We conclude how several aspects of competing and cooperating between brands and units can be related to and encouraged by cultural assumptions in the organizational culture, which ultimately can create the same competitive advantages as in a structurally coordinated coopetitive relationship.

A key aspect to emphasize from our study is the impact of recognition, which is a concept that has been presented in previous research on both organizational culture and coopetition. We conclude that the existing competition for recognition within TopSale Nordic can be seen as more symbolic, than a structural competition for market share or internal resources. We interpret this through how culture management and cultural assumptions play an important role, especially in situations like TopSale Nordic's, where coopetition is not formally coordinated. Furthermore, the degree and forms of both competition and cooperation at TopSale Nordic, could to a large extent be interpreted as based on cultural assumptions. Our findings therefore align with Knein et al. (2020) who state that strong shared values have a positive effect on

coopetitive relationship, however, we argue that coopetition can be seen as culturally embedded to a high extent, as it can act as an expression or symbol of the organizational culture. However, we also note how the organizational culture can be emphasized and strengthened through the competition and cooperation that exists at TopSale Nordic, which further justifies the interrelation between the concepts.

Furthermore, we reflect on how theory on intra-organizational coopetition emphasizes how tensions need to be coped with, in order to find a proper, preferable balance between units or brands. Through analyzing coopetition from the employees' perspective, we have found that the culturally embedded coopetition, contributes both to a perceived relationship and to possible tensions between the two brands. This rather symbolic competition that exists for a desirable system position and recognition, is of high relevance to consider in coopetitive environments, in order to detect and balance tensions. However, these tensions could be seen as less obvious than tensions in a structural coopetition. Furthermore, it can be concluded that organizational culture, as a concept interrelated with coopetition, needs to be balanced between units, where possible subcultures need to be considered, in order to create the best possible competitive advantages of a coopetitive environment.

6.2 Managerial Implications

We argue that our findings and theoretical contributions can have important practical implications in the business world. With an improved understanding of the interrelationship between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition, we acknowledge how managers and other influential actors in similar contexts can use the insights of the study beneficially. More specifically, the insights can influence the perception of how multi-brand organizations can be managed, through an improved understanding of how organizational culture can create an atmosphere where the competitive advantages of intra-organizational coopetition are fulfilled. Furthermore, organizations can receive a better understanding of recognition as a prominent incentive for competing and cooperating, while simultaneously realizing the importance of having a balance between brands in an organization, in order to decrease tensions and create the best possible coopetitive spirit. Lastly, we identify how a culturally embedded coopetition can avoid the tensions of having brands competing for the same market, which could be a valuable insight when setting the structure of an organization with multiple brands.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

As with most research, there are also inevitable limitations with our ethnography-inspired case study. In line with Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2018) advocacy of being self-reflexive, we acknowledge how the methodological choices of the study create certain limitations. One of these concerns the time constraint that was applied, where the study was set out to take a few months, which complicated our opportunities to collect enough empirical data for a full-scale ethnography. Furthermore, another limitation we want to consider is that qualitative studies could be seen as context dependent, meaning that the overarching result could vary if the study would be reproduced at another case company (Prasad, 2018). One could for example wonder whether a similar result would have been identified in a less sales-driven organization. Therefore, we identify how more studies considering the interrelation between organizational culture and intra-organizational coopetition would need to be conducted, to create a better and more comprehensive understanding of its implications. Lastly, another limitation we detect is how our theoretical perspective of looking through the lenses of Schein's (2010) three-level model of culture, limits the reflections. We used this theoretical perspective since it gives us a tangible, distinct focus of how to interpret and identify the organizational culture, but at the expense of interesting findings that could not be identified through that perspective.

Due to the limitations of the study, we identify several interesting topics and conditions for future research. For example, it would be of great interest to conduct a comprehensive ethnographic study, set in a physical setting instead of virtual, in order to grasp a more extensive understanding of corporate culture and coopetitive activities. Research on multi-brand organizations is rather scarce in the field of organizational studies, whereby the relationship between brands in a coopetitive multi-brand organization could be further investigated. In such a study, it could be of great interest to conduct research in the field of critical management studies, taking account of conflict and power to a greater extent than our study was able to. It would also be of significance to conduct research in a multi-brand organization where the brands do compete for market share, or when brands differ more in terms of financial performance and explore the role organizational culture could have in this setting.

References

Akemu, O. & Abdelnour, S. (2020). Confronting the Digital: Doing ethnography in modern organizational settings, *Organizational Research Methods*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp.296-321

Alvesson, M. (2002). Understanding Organizational Culture. London: Sage

Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp.1265-1281

Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. (2011) 'Generating Research Questions through Problematization', Academy of Management Review, vol. 36, no. 2, pp.247–271

Alvesson, M. & Sköldberg, K. (2018). Reflexive Methodology, 3rd edn, Los Angeles: Sage

Alvesson, M. & Sveningsson, S. (2016). Changing Organizational Culture: Cultural change work in progress, 2nd edn, Abingdon: Routledge

Barker, J. R. (1993). Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive control in self-managing teams, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp.408-437

Bell, E., Bryman, A. & Harley, B. (2019). Business Research Methods, 5th edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bendig, D., Enke, S., Thieme, N. & Brettel, M., (2018). Performance Implications of Cross-functional Coopetition in New Product Development: The mediating role of organizational learning, *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 73, pp.137–153

Bouncken, R.B., Gast, J., Kraus, S. & Bogers, M., (2015). Coopetition: A systematic review, synthesis, and future research directions. *Review of Managerial Science*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp.577–601

Bowen, G, A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*. vol. 9. no. 2. pp.27-40

Chiambaretto, P., Massé, D. & Mirc, N. (2019). "All for One and One for All?" - Knowledge broker roles in managing tensions of internal coopetition: The Ubisoft case, *Research Policy*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 584–600

Coombs, R., Knights, D. & Willmott, H. C. (1992). Culture, Control and Competition; Towards a conceptual framework for the study of information, *Organization Studies*, vol 13, no. 1, pp.51-72

Czakon, W., Mucha-Kuś, K. & Rogalski, M., (2014). Coopetition Research Landscape - A systematic literature review 1997–2010, *Journal of Economics & Management*, vol. 17, pp.122–150

Daft, R. L., Murphy, J. & Willmott, H. (2017). Organization Theory & Design, 3rd edn, Andover: Cengage Learning EMEA

Deshpande, R. and Webster Jr., F. E. (1989). Organizational Culture and Marketing: Defining the research agenda, *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp.3–15

Eriksson-Zetterquist, U., Müllern, T., & Styhre, A. (2011). Organization Theory, New York: Oxford University Press

Fleming, P. (2005) Workers' Playtime?: Boundaries and cynicism in a "culture of fun" program, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp.285–303

Fleming, P. and Sturdy, A. (2009). "Just be yourself!": Towards neo-normative control in organisations?, *Employee Relations*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp.569–583

Hatch, M. J. & Schultz, M. (2001). Are The Strategic Stars Aligned for Your Corporate Brand?, *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 79, no. 2, pp.128-134

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2002). The Dynamics Of organizational Identity, *Human Relations*, vol. 55, no. 8, pp.989–1018

Hislop, D., Bosua, R. & Helms, R. (2018). Knowledge Management In Organizations: A critical introduction, 4th edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Klimas, P. (2016). Organizational Culture and Coopetition: An exploratory study of the features, models and role in the Polish Aviation Industry, *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 53, pp.91–102

Knein, E., Greven, A., Bendig, D. & Brettel, M. (2020). Culture and Cross-functional Coopetition: The interplay of organizational and national culture, *Journal of International Management*, vol 26, no. 2

Luo, Y. (2005). Toward Coopetition Within a Multinational Enterprise: A perspective from foreign subsidiaries, *Journal of World Business*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp.71–90

Luo, X., Slotegraaf, R.J. & Pan, X. (2006). Cross-functional "Coopetition": The simultaneous role of cooperation and competition within firms, *Journal of Marketing*. vol. 70, no. 2, pp.67–80

Naidoo, S. and Sutherland, M. (2016). A Management Dilemma: Positioning employees for internal competition versus internal collaboration. Is coopetition possible?, *South African Journal of Business Management*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp.75–87

Peters, T. J. & Waterman, R. H. (1982). In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies, New York: Harper & Row

Prasad, P. (2018). Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the postpositivist traditions. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge

Raza-Ullah, T., Bengtsson, M. & Kock, S. (2014). The Coopetition Paradox and Tension in Coopetition at Multiple Levels, *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp.189–198

Rennstam, J. & Wästerfors, D. (2018). Analyze! – Crafting your data in qualitative research, Lund: Studentlitteratur

Rijamampianina, R. & Carmichael, T. (2005). A Framework for Effective Cross-cultural co-opetition Between Organisations, *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp.92-103

Schaefer, S. & Alvesson, M. (2020). Epistemic Attitudes and Source Critique in Qualitative Research, *Journal of Management Inquiry,* vol. 29, no. 1 pp.33-45

Schein, E. H. (2010). Organizational Culture and Leadership, 4th edn, San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass

Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G. and Macey, W. H. (2013) Organizational Climate and Culture, *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 64, no. 1, pp.361–388

Seran, T., Pellegrin-Boucher, E. & Gurau, C. (2016). The Management of Coopetitive Tensions within Multi-unit Organizations, *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 53, pp.31–41

Sjöberg, K., & Wästerfors, D. (2008). Uppdrag: Forskning, Malmö: Liber AB

Skärvad, P., & Lundahl, U. (2016). Utredningsmetodik, Lund: Studentlitteratur AB

Song, J., Lee, K., Khanna, T. (2016). Dynamic Capabilities at Samsung: Optimizing internal co-opetition, *Califfornia Managagement Review*, vol. 58, no. 4, pp.118–140

Styhre, A. (2013). How to Write Academic Texts, Lund: Studentlitteratur

Thompson, P. (2011) The trouble with HRM, *Human Resource Management Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp.355–367

Willmott, H. (1993). Strength is Ignorance; Slavery is Freedom: Managing culture in modern organizations, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp.515–552

Wilson, A. M. (2001). Understanding Organisational Culture and the Implications for Corporate Marketing, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 35, no. 3/4, pp.353-367

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide to TopReg/TopPro Employees

Background

1. Briefly, what is your role and background at TopSale Nordic?

2. Describe your closest work team. Who do you interact with on a weekly basis?

Culture

3. Is organizational culture something that you talk about in the organization?
   In what situations?
   On what level?
   With who?

4. How would you describe the workplace culture at TopSale Nordic?
   What values, behaviors, attitudes?
   How do you notice this in your daily work?

5. Do you see any differences in values or attitudes between people working at TopReg and TopPro?
   (How does it differ?)

6. We were at the introduction meeting with the CEO and some new employees, where he described a "winners' culture". Do you agree with this description?
   How would you describe the winners' culture?
   How does the winners' culture reflect in the daily work that you do?

Identity

7. How do you look upon your identity as an employee, in relation to TopSale Nordic and TopReg/TopPro? Do you identify with one more than the other?

Relationship between the brands

8. How do you perceive the relationship with TopReg/TopPro?
   Are there ever any tensions or conflicts?

9. How do you perceive the relationship between the different departments at TopSale Nordic?
   Are there ever any tensions or conflicts?

10. What advantages do you see with being two separate brands in one company?

11. What disadvantages do you see with being two separate brands in one company?

Coopetition

12. Are there any situations when you cooperate with the other brand?
    Can you give an example / Why not?
    How is that collaboration?
    Are there issues or tensions when collaborating with them?

13. Are there any situations when you compete against the other brand?
    Can you give an example?
    Do you think those situations have any effect on the cohesion/togetherness in the company?
    Do these situations affect your collaboration with the other brand?

14. The results from the culture survey have shown that collaboration and communication between departments might need to improve. Do you agree with this?
    Why do you think that is?

Final questions:

15. Considering that you are two brands in the organization, that market yourselves strongly towards customers. Do you have any general thoughts about how this affects the organizational cohesion in TopSale Nordic?

16. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix B: Interview guide to brand overarching employees:

1. Briefly. What is your role and background at TopSale Nordic?

2. Describe your closest work team. Who do you interact with on a weekly basis?

Culture

3. Is organizational culture something that you talk about in the organization?
    In what situations?
    On what level?
    With who?

4. How would you describe the workplace culture at TopSale Nordic?
    What values, behaviors, attitudes?
    How do you notice this in your daily work?

5. Do you see any differences in values or attitudes between people working at TopReg and TopPro?
    (How does it differ?)

6. We were at the introduction meeting with the CEO and some new employees, where he described a "winners' culture". Do you agree with this description?

How would you describe the winners' culture?
How does the winners' culture reflect in the daily work that you do?

Identity/relationship

7. How do you look upon identity, if we talk about TopSale Nordic, and TopReg and TopPro? Do you think employees identify themselves more with one or the other?

Relationship between brands

8. How do you perceive the relationship between the two brands?
Are there ever any tensions or conflicts?

9. How do you perceive the relationships between the different departments at TopSale Nordic?
Are there ever any tensions or conflicts?

10. What advantages do you see with being two separate brands in one company?

11. What advantages do you see with being two separate brands in one company?

Coopetition

12. Are there any situations that you know of, when TopReg and TopPro cooperate with each other?
Can you give an example / Why do you think that is?
How do you perceive this collaboration?

13. Are there any situations that you know of, when TopReg and TopPro compete against each other?
Can you give an example?
How do you perceive this competition?
Do you think those situations have any effect on the cohesion/togetherness in the company?

14. The results from the culture survey have shown that collaboration and communication between departments might need to improve. Do you agree with this?
Why do you think that is?

Final questions:

15. Considering that you are two brands in the organization, that market yourselves strongly towards customers. Do you have any general thoughts about how this affects the organizational cohesion in TopSale Nordic?

16. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?