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Should we do it ourselves or should we let somebody else do it?

An exploratory study on in-house agencies and external agencies in
marketing and brand management

by

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Abstract

Title: Should we do it ourselves or should we let somebody else do it? An exploratory study of in-house agencies and external agencies in marketing and brand management

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics of make-or-buy decisions in the context of marketing and brand management. Specifically, the research investigates the role and scope of in-house agencies beyond advertising, and analyses the motivations that drive companies to either insource or outsource marketing and brand management functions.

Methodology: This qualitative study employs semi-structured interviews with a constructionist view and an inductive approach.

Results: The findings from the qualitative interviews shed new light on the phenomenon of in-house agencies and the make-or-buy decision within marketing and brand management. The study proposes a typology of three different types of in-house agencies. The findings further provide an overview of the different reasons to insource and outsource.

Implications: The research broadens the scope of research on the phenomenon of the in-house agency as limited to advertising and adds to the current understanding of an important and highly relevant topic in the current field of marketing and brand management. Besides, the research provides a holistic understanding on the phenomenon of the in-house agency and a comprehensive overview of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the make-or-buy decision, offering valuable guidance in the decision-making process.

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	7
1.1 Background	7
1.2 Problematisation	9
1.3 Research purpose and contribution	10
1.4 Outline of the thesis	10
2. Literature Review	12
2.1 Marketing & Brand Management to build strong brands	12
2.1.1 Brand Building	12
2.1.2 Definition of Marketing and Brand Management	13
2.1.3 Marketing Communication	14
2.1.4 Advertising	15
2.1.5 Internal Branding	16
2.2 To make or to buy	17
2.2.1 To buy: outsourcing	18
2.2.1.1 Outsourcing to the external advertising agency	19
2.2.1.2 Reasons to outsource to an external agency	20
2.2.1.3 Agency-client co-creation in advertising	20
2.2.1.4 The agency-client relationship in advertising	21
2.2.2 To make: insourcing advertising	22
2.2.2.1 The in-house advertising agency	22
2.2.2.2 Advantages of the in-house agency	23
2.2.2.3 Disadvantages of the in-house agency	25
3 Methodology	27
3.1 Research Philosophy	28
3.1.1 Ontology	28
3.1.2 Epistemology	29
3.2 Research Approach	29
3.3 Research Strategy	30
3.4 Data Collection Method	31
3.5 Sampling	34
3.6 Data Analysis	36
3.7 Quality of Data	37
3.7.1 Credibility	37
3.7.2 Dependability	38
3.7.3 Transferability	38
3.7.4 Confirmability	39

3.8 Ethical Considerations	39
3.9 Limitations	40
4 Empirical Findings	42
4.1 Oatly	42
4.1.1 Oatly: reasons to in-house	44
4.1.2 Oatly: reasons to outsource	45
4.2 LEGO	46
4.2.1 LEGO: reasons to in-house	47
4.2.2 LEGO: reasons to outsource	49
4.3 Flying Tiger	50
4.3.1 Flying Tiger: reasons to in-house	51
4.3.2 Flying Tiger: reasons to outsource	53
4.4 Polestar	54
4.4.1 Polestar: reasons to in-house	57
4.4.2 Polestar: reasons to outsource	59
4.5 Maersk	61
4.5.1 Maersk: reasons to in-house	62
4.5.2 Maersk: reasons to outsource	63
4.6 Ericsson	64
4.6.1 Ericsson: reasons to in-house	65
4.6.2 Ericsson: reasons to outsource	66
4.7 Company A: A Global Player in the Jewellery Retail Industry	68
4.7.1 Company A: reasons to in-house	69
4.7.2 Company A: reasons to outsource	69
4.8 Company B: A leading financial service provider	70
4.8.1 Company B: reasons to in-house	72
4.8.2 Company B: reasons to outsource	72
4.9 Trelleborg Group & Trelleborg Sealing Solutions	74
4.9.1 Trelleborg: reasons to in-house	75
4.9.2 Trelleborg: reasons to outsource	77
4.10 Vattenfall	78
4.10.1 Vattenfall: reasons to in-house	80
4.10.2 Vattenfall: reasons to outsource	82
5. Analysis	84
5.1 The three types of in-house agencies	84
5.2 Reasons to in-house	86
5.2.1 Internal knowledge	87
5.2.2 Efficiency & speed	88

5.2.3 Streamlining	89
5.2.4 Control	90
5.2.5 Cost	90
5.3 Reasons to outsource to external agencies	91
5.3.1 Outside perspective	91
5.3.2 Cost	94
5.3.3 Creativity/Talent	94
5.3.4 Efficiency/Speed	96
5.3.5 Capabilities, competencies & capacity	96
5.4 Balancing the in-house agency and the external agency	98
5.4.1 Flexible balance	100
5.4.2 Leveraging strengths	100
5.4.3 The right partner	101
5.4.4 Internal ownership	101
5.4.5 Who owns the brand? Who builds the brand?	102
6 Discussion	103
7 Conclusion	106
7.1 Theoretical contribution	109
7.2 Managerial implications	110
7.3 Limitations and future research	110
References	112
Appendix A - Interview guide companies	127
Appendix B - Interview guide external agencies	128
Appendix C - Participant consent form	129

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of companies

36

List of Figures

Figure 1: The In-House Agency Continuum	86
Figure 2: Reasons to in-house and outsource	98

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

There is one question that unites leaders around the world, from the harrowing battlefields of the Eastern hemisphere to the hectic headquarters of companies worldwide: *Should we do it ourselves or should we let somebody else do it?* It is a dilemma that has been faced by individuals and organisations throughout history and across a wide range of fields, a dilemma that dates back to the creation days of humankind.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), the Holy Bible opens and describes how God created the universe, the earth, and everything within it. It is probably the most famous story in the world, however one creation has received little to no attention so far: the creation of *outsourcing*, defined as the “act of moving ... internal activities and decision responsibilities to outside providers” (Chase, Jacobs & Aquilano, 2004, p. 372). It may sound odd at first, given that the term was not framed until the 1980s (Drucker, 1989). Yet, as the narrative continues, on the sixth day of creation, God created Adam and Eve and assigned to them the naming of all the animals he had created prior: “... and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.” (Genesis 2:19-20).

While the factuality of this early example of divine outsourcing may be subject to different beliefs, the decision whether to outsource or insource, commonly referred to as the ‘make-or-buy decision’, is widely regarded as “one of the most important management strategies of our time” (Schniederjans, Schniederjans & Schniederjans, 2015, p. xix), affecting decision-making across various aspects of life. Homeowners face the decision when it comes to home improvement projects. *Shall we do it ourselves, or shall we hire a contractor?*, they may ask themselves, upon which Haas and Wotruba (1976) comment:

“If a homeowner was unable to find a roofer who would roof his home at a reasonable price, that homeowner could roof it himself. But, it is very doubtful that he could make his own shingles!” (pp. 65-66)

However, the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing and in-housing are not always as easy to determine. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government employed the private military *Wagner Group*, a network of mercenaries, to conduct military operations on behalf of President Vladimir Putin, alongside the Russian army. The question arises, however, who has the control and mastery over the military operations, hence who holds responsibility for the fatal actions of the hired guns. On the other hand, an outsourced army may provide a level of flexibility and adaptability that is difficult to achieve with a large, bureaucratic military organisation. Naturally, this thesis is neither about mercenary armies, nor about house renovations. And certainly, it is not about the creation of the earth. It is rather about the creation of brands and the agencies, internal and external, that participate in it.

Outsourcing marketing

While outsourcing has long been a way for companies to shed non-core functions and processes, often for reasons relating to cost and efficiency gains, over the years, companies have also begun to outsource core functions, such as engineering or research and development - as well as marketing (Lim & Tan, 2009). In marketing, make-or-buy decisions revolve around the utilisation of external agency services (Horsky 2006). Consequently, the very same marketing capabilities may be either built internally by companies themselves or sourced externally through agencies (Jensen & Sund, 2020).

Previous research has mostly focused on the outsourcing of marketing communication. One function of marketing communications that has been traditionally outsourced to external agencies is advertising (Horsky, 2006). Advertising agencies have consistently played a significant part in supporting companies through the provision of capabilities that the company might be lacking (Beard, 1996). With time, the variety of advertising services present in the market has substantially increased (Silk & Stiglin, 2015) and numerous new types of specialised agencies have appeared throughout the past two decades (Jensen & Sund, 2020; Soberman, 2009; Taylor 2017). Companies nowadays outsource a great variety of marketing activities and functions to external agencies (Du Preez & Bendixen, 2019; Jensen & Sund, 2020). Consequently, advertising agencies have been regarded as playing an instrumental part in the value creation process of brands (Arzaghi, Berndt, Davis & Silk, 2012; Horsky, 2006; Jensen & Sund, 2020). Recent trends, however, now challenge the status quo of advertising outsourcing.

Over the last decade, in-house agencies, defined by Silk and Stiglin as "an advertising organisation that is owned and operated by the corporation it serves" (2016, p.1) have seen a significant rise in popularity among advertisers (Sinclair, 2020). As per a 2018 report issued by the US-American Association of National Advertisers (ANA), 78 percent of the association's members had an in-house agency in 2018, a substantial rise from the 42 percent reported in 2008 (ANA, 2018). Furthermore, the report highlights that 44 percent of respondents had established their in-house agency within the five years leading up to the data collection, indicating a recent surge in the adoption of in-house agencies within the industry. Consequently, the report concludes that "the explosive growth of in-house agencies is one of the most significant trends in the advertising and marketing industry today" (ANA, 2018, p. 6).

Moreover, there is a growing trend among advertisers to adopt hybrid strategies that combine both internal and external resources in order to achieve a customised blend of tasks for the development, production, and implementation of effective and impactful advertising campaigns (ANA, 2018; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). In line, the ANA's (2018) in-house agency survey revealed that ninety percent of the respondents collaborate with one or more external agencies. Among the respondents of the survey, an average of 58 percent of all the work conducted for their company was handled internally, showcasing the substantial share of in-house operations in their overall marketing efforts. This hybrid approach allows advertisers to leverage the strengths of both in-house capabilities and external expertise, enabling them to optimise their advertising efforts and attain desired outcomes.

1.2 Problematisation

In-house agencies beyond advertising

While the topic of in-house agencies has recently been extensively discussed in marketing trade journals and among marketing professionals, the topic appears to lack broader attention within academic research and literature. Further, the phenomenon of in-house agencies to date has been exclusively discussed in the context of advertising (ANA, 2018). However, just like the role of external agencies has changed and developed throughout time, we suspect that the role and scope of in-house agencies may also be subject to change. Moreover, we conjecture that in-house agencies may serve a greater purpose than previous research has unveiled. Consequently, just as the marketing capabilities can be developed internally or provided by external agencies (Jensen

& Sund, 2020), companies may further choose whether to insource or outsource brand management capabilities.

1.3 Research purpose and contribution

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the dynamics of make-or-buy decisions in the context of marketing and brand management. Specifically, we seek to investigate the role and scope of in-house agencies beyond advertising, and analyse the motivations that drive companies to either insource or outsource marketing and brand management functions. Consequently, the aim of our research is to develop novel theory at the intersection of marketing and brand management, insourcing and outsourcing. By examining the interplay between internal and external agencies in the process of marketing and brand management, we seek to provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of marketing and brand management practices and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing companies' strategic decisions in the realm of marketing and brand management. Given the relative scarcity of previous academic research on make-or-buy decision-making in the field of marketing and brand management, it is beneficial to broaden our perspective beyond the boundaries of these disciplines. By including research from further business domains, we strive to create a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of make-or-buy decisions and its implications for marketing and brand management.

Thus, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: What are the motives for in-housing and outsourcing in marketing and brand management?

RQ2: What role do internal and external agencies play in marketing and brand management?

RQ3: How do companies balance the roles and perspectives of internal and external agencies?

1.4 Outline of the thesis

To provide an overview of the thesis, this section outlines the upcoming chapters and the key areas they will cover. Following the present introductory chapter, *Chapter 2* covers a theoretical review in which relevant definitions and theoretical concepts are discussed. Hereby, this chapter provides a theoretical background for the analysis and discussion of our findings in the further course of the thesis. In *Chapter 3* the methodology is introduced, discussing the research strategy and design of the study as well as the methodological choices made throughout the research process. Moreover, this chapter argues for the appropriateness of the chosen method of data collection and sampling techniques used. Finally, this chapter discusses the quality of the study. In *Chapter 4* the empirical findings of the study are presented, structured as per the different companies within our research. This leads to the analysis in *Chapter 5*, in which the findings are analysed, interpreted and reviewed in light of the theory discussed in Chapter 2. In *Chapter 6* some of the key findings of the research are presented, discussed and reflected upon. Finally, the research questions are answered in *Chapter 7*, and the theoretical contribution, practical implications, as well as the opportunities for future research are discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing & Brand Management to build strong brands

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the discussed topics, the present chapter aims at defining the core concepts of our research. Firstly, we will define the scope of brand building and the role of consistency in building strong brands. We then define the roles of marketers and brand managers, before turning to the fine print of marketing and brand management. Since the phenomenon of in-housing has been previously discussed within advertising, we will hereby explore advertising as a core function of marketing communications. Furthermore, we delve into the brand management task of internal branding.

2.1.1 Brand Building

In face of an increasingly complex business landscape, brands have become widely acknowledged as strategic company resources (Kapferer, 2012; Liu & Atuahene-Gima, 2018) that are vital assets for organisations' success (Ellwood, 2000; Melin, 2002; M'zungu, Merrilees & Miller, 2010). Long established, the concept of brand equity encapsulates the idea of added value connected to brands, referring to "a set of assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds (or subtracts) from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1996, p. 7).

However, the nature of the brand has been subject to disagreement among researchers over time (De Chernatony & Riley, 1998; Kapferer, 2012). Previous researchers have defined brands from either an input or output perspective, hence, as a company's creation or as a set of associations in consumers' minds (De Chernatony & Riley, 1997). While some scholars have defined brands as identifiers and differentiators of goods and services (Aaker, 1991), and as tools to facilitate the selling of products (Iyer, Davari, Srivastava & Paswan, 2021; Kapferer, 2012), brands are further regarded as ubiquitous and powerful symbols that shape consumer preferences and behaviours (Aaker, 1996; Melin, 2002). In line with McGee and Sammut-Bonnici (2015) we define brand as "a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity, and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization" (p. 1).

According to Rossiter (2014) a strong brand is characterised by high brand equity, resulting in a superordinate and consistent profit flow. Building a strong brand is considered as much an art as a science (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). It demands careful planning, a long-term and deep commitment, and marketing that is creatively designed and carried out (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). A strong brand is the product of having a clearly defined strategy and excellent implementation at the levels of product, price, people, place, as well as communication (Kapferer, 2012). While the company plays a central role in shaping and managing the brand, brand building also actively involves stakeholders such as customers, employees, partners, and the community in the process (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009).

For a brand to be built and to develop long-term distinctiveness, it must be consistent in everything it undertakes (Kapferer, 2012; Beverland, 2021). Consistency is defined as "the standardisation and maintenance, through time and place, of a defined brand image and associated symbols, for example, through names, symbols and positioning themes" (Beverland, Wilner & Micheli 2015, p. 590 cited in Beverland, 2021). Building a brand is in part a matter of very clearly, explicitly and publicly defining that which is non-negotiable about the brand: "Identity' means that the brand should respect its key values and defining attributes" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 242). However, as Kapferer further points out, "there is a point where too much repetition of the same creates boredom" (ibid). Brands may always update communication campaigns, release new products, re-design packaging, tweak their online and offline experience, and through extensions, incrementally add new meanings to their existing identity (Beverland, 2021). Thus, the role of modern brands may be defined as to stimulate consumers to have new experiences, while simultaneously fostering trust and providing reassurance (Kapferer, 2012). Brand managers consequently face the paradoxical challenge of keeping their brands fresh and innovative while staying true to the desired brand position (Beverland, 2021).

2.1.2 Definition of Marketing and Brand Management

As brands aim to create awareness and a distinct identity (McGee & Sammut-Bonnici, 2015), *branding* consequently defines a long-term strategy that entails a broad range of activities, from brand identity development to marketing communications (De Chernatony, 1999; McGee & Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). While marketing and brand management are closely related and interconnected through the notion of branding, there are relevant distinctions between the two

concepts discussed in our research. While brand management is an integral part of *marketing*, the latter encompasses a broad range of activities beyond the brand management function (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). It involves the entire process of identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer needs and wants. Consequently, marketing activities include market research, the development of products, pricing, distribution, advertising, sales promotions, and more (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). *Brand management*, on the other hand, focuses primarily on developing the core identity of the brand and managing the growth and value of brand-based assets (M'zungu, Merrilees & Miller, 2010; Santos-Vijande, del Rio-Lanza, Suárez-Álvarez & Díaz-Martín, 2013). Consequently, brand management can be defined as the process of exerting control over the perception, actions, and messaging of a brand (Temporal, 2010). Its primary goal is to ensure the alignment of brand image, referring to the ideas, feelings, and attitudes consumers have towards a brand (Gardner & Levy, 1955), and brand identity, defined as the tangible and intangible characteristics that allow for the recognition of the company as a unique entity (Kapferer, 2012). This requires a clear understanding of the brand's values, personality, and the strategic positioning that sets it apart from competitors (Temporal, 2010). As consistency is key to building strong brands, the maintenance of consistency is considered a key task of brand managers. Thus, brand managers are responsible for maintaining and upholding the brand's consistent messaging, visual identity, and overall experience across all touchpoints (Keller, 1999).

2.1.3 Marketing Communication

For brand power to exist, it must exist in people's minds (Kapferer, 2012). Consequently, Reid, Luxton and Mavondo (2005) argue that to build a strong brand, a pivotal consideration is the firm's capacity to develop continuous and impactful marketing communication strategies that guarantee the brand's visibility and resonance within the market, which, in turn, facilitates the cultivation and maintenance of long-term brand value. The primary aim of marketing communication is therefore to create brand awareness among consumers (Beverland, 2021; Ellwood, 2000; Kelley et al., 2023) and subsequently to contemplate the brand's purpose, the needs it fulfils, and its key attributes (Beverland, 2021). Achieving this goal necessitates a combination of creativity and consistent visibility (Field, 2018). Through marketing communications, companies strive to inform, persuade and remind consumers of their products

and brands, either directly or indirectly (Keller, 1999; Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). Essentially, marketing communications represents the "voice" of the company as well as its brands, hence is a way of establishing a dialogue and relationships with and among consumers (Keller, 1999). Marketing communications must ensure that the brand stands out, that users can identify with the brand, and are able to connect it to their needs (Beverland, 2021). The elements of marketing communication can have a direct impact on the perceived brand quality, brand personality, brand image and brand awareness (Grossmanova, Vojtkova & Kita, 2009). Consequently, marketing communication is argued to have a significant impact on brand equity (Keller, 1999; Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005).

Marketing communications encompasses an array of forms of communication such as advertising, event marketing and sponsoring, personal selling, sales promotions and public relations (Beverland, 2021; Keller, 1999). Every form of communication represents a distinct area of expertise (Beverland, 2021), often partly created in collaboration with or entirely by external service providers. However, previous scholars have highlighted the importance of using the different communication tools in an integrated fashion to ensure consistent brand delivery across all channels and touchpoints (Beverland, 2021; Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005).

2.1.4 Advertising

Advertising is considered a key communication tool for branding (Beverland, 2021) and a significant aspect of marketing and brand communication (Kelley et al., 2023). Typically, within advertising the advertiser purchases media time or space to communicate the company's message to its target audience (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). Advertising can both build a long-term image for a product or initiate a quick sale (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022). Brand building and growth require both immediate sales via short-term advertising, campaigns running for under six months, as well as image building by long-term campaigns, which aim to build brand awareness, image, and assets and incrementally affect sales over time, allowing for more sustainable sales growth (Beverland, 2021). However, balance is crucial, as too much emphasis on short-term communications may result in a lack of consistency, whereas excessive promotions may damage brand image (Beverland, 2021).

2.1.5 Internal Branding

While often we tend to think of brands primarily in terms of their advertising, logos or experiences, a great deal of brand building is internally focused, to make sure the promises of the brand are fulfilled and the resources to build and maintain the brand continuously flow (Beverland, 2021). Although internal branding initially played a limited role in the brand management process (Dunes & Pras, 2013), it is nowadays considered a key function of brand management (Iyer et al., 2021). As M'zungu, Merrilees and Miller argue, "it is no longer sufficient to simply position and communicate the brand externally" (2010, p. 609). Internal branding revolves around the alignment of employees with brands and motivating employees in supporting the goals of the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2004). This goes in line with Simoes and Dibb (2001), highlighting the importance of infusing the 'brand spirit' across the entire organisation to garner comprehensive support for the brand strategy and its effective execution. Moreover, internal branding is used to build employee understanding of the brand's identity and ensure that they are able to convey the identity of the brand on a consistent basis over time, helping them "stay on brand" (Beverland, 2021). The link between culture and branding is further expressed by De Chernatony stating that "internally brand management is becoming culture management ..." (1999, p. 159). To facilitate a culture that enables the brand to deliver its promise, Gulati (2007) and De Chernatony (1999) argue for changes to the organisational structure. While De Chernatony (1999) argues for the incorporation of the HR director within the brand management team, Gulati (2007) argues for more general changes to the organisational structure and relationships, thus for the elimination of organisational silos. Gulati (2007) further proposes four sets of internal branding activities to transcend internal silos, namely coordination, cooperation, capability development and connection. Coordination refers to the establishment of processes and structural mechanisms that enable the synchronisation of information and activities among different units, thereby fostering the creation of shared knowledge and understanding across departments. Cooperation entails fostering a collaborative environment where individuals across all areas of the company are motivated to work collectively in achieving organisational goals. Capability development describes the process of making sure that enough people across the organisation have the necessary skills to provide customer-centric solutions and developing the talent internally. Lastly, connection defines the development of relationships with external partners for a cost-effective delivery of customer value.

2.2 To make or to buy

In the second part of our literature review, we turn to the fundamental question underlying the research topic: *Should we do it ourselves, or should we let somebody else do it?* While this question may be argued to be as old as humanity itself, the theoretical model of ‘make or buy’ was only introduced in 1937. In his seminal paper ‘The nature of the firm’, Coase (1937) introduced the idea of ‘transaction cost’, referring to the costs incurred in the process of exchanging goods and services between firms, and raised the question: “[Why] does the entrepreneur not organize one less transaction or one more?” (Coase, 1937, pp. 393–394). “The decision to organise transactions within the firm as opposed to on the open market” (Klein, 2005, p. 436) is commonly referred to as the ‘make-or-buy decision’. Probert, Cáneez, and Platts (2002) propose that the make-buy judgments of a company should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the outsourcing policy is in line with market changes, and changes in demand, or government policy. A similar remark is made by Harrigan, suggesting that the make-buy decision of a company must “change over time as industry conditions change or as firms' needs to control adjacent industries change” (1984, p. 642). Quélin and Duhamel (2003) emphasise the importance of a firms’ capability to identify the suitability of activities for outsourcing and how to value the tradeoffs between outsourcing and insourcing benefits. While Coase (1937) regarded the relative cost of internal versus external exchange as decisive in determining whether to make or buy, more recent research has identified further contributing factors to the make-or-buy decision, such as capabilities, ownership, and business strategy (Probert, Cáneez & Platts, 2002; Dale & Cunningham, 1984; Serrano, Ramírez & Gascó, 2018), making that make-or-buy decisions are “very complex, time consuming, interactive and affect many departments within a company” (Dale & Cunningham, 1984, p. 53). Therefore, the make-or-buy decision remains a fundamental dilemma faced by many companies and company departments to date (Probert, Cáneez & Platts, 2002).

Following the given definition of the make-or-buy dilemma, we delve into the two sides the decision. Within outsourcing, we will explore previous research on outsourcing both in general business and, more specifically, in marketing. We hereby focus on outsourcing to advertising agencies, before further examining agency-client co-creation and the dynamics of the agency-client relationship. Shifting to insourcing, we will first provide a general overview before delving into the phenomenon of in-house agencies as researched within the scope of advertising.

We will follow up with an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of in-housing, as discussed in prior research. By exploring these topics, we aim to lay the groundwork for our examination of insourcing and outsourcing within the broader scope of marketing and brand management.

2.2.1 To buy: outsourcing

The term outsourcing came into widespread use in the mid 1980's, as companies decided to deploy external providers to run their call centres and other service-oriented operations. However, outsourcing, commonly defined as the externalisation of one or more business activities that were previously performed internally, to an outside provider (Barthélemy, 2003; Chase, Jacobs & Aquilano, 2004; Ellram & Billington, 2001), is a common practice in various different industries (Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009). Hätönen and Eriksson (2009) identify three key motives of outsourcing as observed in previous research. The first motive, often suggested as the primary reason for outsourcing, is cost savings and cost reduction (Maltz & Ellram, 1997). However, Quélin and Duhamel emphasise that cost reductions only apply under specific conditions, arguing that “if outsourcing was reduced simply to performing the same tasks at a lower cost, internal reorganisation may well be a more efficient way to achieve this type of objective” (2003, p. 648). Moreover, outsourcing is undertaken for the improvement of process as well as the necessity to concentrate on core competencies, namely to gain flexibility through internal reorganisation, speed up projects, shorten the time-to-market, obtain access to flexible labour, and to sharpen the corporate's orientation (Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009). The third motive for outsourcing, as discussed by Hätönen and Eriksson (2009), is enhancement of capacity, including accessing resources unavailable in-house and highly skilled labour, improvement of quality of service, acquiring ready-made innovations and compensating for the lack of specific in-house expertise. This goes in line with Heikkilä and Cordon (2002) who argue that the most common motivations for outsourcing are lack of capital, the absence of know-how, increased flexibility through outsourcing and the need for quick reactions or small production, speed or time to market, utilisation of assets or limited capacity and economies of scale. However, important to note is that when an activity is outsourced, ownership (Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009), as well as control of that activity (Nordigården, Rehme, Brege, Chicksand & Walker, 2014) are transferred. Gilley and Rasheed (2000) further argue that the enhanced reliance on external

suppliers may result in a loss of innovation and insufficient research and development. Therefore, the strategic decision of outsourcing is suggested to be carefully considered (Probert, Cánez & Platts, 2002).

2.2.1.1 Outsourcing to the external advertising agency

While outsourcing has long been a way for companies to shed non-core functions and processes, often for reasons relating to cost and efficiency gains, over the years, companies have also begun to outsource core functions, such as engineering, R&D and marketing (Lim & Tan, 2009). One marketing function that has been traditionally outsourced is advertising, commonly outsourced to a full service agency (Horsky, 2006). According to Horsky, “the typical integrated full-service advertising agency assigns a team dedicated to an account that offers expertise covering consumer and media research, creative copy planning and execution, and media planning and buying.” (2006, p. 367). Consequently, Joel refers to advertising agencies as the “executional arm of the marketing department” (2013, n.p.). Over time, the variety of advertising services present in the market has substantially increased (Silk & Stiglin, 2015) and numerous new types of specialised agencies have appeared throughout the past two decades (Jensen & Sund, 2020; Soberman, 2009; Taylor 2017). In particular, a multitude of digital specialist agencies have entered the agency world (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Consequently, companies now outsource a great variety of marketing activities and functions to external agencies (Du Preez & Bendixen, 2019; Jensen & Sund, 2020). Only the minority of companies employ a ‘one-stop-shop’ solution, as described by Horsky (2006), and the majority of companies utilise several agencies and types of agencies to address their marketing challenges (Jensen & Sund, 2020). Besides the emergence of this wide range of specialist advertising agencies, agencies have increasingly taken on additional tasks over the past decades (Jensen & Sund, 2020). Holding companies have also extended their capabilities, mainly within digital marketing, and have reorganised their media agencies with digital operations and other functions in an effort to position themselves as companies offering a broader range of 'marketing solutions' (McClellan, 2008 cited in Arzaghi, et al., 2012).

2.2.1.2 Reasons to outsource to an external agency

Advertising agencies have been instrumental in supporting companies through the provision of capabilities that the company might be lacking (Beard, 1996). According to Horsky (2006), the main reason for outsourcing to external agencies in advertising is to improve value creation via improved skills and executional capabilities. As creativity is considered essential to the success of advertising (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016), especially the creative skills of external agencies is an often discussed reason for companies to seek support from external agencies (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016), as companies may lack these skills internally. Besides creative skills, previous studies have also shown external agencies' experience working for competitor brands as an important factor in selecting external agencies (Henke, 1995). Besides, companies appear to expect external agencies to provide knowledge of local markets along with category experience (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016). Besides, more specialist functions may be more likely to be provided by external agencies (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Similarly, Hughes and Vafeas (2019) argue that advertisers only seek resources externally when they lack these resources internally themselves, or if they believe the function can be more effectively performed by an external agency.

2.2.1.3 Agency-client co-creation in advertising

Research into make or buy decisions has for long been the focus of researchers in a variety of disciplines, such as economics, strategy, operations management and law (Bigelow, 2018, pp. 932–935). The use of the services of external agencies within advertising is similar to this traditional 'make-or-buy' decision (Horsky 2006), as companies can either develop the same marketing capabilities internally or have these provided by external agencies (Jensen & Sund, 2020). Traditional decisions regarding this matter have been portrayed as a binary choice of making advertising services internally or buying them from an external agency. However, advertisers today frequently pursue hybrid policies of make and buy, to obtain the specific combination of tasks they require for the development, production, and implementation of advertising campaigns (Silk & Stiglin 2016). Whilst companies have many options for getting their brand message across, an increasing number of companies is discovering that the most effective choice is often a combination, and that their need for advertising and marketing services is best fulfilled by coordinating and integrating internal and external resources, as opposed to

assuming that the options of make and buy are mutually exclusive (Silk & Stiglin, 2015; ANA, 2018).

This is in line with literature on agencies and clients, which recognizes the importance of the contribution of external agencies and clients in the creation of the end result (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). The range of services that are provided by external agencies and sought by companies varies greatly (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Similarly, the division of tasks among external agencies and clients, regarding what comes from an external agency and what is internally supplied by the client itself, can greatly differ. No hard and fast rules are in place concerning what is done by external agencies and what is provided internally (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Many of the services that external agencies offer are provided by the client internally, depending on whether they have sufficient resources. Consequently, the services clients seek from agencies are reliant upon the resources they internally possess (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019) and companies select resources offered by external agencies to form the bundle of resources that best meets their needs (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Hence, the absence of a resource internally may result in the need for external services offered by agencies and in turn necessitates co-creation (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). With which resources the external agency is able to add value varies per client (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Nevertheless, as aforementioned, companies today prefer to outsource to multiple advertising agencies and agency types, as opposed to a one-stop-shop. However, they seem to keep control through internal coordination of agency work (Jensen & Sund, 2020).

2.2.1.4 The agency-client relationship in advertising

Literature on agencies and clients has widely focussed on the relationship between the agency and the client (Beverland, Farrelly & Woodhatch, 2007; Haytko, 2004; Labahn & Kohli, 1997). Collaborations between agencies and companies can, according to Calderwood, Koslow and Sasser, “span from long-term commitments to short-term transactional exchanges - with some agencies treated as vendors, while others are regarded as an extension of the brand team” (2021, p.309). Whilst research on interfirm relationships has argued for the importance of the building of long-term relationships between service providers and clients (Crosby, Evans & Cowles, 1990), the length of advertising agency-client relationships are now shorter than in the past (Heo & Sutherland, 2015).

According to Hughes and Vafeas “The level and type of service required from the agency will impact on the nature of the relationship” (2019, p.274). Similarly, the degree to which the advertising agency is involved differs widely, from clients who like to involve the external agency in all aspects of the business to clients who prefer minimal involvement of the external agency (Haytko, 2004). Some clients consider the relationship with their external agency a partnership, in which the agency is involved in interactions with the customers of the client on an ongoing basis and invests time and energy in understanding the business of the client, resulting in a close relationship with the client. This can be associated with a high level of reliance on agency resources. On the other hand, external agencies that provide one-time services have a greater likelihood of having a transactional relationship with the client, which seems to be associated with a low level of reliance on agency resources (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019).

2.2.2 To make: insourcing advertising

The term insourcing has most commonly been described by academics as the ‘in-housing’ of activities that have previously been outsourced (Damanpour, Magelssen & Walker, 2020). This reversing decision has also been referred to as ‘reintegration’, recognised primarily as “the decision to reincorporate a given activity within a company that had formerly been transferred to an external supplier” (Cabral, Quelin & Maia, 2013, p. 2). Schniederjans, Schniederjans and Schniederjans (2015) define insourcing more broadly as “internal sourcing of business activities” and state that insourcing can be considered both “an allocation or reallocation of resources internally within the same organisation”.

2.2.2.1 The in-house advertising agency

As previously discussed, throughout the evolution of modern advertising, advertisers have relied on external rather than internal agencies (Horsky, Michael & Silk, 2008). Consequently, up until the 1980s, only a small number of firms employed in-house agencies (Horsky, 2006), defined by Silk and Stiglin as “an advertising organisation that is owned and operated by the corporation it serves” (2016, p.1). Over the past decade, however, an increasing number of companies have set up their own in-house advertising agencies (Belch & Belch, 2001; Sinclair, 2020), thereby partially or fully "in-housing" advertising activities (Sinclair, 2020). Consequently, many services offered by external advertising agencies are provided by the advertisers themselves, both

by employing new personnel with the required capabilities and by developing their own staff (Jensen & Sund, 2020). The extent to which in-housing is happening varies greatly and can vary from fully staffed in-house agencies to smaller teams handling specific tasks or the incorporation of an external marketing or advertising agency ‘on-site’ (Sinclair, 2020). Whereas some in-house agencies are little more than advertising departments, in other companies they take on separate identities and are in charge of significant amounts of advertising budget (Belch & Belch, 2001). Besides, whilst some companies employ in-house agencies exclusively, others seek combinations of in-house agencies and external agencies (Belch & Belch, 2001).

2.2.2.2 Advantages of the in-house agency

Throughout literature, many reasons for and advantages of in-house agencies have been formulated. Whereas some companies are simply driven to go in-house due to negative experiences with external agencies (Belch & Belch, 2001), we discuss the most common motives for and advantages of in-house agencies as discussed in literature. We group these points into six different overarching categories to explain the underlying rationale behind the phenomenon of in-house agencies.

Cost reduction. Jensen and Sund (2020) posit that the decision to outsource or insource marketing services is dependent on a transactional and administrative cost comparison. Consequently, one of the primary reasons for companies to employ an in-house agency is the reduction of costs (Belch & Belch, 2001; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). When working with an external agency entails higher costs than doing things in-house, doing things internally will be the preferable solution (Jensen & Sund, 2010).

Efficiency. However, cost reduction is not the only motive for companies to turn to in-house agencies (Belch & Belch, 2001). Besides low cost, quick turn, or time savings, has long been considered a primary reason for the internalisation of advertising (Belch & Belch, 2001; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). As noted before, one of the reasons for companies to turn to external agencies is the belief that services can be performed more effectively by an external agency (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Similarly, both Horsky (2006) and Milfeld and Haley (2021) argue that companies will favour an in-house agency to take on all or some of its advertising tasks should they be able to carry these out more efficiently.

Consistency and control. Besides their contribution to improved marketing efficiency, access to in-house agencies may also reinforce a greater message consistency (Milfeld & Haley, 2021). Another commonly mentioned reason for the growth in volume and complexity of the amount of work that is allocated to in-house agencies is the desire for control (Belch & Belch, 2020; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). Moreover, advertisers have been developing in-house capabilities to increase coordination of activities. Thus, by in-housing advertising, companies can enhance control over processes and coordination with the firm's overall marketing program can be done more easily (Belch & Belch, 2001).

Competencies. According to Hughes and Vafeas (2019), clients will only use external services when they lack the resources themselves. Thus, the choice whether to outsource certain resources or do them in-house is dependent on the competency of the in-house agency. If the company has similar or the same in-house capabilities as external agencies, according to Horsky (2006), it should perform all advertising tasks in-house. Similarly, some companies simply believe their in-house agency can do a better job than an external agency at certain tasks (Belch & Belch, 2001). Within digital media, advertisers have increasingly started recognizing their ability to bring digital marketing resources internally as an increasing amount of expertise exists in-house. This is due to the fact that an increasing number of employees are digitally savvy and technology has evolved to be more user-friendly.

Adaptability. In-house agencies have long been recognised for their responsiveness to frequently changing and time-sensitive needs of the companies they serve. More recently, they have started to receive recognition for their ability to adapt to new technologies, new forms of reaching out, and the globalisation of the marketplace (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Technological advances have led to an increase in the number of ways to communicate with target audiences (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). This digital environment requires rapid digital response, implying that support for this may be better carried out in-house (Hughes & Vafeas, 2019). Additionally, in-house agencies have increasingly taken on the measurement of client satisfaction. Being able to collect feedback from clients enables the in-house agency to take a look at their performance and make adjustments accordingly (Silk & Stiglin, 2016).

Closeness to the corporation. Moreover, the in-house agency benefits from intimate business expertise due to its position at the heart of the company (Milfeld & Haley, 2021) and consequently its proximity to and the accessibility of information (Silk, 2012) as well as an

increased knowledge and understanding of the specific market (Belch & Belch, 2001). As stated by Silk and Stiglin, “This provides internal agency personnel with limitless opportunities to listen and learn from within, acquiring company-specific and industry-specific knowledge and insights, forming deep client relationships, and influencing the business directly.” (2016, p.7). Its position within the company and the great frequency of engagement with its ‘client’ provides the in-house agency with an understanding of the real-time challenges and the ability to affect the company’s strategies, influencing everything ranging from strategic planning and positioning to the integration of the brand and management of campaigns (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Hereby, the ‘new’ in-house agency works hand in hand with its ‘clients’ in the development and execution of strategies in support of business and brand objectives (Silk & Stiglin, 2016).

2.2.2.3 Disadvantages of the in-house agency

Despite the increase in in-house agencies over the past decade, companies continue to consult external agencies. With in-house advertising agencies increasingly taking on tasks that were initially performed by external advertising agencies (Jensen & Sund, 2020), opinions differ on whether the in-house agency can fully replace the external agency and how much the in-house agency poses a threat to external advertising agencies (Silk, 2015). Whereas in-house agencies may be argued to have a great variety of benefits, the insourcing of certain tasks may also potentially present disadvantages (Milfeld & Haley, 2021). Bold and creative advertising requires risks to be taken (West & Ford, 2001). Whilst in-house agencies may be argued to enhance consistency, they may obscure creativity that is riskier but more impactful (Milfeld & Haley, 2021). External advertising agencies however, are considered to be more risk seeking (West & Ford, 2001). This is because the external agency’s client has the final say in the decision, and the external agency therefore does not face the direct consequences of their decision, as argued for by West and Ford (2001). Moreover, employees working at in-house agencies are at risk of becoming restricted or growing still as they continuously work on the same product line and they may be lacking the objectivity external agencies are argued to have (Belch & Belch, 2001). However, an external agency may offer an unbiased outside perspective (Newton, 1965). That said, external agencies could provide a variety of highly skilled specialists with diverse backgrounds to bring in different ideas (Belch & Belch, 2001). Besides, external agencies have the experience in working with an extensive array of products (Newton, 1965).

Milfeld and Haley (2021) discuss this phenomenon in the digital media environment, arguing that external advertising agencies have the ability to observe a broader digital media landscape due to working with different clients. This allows the external agency to offer a more diversified perspective (Newton, 1965). Additionally, it can be argued that external agencies manage to bring in the best creative talent within a wider variety of services (Belch & Belch, 2001). The ability of in-house agencies to attract and retain both creative and strategic talent has been questioned often (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Silk and Stiglin argue that “While the stigma associated with strategic and creative talent on the in-house agency side has slowly eroded, it has not been eradicated.” (2016, p.7).

3 Methodology¹

In the realm of research and analysis, methodology plays a crucial role in guiding the investigation and interpretation of complex phenomena. It serves as a compass, directing researchers in their quest to understand and shed light on intricate topics. However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent challenges that arise when attempting to grasp the multifaceted nature of certain subjects. To illustrate the challenges and pitfalls, we turn to the ancient Hindu fable of the blind men and the elephant. The story of the blind men and the elephant captures the essence of the methodological journey we undertake in this study. In this fable, a group of blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. Each man touches a different part of the elephant and forms their own interpretation of the creature based solely on their limited tactile experience. Whilst all men form an interpretation of the same creature, their individual understandings of the elephant diverge. Similarly, in our research, we encounter a complex and multidimensional landscape, consisting of a variety of perspectives and experiences. Just as the blind men sought to comprehend the entirety of the elephant through isolated touches, we, as researchers, strive to understand the broader implications of in-housing and outsourcing within marketing and brand management. For there has been little academic research on the subject, we consider ourselves to be in a somewhat similar position as the blind men in the tale. By investigating the topic from different perspectives, we seek to create an aggregate picture of in-house agencies and external agencies in marketing and brand management. Therefore, the methodology employed in this study assumes a critical role in providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. Through our research design, we aim to overcome the limitations of a one-sided perspective and contribute to a more holistic understanding of this dynamic phenomenon.

In the following chapter, we will outline our chosen methodology, explain the rationale behind our methodological decisions, and describe how we aim to address the complexity inherent in the in-housing and outsourcing of marketing and brand management. We open with a discussion of the philosophical assumptions underlying our research, followed by a description of our research design and strategy, explaining the methodological choices made throughout the research process

¹ This chapter may contain parts of our group assignment presented for *Qualitative Research Methods (BUSR31)*. M.Sc. International Marketing & Brand Management. 2023. Lund University School of Economics & Management. Authors: Nicholas-Joel Kisling, Julia Herma Cornée Dorothée Bosveld.

and their appropriateness for our study. We continue with an elaboration on the sampling process, data collection method, and the approach to data analysis, before evaluating the quality of our research and limitations of our study. We finish this chapter with the ethical considerations of our research.

3.1 Research Philosophy

All research is founded on a set of philosophical assumptions shaping the way we do research and the conclusions we draw from the data we have gathered (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). To increase the quality of research and the creativity of us as researchers, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the ontological and epistemological assumptions before embarking on any research journey (Easterby-Smith, Jaspersen, Thorpe & Valizade, 2021). In the following section, we discuss our view about the nature of the relationship of theory and research. By addressing the ontological and epistemological assumptions, we ensure that we employ appropriate methods to answer our research questions.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is described as “philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality” (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021, pp. 70-71). The ontology has influenced our choice of methods and strategies and the conclusions that we have derived from the collected data (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2021), there are four ontological positions, which are situated on a continuum: realism, internal realism, relativism, and nominalism. According to Keller (1997), branding is both an art and a science, and as it is with art, its interpretation partially lies in the eye of the beholder. In agreement with this, as the previously discussed example of the conflicting interpretations of the elephant by three blind men illustrates, we are driven by the assumption that multiple truths and subjective perspectives exist. Similarly, in regards to in-housing and outsourcing of brand building, different organisations and individuals may have varying experiences and perspectives as opposed to one single universally applicable approach or truth. Consequently, our assumptions align with the assumptions of relativist ontology, presuming “that phenomena depend on the perspective from which we observe them” (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022, p. 72). According to this perspective, facts and truths can appear differently depending on the observer, time, and place, hence

implying the existence of multiple truths depending on individuals' perspectives (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology defines the views about the most suitable means of enquiring into the nature of the world and can thus be referred to as the study of the nature of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) distinguish between two contrasting perspectives: positivism and social constructionism. Our research is based upon the belief that reality is formed by people rather than determined by objective and external factors (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021;). Consequently, our viewpoint does not align with a positivist perspective, which is based on the assumption that the social world exists externally. According to positivism, the properties of the social world should be measured by objective methods. Thus, according to this perspective, knowledge can be studied scientifically (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Within our research, however, we seek understanding and appreciation of the different perspectives and experiences people have. Thereby, we appreciate the variety of constructions and meanings attached by people to their experiences, implying the existence of multiple realities (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Consequently, our viewpoint is in line with the social constructionist viewpoint, according to which "reality" is neither objective nor exterior, but rather socially constructed and is given meaning by people through their interactions. Moreover, according to social constructionism, knowledge is co-created, and it is therefore important to value the way people make meaning of their experience (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

3.2 Research Approach

Within business research, ways of reducing complexity and developing theories can differ among different sorts of reasoning (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Different approaches are used to link research and theory, namely deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Given that our approach to researching the phenomenon of in-housing and outsourcing of marketing and brand management revolves around the collection and analysis of data to arrive at new conclusions, we deemed inductive reasoning most suitable for our research, as this approach aims to bring about underlying principles or theories by seeking patterns embedded within data (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Similarly,

within our research we view and compare multiple instances of the phenomenon in an attempt to induce underlying principles or theories, as opposed to testing through data whether and how already theories or ideas may be applicable in a specific context, as would be the case within deductive research (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Moreover, in contrast to abductive reasoning, in which observations or examples are linked to a theory through plausible interpretation (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021), within our research, the generated theory is constructed from the observation of the collected data, rather than being imposed on data from a pre-existing theory. Hereby, we are taking a "bottom-up" approach to generating theoretical understanding (Greener, 2011).

3.3 Research Strategy

In recent years, the question whether to in-house or outsource marketing and brand management functions has gained interest among brand managers and trade journalists. However, in academia, the field of in-housing and outsourcing of marketing and brand management is largely untrodden terrain that is yet to be fully explored. This exploration asks for profound insights into different perspectives, strategies, and experiences. In line with our epistemological and ontological views, as presented above (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021), and to provide us with the necessary data to achieve the aim of our master thesis, our research employs a qualitative method of data collection. This allows for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of specific processes, decisions, meanings and qualities that cannot be explained through numerical means (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This makes the process of data collection an “interactive and interpretive process” (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021, p. 189). As our research is concerned with subjective perspectives it is crucial to capture the individuals' experiences, viewpoints, arguments, and opinions, entailing detailed descriptions and elaborations of these very qualities. Consequently, a quantitative research approach, focussed on statistical correlations and quantifications would not enable us to obtain the in-depth insights necessary to reflect upon and answer our research question (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).

3.4 Data Collection Method

When conducting qualitative research, there are several techniques and methods of empirical data collection (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2022). Due to the aim of the research and the interest in gaining an understanding of the perspectives of different companies and external agencies, qualitative interviews were considered most appropriate, enabling us to understand their viewpoint and reasons for holding this particular viewpoint (Easterby-Smith et al. 2022). Based on the necessity for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of in-housing and outsourcing of brand building, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for data collection, as it allows the interviewee to give in-depth responses about their experiences and understandings and engage in open discussions while allowing the interviewer to assist them in exploring their own beliefs (Easterby-Smith et al. 2022; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews also allow for gathering primary data on the interviewee's behaviours, attitudes, norms, beliefs and values (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Moreover, this type of synchronous collection of data “provide[s] opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation” (Tracy, 2020, cited in Easterby-Smith et al. 2021, p. 194). Moreover, this chosen method eliminates the potential for participants to be influenced by other participants’ opinions and experiences on the researched phenomenon, as can be the case with focus groups (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Nevertheless, we acknowledge our influence and role as interviewers in co-creating knowledge, resulting in a co-constructed interview between the interviewer and interviewee.

The semi-structure of the interviews allows for flexibility regarding the order and manner in which the predetermined questions and topics are discussed, as well as the introduction of new ideas and follow-up questions (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). The technique of laddering was employed, which, as discussed in Easterby-Smith et al. (2021), enables for a more in-depth knowledge about the interviewees’ views. Both the techniques of laddering up and laddering down were used. Whereas laddering up can uncover the values underlying the statements of respondents through asking “why” questions subsequent to a statement, laddering down can assist in obtaining examples and illustrations for the previously stated (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

Simultaneously, the semi-structure keeps the discussion on-topic and keeps the interview from moving too far off topic (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).

Interview guides

Prior to conducting the interviews, we developed interview guides to create an orientational structure, as presented in appendix 1. In light of the relatively loose format of semi-structured interviews, the usage of an interview guide, listing topics and corresponding questions, served as a useful tool (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). However, the individual follow-up questions are not listed in the interview guides, as these were posed in reaction to individual statements made during the interviews. The interview guide for the interviews investigating the company perspectives consisted of two overarching topics: (1) General understanding of how the company approaches insourcing and outsourcing, and (2) Challenges and strategies for balancing insourcing and outsourcing inside the company. This division provided a clear structure in the interview for both the interviewee and the interviewer. The first part of the interview focused on gaining an understanding of the company's approach to insourcing and outsourcing, whereas the second part of the interview built upon this by discussing the challenges of insourcing and outsourcing as well as the strategies for balancing insourcing and outsourcing inside a company. The first part of the interview provides a basis for a clearer understanding of the provided answers by the interviewee in the second part of the interview. The interview guide for the interviews with the external agencies also consisted of two overarching topics: (1) General understanding of differentiation between in-house agencies and external agencies, and (2) The role of the external agency within marketing and brand management. The interview guides were shared with all interviewees prior to the interview to enable participants to prepare for the interview and familiarise themselves with the topic and aim of our research. Whilst this ensured the participants were well prepared for the interview, as they were able to read into the interview guide they may have been able to prepare for the interview and give predetermined answers. Consequently, it is important to note that cannot completely rule out the possibility of altered or untruthful responses.

Conducting the interviews

We conducted 10 mediated interviews with managers and executives with functions closely related to marketing and brand management from international companies based in the Nordic countries. Moreover, we conducted 2 mediated interviews with creative directors from external agencies based in Nordic countries. The interviews were conducted online through digital video communication platforms, as further discussed in the following chapter. It may be argued that mediated interviews lack the immediacy of contextualization, depth, and non-verbal communication of face-to-face interviews, due to the often perceived distance experienced with online communication (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Efforts were made to overcome this by starting each conversation with casual small talk and a personal question that allowed for a comfortable and fluid discussion, comparable to in-person interviews. Moreover, efforts were made to create a comfortable and neutral interview setup, to allow the respondents to freely elaborate on their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. To not influence the interviewees' responses efforts were made to disclose our personal opinions and positionality from the respondents.

The interviews ranged from 35 to 60 minutes and were held in English, which is the common language spoken by all parties involved. The interviewees were informed about the language of conversation prior to the interview. We conducted the interviews together and alternated in asking questions. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) argue that the presence of more than one researcher during the interview can help create a more pleasant atmosphere for the interviewee, facilitating more sincere, open and honest responses and statements. The researcher's mutual interviewing role was explained to the interviewees prior to the start of the interview and remained the same for all interviews.

Recording the interviews

Due to the explorative nature of the study and the semi-structure of the interviews, the recording of the entire interaction is of high importance (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Consequently, all interviews were recorded in audio form, for which permission was obtained from each participant prior to the start of the interview. The recordings enhanced the listening process and not only simplified the transcription process but also helped ensure that transcriptions were accurate. Moreover, the recordings allowed for repeated listening of the interview, allowing us to ensure no aspects or details were potentially overlooked during the interview. Additionally, the

recordings helped provide an unbiased account of the interview (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). We used otter.ai, an artificial intelligence based programme, to automatically transcribe the interviews. Thereafter, we listened back to each interview to correct inaccuracies that occurred during the auto-transcription.

3.5 Sampling

Before planning and conducting the interviews, an illustrative subset was selected from a larger population to be investigated, commonly referred to as a sample (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). There are two different forms of sampling designs, namely probability sampling, where every member of the population is equally likely to be selected, and non-probability sampling, which does not guarantee equal or known chances of selection (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Due to the nature of our research, we deemed a non-probability sampling design most useful. Purposive sampling was chosen, in which “interviewees may be selected purposively on the basis of their likely ability to contribute to theoretical understanding of a subject” (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022, p. 391). We defined our sample as managers and executives with functions closely related to marketing and brand management, including senior managers, directors and department leaders from the areas of marketing and branding. We specifically aimed at individuals working with the global brand strategy, as opposed to a regional brand manager. We have narrowed our focus to multinational brands with headquarters in the Nordic countries, as we considered having the company's headquarters in proximity to enhance the likelihood of accessing the global brand decision-maker. Consequently, we conducted 10 interviews with 13 individuals from 10 companies from 10 different industries, as specified in Table 1. Additionally, we interviewed 2 representatives from external agencies.

Name	Position	Company name	Industry
Kevin Lynch	Creative Director	Oatly	Food & Beverage
Miguel Vara	Senior Communications Strategist	LEGO	Toys & Entertainment

Signe Skovgard Prehn	Head of Brand	Flying Tiger	Retail
Anonymous	Global Marketing Communications	Polestar	Automotive
Anonymous	Global Marketing Communications	Polestar	Automotive
Anonymous	Brand & Marketing	Polestar	Automotive
Erik Catton	Corporate Brand Strategy and Positioning Manager	A.P. Møller – Maersk	Shipping & Logistics
Anonymous	Marketing Professional	Ericsson	Telecommunications & Information Technology
Anonymous	Global Brand Manager	Company A	Jewellery Retail
Anonymous	Head of Brand	Company B	Financial Services
Maria Rifaut	Group Brand Manager & Campaign Manager	Trelleborg	Engineering & Manufacturing
Carolina Pozzolini	Director Brand Communications	Vattenfall	Energy
Anonymous	Brand Manager	Vattenfall	Energy
Anonymous	Creative Director	Agency A	Advertising
David Aronson	Creative Director	ANR+1	Advertising

Table 1: Overview of companies

This research investigates a phenomenon that has yet to be clearly defined and researched. We understand that there is no holistic modern understanding of this phenomenon and, as previously illustrated by the example of the three blind men, recognise the existence of a wide variety of different understandings, perspectives and experiences. Therefore, we strived for as many interviews as possible, whilst taking the time scope of our research into consideration, to have the highest number of different descriptions of the phenomenon of study. Whilst more interviews could have potentially increased our understanding of the different perspectives on the phenomenon, during our final interviews we increasingly reached saturation.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the conduction of the interviews, the data collected as audio recordings was transcribed into written text using Airgram. The transcripts were read through to correct any potential mistakes that occurred in the transcription to ensure an accurate transcription of the interviews, before analysing the data. To ensure the data is accurately analysed and interpreted, the analysis of semi-structured interviews requires a systematic and rigorous approach. The systematic process as suggested by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) was used to analyse the empirical material to ensure the data was analysed and interpreted in an accurate manner. This process consists of three activities, namely sorting, reducing, and arguing. Applying this process to the data gathered from this study, we first reread all the transcripts of the interviews to familiarise ourselves with the responses of the participants. Subsequently, we engaged in the sorting activity, which is concerned with familiarising oneself with the data. Thereafter, we started the process of coding (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Easterby-Smith et al.,(2021) argue codes to be a useful tool for connecting disorganised and overwhelming data with more structured categories, which is commonly created by grouping codes that share similar or related features. The process of coding consisted of two sorts of coding. First, descriptive codes were used to group the empirical material, helping with the organisation of the data. This is commonly defined as open coding. After ascribing open codes, these descriptive codes were organised and merged into labels for more general insights, defined as focused coding. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) argue that “the process of sorting frequently creates too many avenues for future analysis”. Consequently,

we reduced the empirical material to a more manageable quantity during the next step, whilst ensuring the overall picture of the data was not ignored. We selected categories based upon their ability to answer the research questions, defined as categorical reduction (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This type of reduction helped limit the empirical material to the most relevant findings for answering the research questions. This resulted in several overarching themes which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, this was followed by the arguing phase, in which the collected results were articulated and abstracted in such a manner that theoretical concepts based on the collected material could be developed (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). For the presentation of the findings, each theme was supported by verbatim quotes from participants.

3.7 Quality of Data

The adopted approach acknowledges our role as researchers and the role of the participant in co-creating knowledge. As with all qualitative research approaches, the data is susceptible to interpretation. To guarantee the trustworthiness and quality of our research, it is crucial that we are transparent and reflect critically on our research process and findings (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Whereas validity and reliability are most commonly used and highly relevant for research of quantitative nature, they are frequently considered inapplicable for research of qualitative nature (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Therefore, alternative concepts to establish and assess the quality of qualitative research have been introduced, such as by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who have proposed the notion of trustworthiness as a criterion for evaluating qualitative studies, introducing four criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We have chosen to employ these original and widely accepted criteria to demonstrate the trustworthiness of our study.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is concerned with how adequate the researcher presents the perceptions and beliefs of participants of the research (Tobin & Begley, 2004). To enhance the credibility of our research, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), we have offered the participants of our study the opportunity to review an account of our findings through “member checks”, also referred to as “respondent validation” (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). This technique, regarded as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314), assisted us in

ensuring an accurate correspondence between the perspectives and experiences of the interviewees and our findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Additionally, as argued by Lincoln and Guba “The fact that any one team member is kept more or less “honest” by other team members adds to the probability that findings will be found to be credible” (1985, p. 307). We both have been involved in the analysis of the data, enhancing the credibility of our research. Moreover, during the interviews, we made use of explanatory probing questions and affirmative questions, as a way to validate our interpretations of the answers given by the interviewees (Easterby- Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

3.7.2 Dependability

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) argue that *dependability*, which deals with the question of whether findings are likely to apply to other times, parallels the quantitative research criteria of reliability, which is concerned with the repeatability of the study. To achieve dependability, researchers are responsible to ensure that their research process is logical, traceable, and documented (Schwandt, 2001). To achieve a high degree of dependability of our research, we sought to document the complete research process, research design, and the decisions made, in detail (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Moreover, we aimed to present explicit arguments and motivations for any methodological choices made throughout the study. Additionally, we shared a copy of the interview guide with all interviewees prior to the interviews, which according to Bell, Bryman and Harley, “can help strengthen the dependability of the research” (2022, p.430).

3.7.3 Transferability

Easterby-Smith et al. define *transferability* as “the extent to which observations or theories derived in one context can be applicable to other contexts” (2021, p.141). As discussed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2021), qualitative research typically aims at internal, rather than statistical generalisability. Therefore, qualitative research often solely explains what has been researched within a particular context. Hence, given the qualitative nature of our study, it is essential for the results to be understood in the context in which they are obtained. Thus, we have sought to present a transparent and adequate account of the context in which this research has taken place and a clear description of our research approach, to facilitate understanding the context of this

study. This enables other researchers to make judgments about the transferability of the findings from this study to different settings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with “establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination but are clearly derived from the data” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p.392). We recognise that total objectivity in business research is impossible (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the influence of a relativist and constructionist perspective, the study is bound to remain subjective by nature. Consequently, in analysing the empirical material of this study, our personal interpretation and background knowledge may have influenced our findings. However, we have strived to maintain objectivity and to prevent personal values or theoretical inclinations from influencing the research and the findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). By outlining the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices that were made throughout the course of the research and discussing the potential influences on our research and findings, we have attempted to present a clear insight into how and why specific decisions were made (Koch, 1994) and how conclusions and interpretations were arrived at.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics is a fundamental aspect of empirical research in which researchers are required to navigate a variety of considerations to ensure that the study is carried out in a way that ensure the protection of the participants as well as the integrity of the research community (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). These ethical considerations include the privacy and dignity of participants, avoiding harm and deception, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, communicating honestly and transparently, and obtaining informed consent (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

In striving to take all ethical considerations into account, we provided each interviewee with an interview guide at least one day prior to the interview, outlining our research objectives and questions. At the beginning of the interview, all interview participants were once again informed about the nature and aim of our research and the involvement of other companies in the research. Moreover, at the beginning of the interview, we asked the participants for consent to record the

conversation in audio form, explaining the motives for recording and assuring them of the confidential treatment of the recordings and transcripts. Additionally, we ensured them that the data would solely be used for the purpose of our thesis. Moreover, we informed the participants about their opportunity to anonymise their identity and the name of the company and about their right to withdraw their participation in our research, certain answers or information, at any time before the publication of the final thesis. Additionally, all participants were offered the opportunity to review the manuscript of the thesis, to ensure an adequate representation of their responses and to give them the possibility to rectify any errors or aspects they considered to be misinterpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After the interviews, we shared the manuscript of our analysis with all participants. Additionally, we shared an information and consent form, in which participants could confirm the voluntary nature of the interview and choose whether to remain anonymous in the publication of our thesis or not.

3.9 Limitations

We strive for maximum transparency with the detailed exposition of our research design. Therefore, it is important to highlight the several limitations that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of our study. Firstly, whilst all interviews have been conducted in English, both the researchers and the vast majority of the participants of the study are not native speakers in English. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility of this matter affecting the answers provided during the interviews as well as our interpretations of these answers. Moreover, whilst the fact that we had interviews with participants that work in different roles within companies has provided us with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of different perspectives, the different roles within the company may have resulted in participants having different levels of knowledge regarding the in-housing and outsourcing of marketing and brand management within the company they work for. Therefore, it is difficult to thoroughly compare different perspectives and to fully ensure that the answers of the participants have given us an adequate picture of the in-housing and sourcing of marketing and brand management within the companies. It is important to take these different perspectives into consideration when interpreting the findings of our study. Additionally, our research has only been conducted among people working for large, internationally operating companies. This is important to take into consideration when interpreting the findings of our study. Moreover, the conducted interviews

varied in duration due to the different amounts of time the participants could offer us. Consequently, we may have gotten more in-depth answers during certain interviews as opposed to other interviews which may have potentially remained rather on the surface. Whilst we have carefully constructed our interview guides to ensure all key topics were discussed during all interviews, the potential influence of the duration of the interviews should be taken into consideration. Finally, whilst we have interviewed employees from 10 different companies, the number of interviews conducted with employees from external agencies was limited to 2 due to the additional perspective they could provide to our findings. Therefore, the perspective of the companies, and consequently client-side of in-housing and outsourcing of marketing and brand management, is highly likely to have had a more extensive influence on our results, as opposed to the external agency perspective.

4 Empirical Findings

To provide a clear understanding of the wide variety of perceptions of the phenomenon of study, the following provides an overview of the different companies we interviewed and the models they operate. Furthermore, we present the company-individual motives to insource and outsource. Hereby, we aim to facilitate an understanding of what the following analysis is based upon. It is important to note, that whilst some of the companies in this study have clearly defined and formulated an in-house agency, many companies do not officially use the label ‘in-house agency’. However, over the course of the interviews, it became clear that many companies did consider their in-house capabilities to be an in-house agency of some sort. Therefore, in our findings, all companies who have argued that their in-house capabilities are an in-house agency or similar to an in-house agency are considered to have an in-house agency. It is further to be noted that this overview consequently excludes the external agencies we interviewed. However, the external agency perspective will be an integral part of the analysis following this overview, where it will serve as an outside perspective on our findings.

4.1 Oatly

Unconventionally named the “Oatly Department of Mind Control” (ODMC), Oatly's in-house agency operates with an equally unconventional approach, leveraging its flexible team structure and diverse expertise to handle various marketing and brand management functions internally. According to Kevin Lynch, the company has both embraced and avoided the label "in-house agency" in the past. By adopting an unusual title, the ODMC strives to avoid predefined roles and aims to have more influence within the organisation:

“On one hand, okay, it's funny and kind of weird but I think on the other hand, breaking away from the sort of titles, I think, sometimes helps you break away from expectations or boxes that people would typically put you in. So if we called ourselves the Creative Department or the Marketing Department or some sort of nomenclature that people are more used to, I think that would keep us from probably having some of the influence that we have elsewhere in the organisation versus the Department of Mind Control, you're like “I don't know where those people belong. Do you want to be in this project? Sure, you

can be in this project because I don't know otherwise.” I mean, really, it sounds super simple, but I do think that anytime you have the opportunity to kind of reframe yourself by breaking away from expectations through naming or whatever structure that might be, you can open up a lot of opportunities that you wouldn't otherwise see.”

The agency comprises approximately 50 professionals with diverse roles, including communications, social media, media planning, PR, events, writers, art directors, designers, project managers, production managers, and community managers. Moreover it takes responsibility for brand strategic concerns, such as positioning and brand development. While Oatly handles most of its marketing and brand management functions in-house, certain tasks are outsourced, such as media buying, public relations in certain markets, and production for larger film projects. External agencies play a supportive role in collaborating with Oatly to build and reinforce the Oatly brand, described by Kevin Lynch as "more hands than heads." Lynch emphasises the importance of finding partners who understand the brand and suggests maintaining long-term relationships with them. He views the Oatly brand as primarily cultivated internally, with external agencies sporadically being integrated in recent years as the company has expanded. External agencies, however, have no inherent stake or ownership in the brand. External partners, as well as new colleagues are expected to comprehend and respect the established brand identity, appreciating its continuity rather than seeking radical changes. Despite evolving over time, both internally and externally, Oatly values consistency and aims to preserve the distinctive qualities that have contributed to its success.

“We're looking at it more from an execution standpoint than from a “start from scratch, help us figure out who we are, what we want to say.”

Kevin Lynch defines the "perfect balance" between in-housing and outsourcing as a context- and company-specific alignment between internal and external contributions, determined by the strength of their in-house resources and their awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses on the one hand, and the capabilities and effectiveness of external agencies or partners on the other hand. Oatly's approach emphasises evaluating internal capacities and finding suitable external collaborators to optimise their brand development.

4.1.1 Oatly: reasons to in-house

A main driver for Oatly's decision to go in-house is the control and articulation of the brand, which they believe can be better achieved through an in-house agency.

“And so I think if you really kind of got into the root driver of why we structure ourselves the way we do, a lot of it's, frankly, about control, it wasn't born out of cost. It was born out of sort of creative control and just making sure that the more things we can kind of touch or the more places we're coming to life, the better off they would be if we kind of took full control of that experience.”

The in-house structuring further allows for shorter timelines, efficient communication within the company, and flexibility in tailoring teams and projects according to specific needs, while saving cost compared to when the same task is outsourced to an external agency. By having an in-house agency, Oatly can ensure a dedicated group of individuals who are familiar with the brand and its products, thus ensuring consistency.

“So from a company perspective, you know, you want to save some money. You can get really good talents to kind of come internally here and then you're probably almost always going to have shorter timelines. People are going to know who to talk to, they're going to know the products better. You don't have to onboard people as much as you would if you're in a typical agency relationship where the turnover is a bit bigger than it would be in house.”

“So as you hear a lot of different disciplines and so then depending on if a project comes in, we're a super flexible bunch. ... So when a project comes in, it's not like we go, cool, this is our set process, these are the people we involve. A lot of it is sort of taking that step back, looking at what's needed, what's the potential, and then kind of pulling together a tailored team.”

4.1.2 Oatly: reasons to outsource

Kevin Lynch generally acknowledges objectivity and creativity as the most frequent drivers of companies' outsourcing decisions. However, while underscoring the intrinsic challenges associated with maintaining objectivity when assessing the own brand image, Lynch emphasises the role of talent and corporate culture in counteracting "home blindness" to one's own brand, as well as the changing allocation of creative talent.

"The advantages of an external partner is really creativity and objectivity. To me, those were always kind of the two most meaningful things. ... Looking at it from a company's perspective, if I wanted good creativity ten years ago, I had to go to an agency. And now I can probably give them a good creative mind, a better life, more sort of a bigger breadth of different things to work on, which is always a big complaint of creatives going in house. ... I think we are exceptional in letting creativity drive the organization, but I do think a lot of other organizations are going "it's good to have these creative people around" and so there's maybe a little bit of a better stage for creative folks to play in house."

"... I don't think companies are very good at being objective about their own image. I do think that we all drink our own Kool Aid and I think it negatively affects us. And that's an overgeneralization. But it's true here, it's true at any other in-house place that I know of. ... But the best people who I've worked with have been able to do that."

While external agencies may generally offer valuable perspectives, Lynch emphasises the importance of acknowledging that external agencies may, too, be biased, particularly if driven by the pursuit of fame and awards. Companies must therefore exercise caution and evaluate the objectivity and alignment of external agencies with their goals and values.

In practice, Oatly's decision to outsource stems from the recognition that some resources, such as film production, do not require continuous access. By refraining from in-house film production, Oatly can allocate their internal resources more efficiently, focusing on core competencies while relying on external partners when the need arises. Kevin Lynch further acknowledges the oscillating nature of their internal capacity to fully handle public relations.

They concede that certain aspects, such as maintaining relevant contacts and cultural insights across all markets, may fall short within their internal purview. For media buying, while emphasising the importance of brand knowledge in media planning, the company acknowledges that external partners, with their expertise and understanding of diverse markets, are better positioned to navigate the intricacies associated with multiple markets. Moreover, Lynch recognizes that entrusting external media agencies with the negotiation of terms can potentially yield more favourable outcomes in securing advantageous pricing arrangements.

“I think there's creative opportunities that come out of really knowing the media space with Oatly in mind. We benefited from that smaller scale. What we're finding now is when we have cross market campaigns or global campaigns, it just doesn't make sense to [in-house media] as much. ... If we've got a big global media partner and if they're negotiating some things across the board with some of the media vendors that have properties in multiple markets, it's just a much smarter, more responsible way to go.”

4.2 LEGO

With a team of more than 500 people located in Denmark, England and the United States of America, LEGO operates the largest in-house agency out of the companies in our study, accounting for the day-to-day execution and operational aspects of marketing communications, from communications strategy, marketing analytics and creative development to graphic design and production for all markets. As suggested by Miguel Vara, Senior Marketing Communications Strategist at “Our LEGO Agency” (OLA), as the in-house agency is referred to, the team develops and executes promotional campaigns, including traditional advertising and internal communications, and designs assets for the website and catalogues: *“For 99% of the campaigns we create, it's all done in house, that is my understanding.”* It further collaborates with the product departments to define design principles for Lego franchises, acting as a design guardian. While OLA takes charge of the execution, the marketing and branding departments provide input on brand strategy, positioning, and content requirements. However, there are brand strategists at OLA working in close tandem with the respective offices. Certain aspects of production, however, such as film direction or post-production, remain outsourced. Additionally, OLA

occasionally collaborates with specialised external agencies for niche audiences or passion points.

Miguel Vara believes that the "perfect balance" involves assembling the best team to tackle challenges. With a large internal workforce possessing diverse skills, the company strives to utilise its in-house talent. However, acknowledging the occasional need for specialised expertise, Miguel Vara is receptive to working with external partners when the project demands it, allowing for a flexible balance between internal and external contributions. Consequently, the balance varies from project to project. The brand marketing team holds significant influence, guiding the expression of the LEGO brand and briefing the LEGO agency.

4.2.1 LEGO: reasons to in-house

LEGO's decision to establish an in-house agency may be attributed to two primary factors. Firstly, cost efficiencies play a significant role, as traditional external agencies often bear substantial overhead costs, including costs for unutilized hours. By insourcing, organisations can mitigate such expenses and optimise resource allocation. Secondly, the strategic alignment of internal teams with the overarching objectives of the company is widely regarded as an astute business tactic that fosters a collective commitment to the organisation's best interests, thereby enhancing the efficacy of brand communications.

"You always have the same interests across the organisation ... there's a common shared goal, and I think that creates the right environment for the best work possible. ... There's something about just having a Lego email at the back, having the same email signature, just being a click away, the possibility to email them on teams so easily, things like that just remove the barrier and do turn that person into a colleague."

Additionally, Miguel Vara highlights the advantage of shared knowledge and comprehension of the company's long-term strategy as a key advantage. The internal structure provides advantages such as enhanced data access, facilitated communication, and deeper business insights. Unlike external agencies that rely on information shared by clients, internal teams have the opportunity to access a wider range of data, engage in meaningful conversations, and obtain valuable knowledge about the business. This environment fosters openness, transparency, and greater

accessibility to information, which are typically unavailable in external agency setups. Consequently, Vara argues that the internal structure helps foster consistency and a holistic approach to campaign execution. This environment encourages broader considerations of channels, allowing for the creation of integrated campaigns that extend beyond individual channels.

“Whereas if you look in the wild and look at what brands are doing, sometimes you get content and creative that feels extremely fragmented and disconnected from each other. Probably has to do with the fragmentation of teams creating those assets.”

OLA is further argued to both stem from and contribute to a corporate culture that has creativity at its core. The agency recognises the significance of hiring individuals who not only fit into the existing culture but also bring valuable additions to it, emphasising the key role of HR in the process. Moreover, the influence of the creative culture extends beyond OLA itself and infuses the organisation as a whole.

“And I think when we bring that into meetings with colleagues that probably have less creative roles, it is inspiring to see and kind of, it does inspire them to create better creative work, I think. ... The fact that we're an in-house agency, we're all colleagues, creates more opportunities to engage, to liaise, to interact, and to work together. I guess that creativity permeates more.”

The collective belief within LEGO is that the organisation's corporate culture is intrinsically linked to the attainment of superior outcomes.

“I think anyone you would ask within Lego as a whole would agree to the fact that our corporate culture leads to better outcomes. And that's certainly true of the agency as well.”

4.2.2 LEGO: reasons to outsource

Miguel Vara considers capabilities and expertise as decisive factors in the make-or-buy decision. While usually relying on internal resources, the company acknowledges the occasional need for specific knowledge or skills only available outside of the company. The decision however only affects singular projects.

While seeing the advantages of an in-house agency outweigh the disadvantages, the company acknowledges the risk of “home blindness” when losing the outside perspective, particularly as the in-house agency is located in the rural headquarters of LEGO.

“And especially if you're in Billund probably, and you're kind of in a pocket of the world that is like 99% LEGO. It's easy to have that blindness, right. ... And I see that with a lot of conversations with marketers as well, where they kind of mix the market with the marketer. ... I think it's just our job, especially as strategists, to keep our mind open, to see who we work with, who we work for, who the campaigns are for, and try to remain honest. And know that not everyone loves LEGO as much as we love LEGO. So data helps us do that. Research helps us do that. Very weird ways of doing research help us do that.”

However, it is argued that, on the other hand, external agencies may well be biased. External agencies can be influenced by their location, leading to a limited perspective on markets and trends outside their immediate surroundings. Additionally, an award-oriented approach may prioritise personal recognition over serving the business's objectives, which is not the case within internal agencies, where campaigns “serve the business 100%.” Consequently, the importance of hiring the right talent is further emphasised.

“The only potential negative is potential complacency that comes with knowing that if you don't hire the best people, then not the best work might get made. Luckily, I don't feel that's the case at Lego Agency ... But if we're talking about internal agencies as a structure, as a whole, I feel like that's probably the biggest challenge they could face.”

Lastly, while acknowledging the long-term cost savings of in-housing, Miguel Vara points out the high initial costs of staffing up an in-house team.

“It probably saves money in the long term, but the short term investment that in-housing requires ... [is] probably significant because you suddenly need to upstaff however many hundred people. And I don't know that many companies are capable to do that very quickly. Maybe it'll be a gradual thing and we'll start in-housing certain capabilities and grow from there.”

4.3 Flying Tiger

Flying Tiger's in-house agency is constituted as a marketing department with enhanced capabilities.

“I think that in general, when you talk about an in-house agency, I would say that it is when you in-house the functions that you would usually go to a traditional advertising agency to buy or maybe a media agency. ... I always talk about it like there is strategy and then creative development and then of course production. In a traditional advertising agency, you would find these three functions and buy them.”

Consequently, the in-house agency consists of around 25 individuals, covering campaign planning, creative development, graphic design, copywriting, photography, SEO, influencer management, digital ad planning and more. It is responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies and campaigns internally and collaborates closely with multiple departments, including packaging, retail, legal, and the senior leadership team, to ensure creative packaging design, internal campaign implementation, legal compliance, and alignment with business goals. The closest collaboration, however, is between the in-house agency and the brand department, headed by Signe Skovgård Prehn:

“So the marketing in-house agency and my brand team, I would say we are not the same, but we sit in the same room. We are kind of the same, but my team can also be taken out of that context and then put somewhere else.”

- Signe Skovgård Prehn, Flying Tiger

The brand team is involved in developing strategic solutions and creative ideas based on the briefings received from the senior leadership team. While most tasks are planned and executed internally, Flying Tiger still collaborates with an external agency based in Vietnam by outsourcing “the ‘less creative’ part of production,” including versioning, final artwork, photo and video editing. Additionally, in recognition of its limitations during peak seasons, such as Halloween and Christmas, where the workload surpasses the capacity of their existing workforce, Flying Tiger occasionally outsources operational tasks to external agencies, as the influx of work during these periods necessitates external support. However, Flying Tiger, formerly simply called Tiger, has made drastic efforts to insource marketing and brand management functions.

“And that has changed a lot in the last three, four years because the decision was made to in-house more for a range of reasons. ... When we got our new name, Flying Tiger Copenhagen, ... that was an external agency who came up with that name and the logo as it is today. And the corporate visual identity that was in 2018, that was bought externally. And right now, it feels really strange that it was that way, because today we would have always done it in house. ...”

While “three or four years ago” control over the brand identity was “almost out of [the company’s hands,” Flying Tiger is now in full control of the brand, using externals solely as supporting entities in operational tasks. However, in case of drastic innovations, such as the introduction of a loyalty programme, Flying Tiger would still consult a marketing strategy consultancy for their specific expertise. Consequently, Flying Tigers' "perfect balance" involves in-housing the development part of their operations, leveraging their internal capabilities, and relying on external agencies either as supportive resources in execution or for scoping and planning innovative projects that require specialised expertise.

4.3.1 Flying Tiger: reasons to in-house

Flying Tiger’s primary reason to establish an in-house agency was the need for control and consistent brand delivery across all markets, arising from the internationalisation and growth of the company. As a consequence of the increasing scale of operations, a further factor driving the

decision to go in-house is the cost factor. Signe Skovgard Prehn recognizes that if they were to rely solely on external agencies for all their needs, the associated expenses would be substantial, given the scale of the company's operations. Consequently, in-housing is regarded as a way of saving cost, while simultaneously fostering a dynamic and collaborative work environment, characterised by short communication lines.

"It was more like a small brand in seven, eight countries. That was okay, that it was a little bit organic and had a different expression in other countries, but at a certain point we were so large that someone needed to... we needed to get a grip of what's going on with the brand. ... Because being in 30 markets, it's just crucial that everything comes from one place. ... And if we were to do everything that's going on in a company like our size, then our budget for external agencies, it would be very large. ... And we meet each other every day by the coffee machine and talk about like "how is it going with the sustainability campaign?" ... We have a dialogue going on all the time and it's not like we go somewhere and brief and say, this is our problem right now, can you help us solve that? ... It's a much more dynamic way. We can constantly be in dialogue on how we're handling different things. And then whenever we agree on something and we produce something, it goes out to all 30 markets from central hold."

Closely connected to the short communication lines, Signe Skovgard Prehn emphasises the advantage of the shared knowledge and understanding of the company's long-term strategy. This knowledge allows for the consistent incorporation of strategic considerations into department-individual projects. In contrast, external agencies often lack the comprehensive understanding of the business's complexity and long-term goals, making it challenging for them to align their solutions with the broader strategic vision.

"It's not like we have a deadline next month for this project, it's an ongoing project. We are not going to solve [a] brand awareness problem in one campaign. It needs to be something that we consider all the time. ... So you can say in that way the priorities from the senior leadership team go directly into all the projects, which wouldn't happen if we briefed someone externally."

Interestingly, while not a primary factor, Signe Skovgard Prehn further acknowledges that the cost of hiring external agencies could lead to different prioritisation decisions, potentially compromising purpose-driven campaigns, such as the company's LGBTQ+ pride campaign, due to budget constraints. Thus, the company's in-house capabilities allow for a more efficient allocation of resources and the prioritisation of projects without separate budget limitations.

4.3.2 Flying Tiger: reasons to outsource

While generally regarding the deep knowledge of the brand and company as an advantage of an in-house agency, Signe Skovgard Prehn acknowledges the risk of losing an important outside perspective, both on the brand itself and the general market development, when working in-house. Consequently, the ability to perceive the brand "from a clearer place" is an advantage associated with external agencies.

"We all know what we are talking about when we're talking about certain issues ... It goes over the heads of the consumers because they don't have all that background knowledge that we have ..."

Flying Tiger counteracts 'home blindness' by using a brand tracking tool that provides monthly insights on brand metrics, as well as paying regular visits to trade fairs and industry events to remain abreast of evolving market trends.

"I guess it's just an ongoing task for all of us here working in the in-house agency and in my team to really make an effort to stay updated on what our competitors are doing."

Another advantage of external agencies, according to Signe Skovgard Prehn, is an increased level of creativity that is difficult to achieve in a corporation. External creative agencies are driven by the need to deliver highly creative work to win awards, maintain their relevance and attract new clients, consequently setting "the creative bar a little bit higher."

“We don't have that. And I think that's probably what we do here. It might not be potential award winning work, it's probably not, because that's not our ambition. Our ambition is to solve the problems that the organization or the business is facing with creative work. But we're not out there to win prizes. It's not important. It's important that our brand goes in the right direction and we take the right decisions in order to move the brand little by little in a dynamic way.”

Yet, according to Signe Skovgard Prehn, leaders of in-house agencies bear the crucial responsibility of actively cultivating and sustaining a high level of motivation within their teams, while simultaneously mitigating complacency. This proactive approach is essential to foster a perpetual drive towards producing creative outcomes.

Moreover, the effectiveness of external agencies is argued to lie in their ability to assemble a specialised team focused solely on resolving a particular project, a task that proves challenging within an organisation where multiple concurrent activities demand attention. In contrast, agencies can swiftly allocate the necessary resources to address the task at hand without the interruptions and diversions that internal teams may encounter. In practice, Flying Tiger's choice to engage in outsourcing is primarily driven by pragmatic considerations, such as insufficient internal capabilities in peak seasons, a lack of specific expertise or a lack of requirement for continuous access to certain resources, such as film production.

By outsourcing specific tasks to Vietnam, Flying Tiger further achieves cost savings in comparison to outsourcing to the Danish or European market, thus enhancing its financial efficiency.

4.4 Polestar

The case of Polestar serves as a further showcase example of the fluid transitions between traditional company departments and their conceptualisation as an in-house agency:

“The Brand & Marketing department at Polestar is the in-house agency, and our markets are in many ways our clients. We develop strategy for creative, produce content, create toolkits and overall ensure that there is brand consistency throughout all content and

campaigns at a global level. Additionally, we also consider our inhouse media team our clients since we work closely with them for our APM, online and direct efforts.”

Located in the company headquarters in Gothenburg, Sweden, the strength of Polestar’s in-house arrangement lies in the close cooperation of the different teams and departments combined under the label “in-house agency.” As a combined entity, the team is creating and executing marketing campaigns and brand guidelines. The in-house agency encloses a creative team, including creative directors, art directors, graphic designers, copywriters, producers, and project leaders, content creators and writers, among others. Further functions include CRM, digital marketing and web services, media, and marketing analytics. The difference to a regular marketing or brand management department, as well as from an external agency, accordingly lies in the amount of capabilities united under one roof.

“There are many organisations moving activities to their in-house marketing departments. What makes our in-house team successful is the extensive team of experts and talent, from brand to media experts, from copywriters to videographers. This is how we are able to create in-house what external agencies used to create for us, planning and execution of global marketing activities”

The novel designation as an in-house agency stems from the current absence of a retainer-based partnership with external agencies.

“We currently do not have a retainer with an external agency, but the process remains the same. Projects begin with a brief, and the project managers work closely together with the creative team to find creative solutions. The main difference is an added efficiency since we are all sitting under one roof and if an expertise is needed, they are just a few steps away.”

However, while Polestar strives to insource as many capabilities as possible, it acknowledges the need for external partners in certain projects where additional expertise, perspectives or resources are required, such as film production agencies and consultancy firms.

“Our ambition is to use our internal talent to do as much work in-house as possible. However, there can be projects where we recognize that an external resource is needed. This can at times be due to our resource availability, where we need to bring in external support to the team. Or, it can be a very specific brief, where we need an external specialist, a music supervisor for example.”

According to Polestar the perfect balance depends on the specific situation, emphasising the importance of finding the right balance between internal resources and outsourcing to effectively manage the workload and ensure timely execution. As Polestar’s brand identity and values are already well-established and maintaining a strong sense of ownership and responsibility is considered important, external agencies are currently not considered to have an influence on shaping the brand. However, what role an external agency will play in the future, and consequently where the balance will lie, may be subject to change. Polestar emphasises the trial nature of its current in-house setup, arguing that maintaining flexibility is crucial, rather than being rigid and sticking to a single approach. Recognising that the present direction may change and being self-aware of the organisation’s current and future capabilities, needs and direction is considered essential in establishing balance.

“The goal is to deliver the best possible work. And how we get there is not by having a strict process, but by remaining flexible and aware that what works for one project may not work for another one. If a brief requires external support, we are open for this. If we can tackle it internally, then that is what we do.”

Polestar argues that to establish a successful collaboration with any agency, trust and curiosity are considered essential. Polestar consequently emphasises the importance of finding the right partner who understands the brand while bringing new and challenging ideas to the table.

4.4.1 Polestar: reasons to in-house

While several factors have led to the decision of Polestar to build on its in-house team, this was primarily driven by how agencies interpreted the brand. The organisation at times felt there was a disconnect in understanding the values of Polestar and how this came across in the work. By bringing the work in-house the company could ensure consistent adherence to the brand at all

times. The company argued that this in turn had an effect on costs, as creating in-house with a strong tie to the brand became more efficient overall.

“There are obvious benefits to being an in-house agency, like costs, efficiency and flexibility. But, the biggest benefit is our ability to understand and creatively express the brand in a consistent manner. This understanding trickles down to a more efficient way of working, which in turn has an impact on costs. But, it all boils down to how do we best bring our brand to life and at this moment this is best done internally.”

Moreover, the design-driven mentality of the brand, and consequently the notion of getting “many creative minds” aboard, poses a key factor in the decision to in-house. Nourishing from the strength of a large in-house team, Polestar expresses confidence in its ability to generate and execute marketing ideas independently from external agencies.

“We are a design driven brand, with a strong brand strategy. And this brand obsession can at times be difficult to grasp for an external agency. Our team lives and breathes the brand. That brand understanding together with strong creative capabilities allows us to bring the brand to life in our marketing campaigns.”

As a young brand venturing into new territory, being closer to the brand and thus having a complete grasp of the brand's direction and essence is seen as a significant advantage over an external agency, that further leads to a shared passion and sense of responsibility for the company's success among all employees involved. This high level of immersion and shared enthusiasm is considered challenging to convey to an external agency.

“Since we are in many ways still a start-up, and one that is so brand focused, there are obvious benefits to creating as much work internally as possible. Every meeting, every encounter with a colleague, every problem tackled is a representation of Polestar's mindset and passion for the work we do. This is not something that is easy to translate, explain or grasp.”

Polestar highlights the time-consuming nature of the onboarding process of external agencies, involving multiple rounds of feedback and back-and-forth communication, which can prolong the process. They emphasise the need for speed and agility in the fast paced environment in

which the company operates. The quicker turnaround times and faster execution compared to working with external agencies are considered an important benefit and reason to bring tasks and responsibilities in house.

“Speed is crucial, not just in how fast we get the work done but this also comes down to how fast we make decisions, get sign-off on ideas or productions, or how quickly we can shift gears as conditions change. We are in a fast-paced environment, and sitting together on one floor enables us to move quickly when needed.”

A strong benefit of the in-house agency is considered the ability to closely collaborate between different teams. Polestar embraces a culture of approachability where anyone can freely discuss any topic or ask any question without hesitation. The close proximity and constant communication among employees is argued to remove trigger points and improve coordination. They further emphasise the advantage of proximity to the product, describing the direct access to information about the product.

“There is a strong sense of collaboration at Polestar. And an understanding that we are building this brand together. So although there are a lot of different departments, there is an openness and willingness to help each other. A product expert readily jumps in to support the campaign team. The legal team understands the creative aim and supports the idea that may be legally challenging. It is a very fluid process in this sense, not one hindered by department lines.”

Moreover, the company highlights the close proximity to results, numbers, and analytics as an advantage of the in-house agency. Being internally connected to these metrics allows them to make adjustments and optimisations during a campaign, providing them with the advantage of speed and the ability to make ad hoc adjustments.

Finally, the innovative and experimental spirit within the company is argued to facilitate the generation of bold and unconventional ideas. While acknowledging the creative strengths of external agencies, Polestar takes pride in the creativity of its in-house agency, rating its creative ability above par. Referring to a recent launch campaign for a new car model, Polestar claims:

“We are a bold brand, inherently prone to doing things differently. We push ourselves creatively as hard or maybe even harder than we would an external agency. This is how we ended up creating an eye-catching and refreshing car launch with 80,000 tulips. An idea that may seem unconventional, but it is very much Polestar.”

4.4.2 Polestar: reasons to outsource

Polestar's occasional decision to outsource to external agencies is mostly driven by the need for something different that goes beyond the capabilities or expertise of the in-house team. The lack of highly specific skills and expertise or the desire for an additional creative perspective are mentioned as important reasons to employ an external agency. Moreover, Polestar acknowledges that there may be situations where the in-house agency lacks the resources to handle a particular task or when they are overloaded with other responsibilities.

“We remain open and humble to the fact that, at times, external expertise is needed. This can be for time reasons, or we simply want to try something new and get a different perspective on something. That door is never closed. We look at what is best for each task and make decisions based on that.”

A major challenge of bringing tasks and responsibilities in-house is keeping the outside perspective in mind as a way of counteracting the tendency to become too immersed in the brand and lose objectivity. Polestar acknowledges the importance of thinking outside-in and considering the customers' perspective. Consequently, an important motive for the decision to outsource to external agencies is their ability to provide a fresh and valuable outside perspective. This external perspective is seen as a way to think outside the box and see beyond the confines of the company's internal perspective.

4.5 Maersk

Maersk operates a multiple agency setup, including both external agency partnerships and an in-house agency named “IMS.” The in-house agency is located in India and steered from inside the central marketing department. It handles marketing communications aspects, including

filming, editing, and content creation for the markets in Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific and South America. While IMS takes care of the execution and day-to-day operations, the strategic direction and overall strategy are guided by the marketing and branding departments within Maersk, who are responsible for providing IMS with input on brand strategy and positioning, as well as briefings on content and further executional needs:

“And I think the difference here is that we are really guiding that strategy discussion and the internal agency is pretty much just producing the content.”

Besides IMS, Maersk works with an external agency, based in Vietnam, that handles high-level brand communication, producing content for social media and other brand-related initiatives. Due to the close cooperation, Erik Catton, refers to the agency as an “internal external agency”, commenting:

“I think they are technically external, but they're very integrated into our systems and it's a long ongoing partnership, whereas the IMS team is technically part of Maersk.”

However, despite the additional capabilities provided by IMS and the internal external agency, Maersk engages an external advertising agency, for developing creative concepts and executing external brand campaigns.

“So it's almost like you're paying the external agency to come up with some of the big ideas on how it should be visually shown or executed. And then you have the internal agency doing the day to day execution of it after the fact.”

Maersk further collaborates with external agencies for specific purposes. For events, Maersk works with an event agency that assists in designing and organising various events. For media, an external media agency is responsible for media placement and buying, helping Maersk make informed decisions on advertising and reaching the target audience effectively.

The perfect balance, according to Erik Catton, lies in effectively managing the roles of the internal marketing and brand team, in-house agency, and external agency. Consequently, Maersk's approach emphasises leveraging the strengths of both internal and external resources to achieve their marketing goals.

4.5.1 Maersk: reasons to in-house

According to Erik Catton, the increased operational effectiveness and decreased cost are the main drivers of the company's decision to build and maintain its in-house agency. The integration of IMS into the company's operational systems has resulted in seamless communication and quick turnaround times. The inherent efficiency of the internal team allows for the production of substantial content volumes at a faster pace and lower cost compared to engaging external agencies. Consequently, the in-house agency model empowers Maersk with enhanced control and cost-effectiveness, particularly in regards to the day-to-day execution of tasks.

“And then, you know, again, where I came from, which was a huge, you know, automotive company that spends billions of dollars a year on marketing and advertising, ... using these huge external agencies to do everything. It was, I think, tough. Tough in the sense that I think that they provide a good strategy. But then the actual day to day execution wasn't ... there.”

The embeddedness of IMS within the company structure further facilitates a shared knowledge and mutual understanding of the brand expression, strategy and organisational direction, that is not naturally given when working with an external agency. In large organisations like Maersk, ensuring consistent adherence to brand guidelines can be challenging. However, with an internal agency, the company benefits from their deep knowledge of the brand, resulting in cohesive brand delivery across various touchpoints. Thus, the internal agency plays a crucial role in maintaining the brand's integrity and consistency.

“With branding in general, the only way you get people to use it and to understand is by repetition and consistency over time. And so that's another benefit to having internal agency because again, it's about the efficiency that they provide.”

4.5.2 Maersk: reasons to outsource

Despite the numerous advantages of in-housing, Catton simultaneously recognizes the value of outsourcing. Convenience emerges as a key driver, as external agencies can offer quick access to

additional resources without the need for extensive internal coordination. This convenience allows Maersk to leverage external expertise effectively while minimising internal staffing challenges, that often arise in larger corporations, and is further facilitated by the long-term cooperation with the external partners.

An additional reason for Maersk to outsource is the specific expertise and creativity provided by external agencies, particularly in regards to larger scale projects and campaigns, where Erik Catton values the “fresh ideas” brought forth by externals.

“I think at times, right, again, whenever we go out externally, it's because we need something that's, like, either new or very creative, or we need a strategy, insight from someone who's on the forefront of that. And I think that's where the external agency is needed as opposed to the internal agencies that can't provide that.”

While internal agencies possess a deep understanding of the company, Catton further highlights a potential risk of succumbing to internal biases and becoming entrenched in established mindsets. Engaging external agencies thus helps with introducing outside perspectives and strategic insights from industry experts who remain unencumbered by internal constraints.

“If you have an internal agency for too long, then they become a bit stale. They become too knowledgeable about how the company works and about maybe some of the mindset of the company, and they don't think outside of the box. And then when that happens, then it's kind of look the same for a long time, right. And I think that is actually, now that I think about that, that's probably the biggest disadvantage of an internal agency.”

4.6 Ericsson

Ericsson works both with external agencies and an in-house agency. Located in Europe and India, the in-house agency operates as a creative department that mainly, yet not exclusively, assists the internal marketing and communications departments in executing projects. This includes activities such as photography, video editing, graphic design, copywriting, digital services, social media, analytics, marketing automation, and project management. It further serves as an internal creative consultancy, engaging in brainstorming and discussion. While the

in-house agency handles a variety of tasks, its focus however tends to be on volume-based work and adapting content created by external agencies:

“So I think the challenge is that [the in-house agency] tends to get simpler tasks. They don't tend to get the sort of strategic, maybe super creative work. So it's more about, perhaps adapting what an external agency has created with us. So they might sort of recut the video, for example. They might not create the video.”

Larger-scale projects and strategic initiatives, such as the development of a new logo, brand positioning, or global campaigns are typically outsourced to external agencies specialised in strategic branding and creative campaign development. Although the in-house agency offers certain strategic capabilities, their main role is to support and assist rather than drive strategic projects. The interviewee questions the need for an involvement of the in-house agency in brand strategic concerns:

“I guess the big question really is, I'm just thinking, do they need to be driving the big strategic projects? Not necessarily. Maybe that isn't what's best in the end and maybe then we're in a good place because we can optimise all those valuable things they do, but those that are adaptations rather than the big picture strategy.”

It is, however, a long-term strategy to build up talent and skill, thus capabilities within the in-house agency:

“... in a dream situation, they should be more in a position to maybe challenge us as well because they're not sort of desperate for the job, if you know what I mean. So maybe they could push back on the brief and so on. That's also a strength, I think.”

Ericsson maintains collaborations with external agencies, actively involving them in many aspects of the company. This high involvement in shaping the brand leads to what is considered a process of co-creation. The interviewee argues that the in-house agency may be better suited for adaptive work, rather than major strategic work, which is where external agencies are involved. They perceive the current balance as favourable as it allows for leveraging the valuable

contributions of both the in-house agency and external resources, thereby obtaining the best of both worlds.

In terms of 'the perfect balance', the interviewee believes that the current arrangements provide significant benefits. They further argue that this arrangement provides the company with freedom of choice and a wide range of options, allowing for cost efficiency and efficient task execution. Moreover, the current strategy allows for the pursuit of long-term projects that require the best available resources, the expertise of external agencies. The interviewee recognises high value in providing in-house agencies with opportunities to handle intermediate projects, fostering training and development. Moreover, they emphasise the value of further investing in in-house capabilities. Consequently, the strategy is to build up the in-house agency, particularly within specific areas.

“I think what we have now is working really well. We have freedom of choice and we have a wide range of options. That is really nice. So we can be cost efficient and speedy. We can also embark on longer term projects that we really want sort of the best of the best in. I think it's really good. And then we can challenge ourselves a little bit when it comes to maybe the middle projects to give them a proper chance, our in-house agency, because I really see the value in training them.”

4.6.1 Ericsson: reasons to in-house

Several different reasons drive Ericsson to bring tasks and responsibilities in-house. Cost efficiency is frequently mentioned as a highly important reason to bring tasks and responsibilities in-house. The smoothness of the billing process is highlighted as an additional advantage, emphasising the convenience and ease of handling financial transactions. Additionally, the interviewee considers speed a considerable advantage of the in-house agency, arguing that the use of the in-house agency saves time and allows the participant to spend their time on other tasks that might create more value. Moreover, it is highlighted that the in-house agency should possess a deep understanding of the brand, which is considered a key strength. The quality aspect of an in-house agency was emphasised, arguing that it should be easy for the in-house agency to comprehend what the brand should look and sound like. The interviewee considers the intention

to train and develop the skills in-house as another motive to bring tasks and responsibilities to the in-house agency, reflecting a long-term investment in the capabilities in-house.

“So, number one, it's more cost efficient. Also, billing is super smooth, which is just a nice bonus really, because you don't have to deal with anything. Like you don't even see it happening, it's just automatically getting noticed. So that's really nice. But yeah, cost efficiency and then speed also. ... And then they really should be on top of the brand, that's another strength. And then also the fourth one I could say is that we want to train them, we want to build up their skills. So it's something we, for the long term, that really makes sense to invest in our own.”

4.6.2 Ericsson: reasons to outsource

Ericsson outsources certain tasks and capabilities for a variety of reasons. An important motive driving their decision to outsource is the fact that they consider the in-house agency to lack the specific expertise or capabilities considered needed for certain projects. Moreover, the interviewee argues that driven by the desire for experts on the job, Ericsson commonly outsources to external agencies because of their, commonly highly specialised, expertise and skills. The company has strong long-term partnerships with specialised external agencies whom they work closely with, know the company well and have become the preferred choice for certain tasks. Given the significant investment in the relationship with the agency and the desire to maintain a consistent thread of progress, the interviewee states that Ericsson prefers to continue outsourcing to these agencies and build upon its previous work together. Especially in the case of projects of larger scale, it is argued that as the company can afford it and has a strong relationship with these agencies, outsourcing may be preferred.

“I think that's because also we have really strong partnerships with these external agencies that I told you were like very specialised in certain things. ... So then it kind of makes sense to meet up with them again and to build on what we've done already. We have sort of invested a lot in this relationship with them and then we don't want to take it elsewhere because we want to make sure we have that red thread. ... Like if somebody starts with something, then it makes sense to continue.”

Whilst external agencies are considered to occasionally ‘go crazy’, resulting in the need to tell the agency these ideas are considered unsuitable for the organisation, the interviewee considers the external agency valuable in helping Ericsson explore its boundaries and push its limits, after which the company may refine and scale down these ideas as necessary.

“So sometimes they can go crazy and then obviously we have to tell them that this is not the right fit for us. But I think it tends to be really good just to sort of explore boundaries, dare to go bolder and sort of a little wild and crazy and then we can scale it down.”

Moreover, the importance of getting out of the world of the company was highlighted. Additionally, external agencies were considered highly valuable due to their knowledge of current trends and their involvement with other clients and ability to provide benchmarking insights. The aspiration to reach a similar level of trend awareness and expertise in-house was discussed, however, it is acknowledged that the company is currently not at that stage.

“I also think one good thing about going external is that they might need to be more like on top of trends. They also work with other clients, so that could be helpful. Benchmarking is always really good, ... I think I'm hoping we can get there with our in-house, but we're not there currently.”

4.7 Company A: A Global Player in the Jewellery Retail Industry

Company A, a global player in jewellery retail, refers to its in-house agency as the creative department, which is part of the broader brand and communication department. Elaborating on the capabilities of the in-house team, the interviewee states:

“So what we think about in-house and how we run in-house is that we have creative directors, we have graphic designers, we have all the resources in-house to basically do every single brand management topic in-house. So we have the capability to actually run everything in-house.”

The in-house agency encloses all functions to cover the whole process of marketing communications, from creative conception to production. It further works on brand visual

identity and creative look. However, the company runs a hybrid model of in-housing and outsourcing.

“We are doing a bit of a mix. So we always have an external agency to help us on the biggest campaigns. But we’ve also done big campaigns in-house, and we have a huge in-house creative department, which is probably around 20 to 50 people.”

Company A emphasises the differences of companies and industries, when defining the individual perfect balance, as well as the brand stage. Further emphasis is put on the dependence of brand strategy on the overall business strategy. Consequently, the “perfect balance” is defined as a dynamic process that involves strengthening capacities both internally and externally, without “excluding any direction.”

“I think every company needs to find their own way of managing this and we're doing it one way. We're also changing a lot of things on the go, all the time. So what we do today might be very different than what we do next year. ... So I don't think we have found the ideal way of working and I think we're also in a constant change. I don't think we will ever set a very clear direction on this because we have different needs, different years and different budgets used in marketing. And there's always so [many] external factors that it wouldn't make sense to have an ideal framework how you work in-house and outsource. Because it will change anyways.”

4.7.1 Company A: reasons to in-house

According to the interviewee, one factor contributing to Company A’s insourcing decision is control. When working with external agencies, there is always an internal creative director involved ensuring the effective communication of the desired message. When dissatisfied with the performance of external agencies, the interviewee argues that the company opts to regain control over the creative process.

“So it might have been that we've done big campaigns in house for the reason that we haven't been happy with the agency working in the previous months, and we've taken the control back in house for that reason.”

Further, in-housing is considered to offer the advantage of having a dedicated team with deep brand knowledge and familiarity, eliminating the need for repeated briefings to ensure consistent brand delivery, which is considered to be the case with external agencies. As a result the interviewee considers the brand management process much “leaner”, as there is no “need to start from scratch.”

4.7.2 Company A: reasons to outsource

The driving factors for make-or-buy decisions at Company A are, according to the interviewee, cost, creativity and capabilities. Firstly, resource constraints, such as the departure of internal human resources or high seasons, are argued to potentially lead to the decision to outsource as a means to address the temporary resource gap. Secondly, while in-housing is argued to be a cheaper option compared to outsourcing, the interviewee regards the level of creativity higher at external agencies as compared to in-house agencies. Consequently, the interviewee argues that HR plays an important role in ensuring that there are sufficient “talented, creative, business minded people in-house.”

However, the interviewee highlights a further advantage of external agencies in regard to people and culture, that influences the speed and ease of work.

“I think the major disadvantage of doing in house is that ... when you talk to your colleagues, you might not be able to give the feedback that you would give to the agency because in the end you all work in the same team. So the feedback is definitely much softer when it comes to [the] in-house agency. So with [an external] agency, and I don't mean this in a mean way, but you can always pressure the agency much more than you can pressure the in-house agency. ... [W]ithin the in-house [agency] they might have some other topics that they need to work [on] first. It might not be as fast. Some things are faster, obviously, because we have the structure and we have the graphic designers available. So sometimes faster but many times it's slower.”

As a result, the interviewee regards the corporate culture and internal structure as an important factor contributing to the success of in-house agencies.

“So I think this is very much around the company functions. ... What we see at [Company A], it’s that when the decision-making is not clear and maybe there is a lot of power in the in-house agency, it becomes kind of like a political situation as well. And it takes time because a lot of people have a say. ... [I]f you have an in-house agency, I think we need to be very clear on who makes the call and who makes the decisions.”

4.8 Company B: A leading financial service provider

Considered one of the leading financial service providers in Northern Europe and the Baltics, Company B operates a multiple agency setup. The company’s in-house agency, referred to as the content studio, is a team of graphic designers and videographers within the marketing department that primarily focuses on digital and graphic content creation for the company’s digital communication channels.

“What they typically do, we have both designers working quite a lot with digital, but also graphic design, but we also have videographers. So we do quite a lot of in-house films. We interview a lot of experts and other stakeholders that we have and publish it in our own channels. So there we have like videographers and then I think we also then have designers who can do, based on our visual identity guidelines, they can do certain things that we don't need to buy from an agency.”

When projects within other departments of the company, such as the brand department, require the assistance of the content studio in leveraging design capabilities, the project leads submit requests to the content studio, specifying their design resource needs for a particular period. However, larger-scale productions and strategic projects are usually outsourced to specialised external agencies.

“I think more or less throughout my career, being on the client side, I think I hired quite a few different types of agencies. So currently, when we do advertising and brand marketing communications, it's one type of agency. It's more like a creative advertising agency. When we do strategy work, I would go to or I've used brand strategy consultant. ... And when we do design, for instance, if recently we redesigned our credit cards, then I would go to a design agency. Which is then another discipline. And I think I would also say that - I just came out of a meeting now where we discussed research - when we do research, we hire a research agency.”

While external agencies are involved in the co-creation process and contribute to establishing the right tone of voice and visual identity, the final decision-making authority typically rests with the company. The collaborative process involves initial exploration, testing, and narrowing down options with the help of external agencies, ultimately leading to a point where the company determines if the chosen tonality and tone of voice align with their brand.

Where, according to the interviewee, the perfect balance lies for the company, is dependent on the situation and may fluctuate over time. In certain times, a significant amount of work, which commonly requires creative or strategic thinking, is outsourced to external agencies. Hereby, as the interviewee argues, the external agency is preferred to develop the appropriate tone of voice and tonality for the brand's visual and verbal communication. Once the external agency has finished their projects however, the need for the external partner may go down and the in-house agency will focus on the application of the guidelines, rather than coming up with big ideas. Hereby, they are both considered highly important.

4.8.1 Company B: reasons to in-house

Whilst Company B frequently utilises external agencies, specific work is considered better suited to be carried by the in-house agency. According to the interviewee, this is mainly driven by the need for cost efficiency and swift execution. The tasks taken on by the in-house agency typically do not require a high level of creative and strategic thinking and are focused on applying rather than inventing. Having an in-house agency perform such tasks is considered advantageous as the

existing visual identity and guidelines can be applied. Such work was mentioned to preferably be performed by the in-house agency and considered convenient to be done in-house.

“I think we still use external agencies and quite a lot, but I think a certain type of work which needs to be both cost efficient and account with speed and which maybe doesn't require as much creative or strategic thinking, it's more about applying the visual identity, the guidelines that we have, then it's quite convenient to have it in house.”

The preference for the in-house agency is also argued to be driven by the advantage of avoiding the overcomplication that external agencies may introduce. In such instances, simplicity is valued and the company favours the in-house agency due to their clear understanding of the desired outcome.

“And the advantage here is also that sometimes when you go to an external agency they overdo things, they want to be creative, they want to show new thinking, et cetera. But sometimes you just want the simple thing, right? ... And then I often prefer to go to people who know exactly what you want.”

4.8.2 Company B: reasons to outsource

An important motive to outsource to an external agency, as discussed by the interviewee, are the specific skills and knowledge which are not present in the in-house agency, such as the skills and knowledge to create a highly specific tone of voice in the market. Project based work, including large productions or bigger strategic and creative work, is commonly outsourced to external agencies due to the creative and strategic ‘firepower’ they can offer, which is not considered readily available within the in-house agency.

“So we work with an agency ... who do sort of the majority of the bigger productions and the bigger strategic and creative work. And I think it works quite well because sometimes you need that extra creative strategic firepower and you will not find it in-house.”

The decision to outsource is frequently driven by the need to find the best talent, which are considered to typically work for external agencies. Therefore, a major reason for outsourcing to external agencies is the difficulty of bringing certain capabilities in-house. This is argued to be due to the nature of creatives thriving more in advertising agencies than in a company in the industry of Company B. The interviewee argues that the structured and process-oriented work environment in such big companies may not be well-suited for the creative.

“And I would also argue that one of the reasons why we maybe can't have it in-house is that creative people often don't thrive so much by being inside [the type of company]. They prefer to maybe have a more free role with an advertising agency. ... I think this very sort of process oriented type of workdays that you get in a big company, maybe it's not suited for every sort of creative mind out there.”

Another discussed motive for outsourcing is connected to one-time projects which require a significant investment of time and resources. The interviewee argues that if they were to bring the needed capabilities for such a project in-house this can be a considerable investment and the resources may not be continuously needed after completion of the project.

“And obviously, we get talented people to work in in-house functions for sure. It's just that sometimes ... when we launched a big brand marketing communications platform, ..., we probably spent like twelve months developing that whole thing. But you only do it once. Once you have that platform in place, then you don't need all the people anymore. ... So if we were to hire a team like that, first of all it would be very expensive and then we wouldn't know exactly what to do with that team once the project is delivered. I think that's part of it as well, in-house capabilities, you need to put work on them every day, not just project based.”

4.9 Trelleborg Group & Trelleborg Sealing Solutions

In the case of Trelleborg, there are two different models in use within the wider company group. While the overarching corporate brand, Trelleborg Group, has a smaller team that focuses on guiding and assisting different entities within the group in staying on brand, its daughter brand,

Trelleborg Sealing Solutions (TSS), has some in-house production capabilities within the global marketing department, enclosing both graphic design, motion design, and videography, besides the social media and content development capabilities provided by the marketing department. Maria Rifaut, both Brand Manager at Trelleborg Group and Campaign Manager at TSS, elaborates:

“Well, we can call it an agency maybe for this purpose, and it has been expanding over time. But I think we started with one graphic designer, and then it's like, okay, it's not enough. So now there are three or four. And then the 3D team, we do a lot of renderings for animations, so that the product, you can see the product from different angles. And also for our catalogues and so on. So those actually we used to outsource in the past. And because we do so much catalogue, we really do a lot of films, animations, catalogues, and we need the renderings for everything. So it made sense to build on the in-house capabilities. You could say it's kind of like an agency.”

The team further works with other departments upon brief, enclosing tasks such as content consulting, the production of marketing materials, conception, campaign planning, and execution. However, TSS still outsources supportive tasks to external advertising and communications agencies. At the group level, where daily business mostly revolves around brand strategy and the alignment of brand communication across the company group, outsourcing primarily revolves around graphic support and research, due to the lack of capabilities in-house.

“So what I have been outsourcing since I started is mainly graphics. So I work with external communication agencies, we can say. Because it's not only a graphic designer, but there's some thinking or some more strategy behind it. But I know that in the past group, so the previous brand manager or the team, they have outsourced, for example, brand reputation studies or brand studies in general. I haven't done it, but I have to start looking into it. ... So this is something that will definitely need to be outsourced”

Maria Rifaut acknowledges that transitioning completely to in-house can be beneficial but acknowledges the significant effort required to do so. She describes the perfect balance as an arrangement in which the in-house agency does the main work while external agencies provide support, offering specialised skills and knowledge and an outside perspective. Hereby she considers the external agency to provide support rather than calling the collaboration a ‘joint effort’. She considers the ideal scenario is an arrangement in which both parties focus on their respective strengths and collaborate and communicate efficiently. The perfect balance for Trelleborg, according to Maria Rifaut, depends on several factors, such as the strengths of each party and the nature of the project. Maria Rifaut emphasises the importance of understanding the capabilities of the in-house agency and external agency to determine the best combination. Moreover, she highlights the significance of close collaboration and familiarity when working with external agencies, arguing that outsourcing to external agencies that have a deep understanding of the company, its identity and its guidelines is more time and cost efficient.

4.9.1 Trelleborg: reasons to in-house

The decision to bring tasks and responsibilities to the in-house agency within Trelleborg was discussed to be mainly driven by the advantage of the in-house agency’s familiarity with the company and how it wants to express itself. An in-house agency is considered to possess a deep understanding of the company. According to Maria Rifaut, this eliminates the need for time consuming, and consequently expensive, explanations, introductions and review processes, which are considered needed when working with external agencies due to their lack of familiarity, and sometimes reluctance, to understand the company and its needs.

“That it's, they don't know us, or they don't get familiar, or they don't get it, or they don't want to get it. And then it takes more time than if I would do it on my own, exaggerating. But then it becomes ... this is taking too much time. Like, I would spend more time in these reviews than what the actual project should take. So for me, that's key. Otherwise I would then look to do it internally, because then it takes just too much time. And it's also expensive because they charge us for their time.”

A similar advantage of the in-house agency was discussed relating to the technical material and documentation Trelleborg produces, which are stated to never be briefed to an external agency. According to Maria Rifaut, the reason to bring such tasks in-house is due to the requirement of in-depth understanding, which external agencies are considered to be lacking.

“I wouldn't outsource the technical material that we need for it because we have a better understanding than an agency would. So they will create the graphics for me, but all the technical material is, of course, done in-house.”

Furthermore, Maria Rifaut stated that Trelleborg invested in specific in-house capabilities in response to the substantial utilisation of these tasks, recognising the practicality of developing these capabilities in-house.

“And because we do so much catalogues, we really do a lot of films, animations, catalogues, and we need the renderings for everything. So it made sense to build on the in-house capabilities. You could say it's like kind of like an agency.”

Whilst Trelleborg does not yet employ a common in-house agency for all its entities, Maria Rifaut considered this highly relevant. She argues that this would greatly assist in ensuring everyone within the company to stay on brand and thereby significantly increase consistency.

“And I think it ties in with brand management that if we use the one central department, then it would be easier for us to have the same look and feel everywhere, which is a struggle now. So that would be another benefit of having one central resource for that.”

4.9.2 Trelleborg: reasons to outsource

A frequently mentioned rationale for Trelleborg to outsource tasks and responsibilities to external agencies is the external agency's experience with other companies. Maria Rifaut considered external agencies helpful in providing inspiration and insights from their experiences with other, similar, companies. Moreover, they may provide insights into current trends and demands of the market.

“So we have the direction, we have all the elements that we want to focus on, but we sometimes or often require external support or consultancy in terms of this is what competitors are doing, this is what the market is doing or is asking for. So more of the insights, but we internally have the direction ... I mean, we could do it on our own but we rely on these external parties for more insights or more insights that we wouldn't have.”

Similarly, the choice to outsource tasks and responsibilities to external agencies is driven by their ability to provide a ‘fresh’ perspective in contrast to the comprehensive familiarity the in-house agency has, which may pose challenges, as reflected upon by Maria Rifaut.

“But I think in some cases maybe the, not the quality, but the creativity of an external agency is sometimes necessary because we are so deep in it that when you have someone coming from the outside, it's like a fresh air sometimes.”

In instances where there is a lack of the required capabilities or capacity in-house, which may be related to time constraints, external agencies may be preferred. Despite the potential higher costs that may be correlated with outsourcing, the external agency will be preferred in instances influenced by the need for fast execution.

“It's also depending on the resources that we have because even if we have a rather big team, there's also a lot to do. So it's like, okay, I have this, but you're going to take five weeks and well, maybe the agents is going to be a bit more expensive, but I need it faster, than I would outsource. So it's also a matter of the capabilities that we have available.”

Moreover, the difficulty in bringing highly specialised tasks in-house is mentioned, which is considered to be highly expensive and challenging. Whilst Maria Rifaut recognises potential benefits of having everything in-house, the associated efforts required are considered considerable.

“So very specific specialised tasks that would be very expensive to have in-house and even to find I mean, we struggle finding new resources. ... And it's very hard to find the right person. So to have everything in-house, I think it would be interesting and it would be beneficial, but I think the efforts would be really high.”

Finally, Maria Rifaut mentions the value of long-term collaborations with external agencies rather than one-time projects. The company prioritises long-term collaborations in which the external agency becomes familiar with the identity, processes, and guidelines of the brand and possesses a deep understanding of the company. This familiarity accelerates the process and minimises the need for extensive briefings and guidings.

“So when we start that collaboration, it is from our side at least meant to be, okay it's not only going to be one project, but we would like. And that has been always the case, all the agencies that we have, have been around for many years and they know us perfectly. So that speeds the process.”

4.10 Vattenfall

Among the companies interviewed in the course of our research, Vattenfall was the only company that did not have an in-house agency of any form. At Vattenfall, multiple external agencies are involved in three different layers of marketing and brand management, as described by Carolina Pozzolini, Director of Brand Communications:

“I'd like to see it as we work in different layers almost. So in the top layer where [colleague] is really dedicated as a brand strategist, it's more about developing the long term strategies for our brand, the things that we don't look into very often, but on a regular basis. ... And these things, of course, we need outside-in perspectives on. So even though we as a team own the projects and the strategy and definitely take care of all the internal listening and stakeholder engagement, of course we have agencies on the strategic level supporting us both, like brand strategists. So, they supplement [colleague] and us as a team, as a brand agency. But then also when it comes to communication, if we develop new concepts or even the visual parts of the brand, that also lies within the

agency's support as well. So we don't have the creative parts of developing our brand internally, but rather the strategies and concept developments sit outside but always with a clear ownership within the team of ours. And then I would say on the mid layer could be ... [Agency name], more like almost like a management consultant supporting us in driving initiatives forward, setting up projects. ... And then on the third layer, if you may say it's more of the tactical things producing, making things come to life and doing the implementation or the activations. And then there is another setup of agencies supporting us in that field as well.

Interestingly, as discussed in the further course of our thesis, Vattenfall considers the external agencies due to the long-term nature of the relationship as outsourced in-house agencies, as described by the Brand Manager:

“ ... [W]e have some consultants that have been working with us for a very long time, so they're kind of, I would say, something in between in-house and outsourced. And they can do very broad tasks for us, like project leading, like an extra resource if there's too much on my plate or my colleagues plate.”

Both interviewees argue that the core of the brand identity and strategy start within the company. However, external agencies are considered to have an influence on the brand identity and the visual aspects of the brand identity are typically created externally. According to Carolina, finding the right balance between internal and external perspectives is an ongoing process that needs to be evaluated periodically. Moreover, she argues that it should be evaluated on a yearly basis which external agencies are the right fit. She emphasises that in achieving the perfect balance, it is important to have internal ownership and a feeling of control while also being open to listening and coaching.

“That's a really good question and I think a question that you will have to ask almost on a yearly basis. I would say also in relation to having the right external agencies. ... but the balance ... I would say that the main, my main take on this is that as long as you have

ownership and that you feel that you steer - but always in a coaching way, but with big ears listening - but also to steer things in the team.”

To maintain consistency and control of the brand, both internally and externally, Vattenfall has internally designated brand country leads. These leads are also responsible for ensuring that the company works with the right agencies for specific purposes and provide training to onboard new agencies, which is considered key to ensure alignment. Moreover, both internal and external agencies can employ a brand help desk and the company has established a network of agencies with a clear structure. Lead agencies are steered by the brand management team, thereby considered an extension of the team, and are responsible for working with local agencies.

4.10.1 Vattenfall: reasons to in-house

According to the interviewees, a primary reason driving Vattenfall to keep certain resources internally, but especially brand strategic tasks, is the closeness to the business and consequently the advantage of the ability to maintain ownership internally, which is considered a key area. Carolina Pozzolini states:

“And at the same time the benefits are that you stay close to the business. You have true ownership of the more strategic parts of the brand in house. And that’s a true benefit, as I see it.”

Moreover, the interviewees argue that certain tasks and responsibilities are best handled internally. Especially the more tactical layer was considered beneficial to take on in house as this is considered to be faster internally, increasing the speed of work and go to market. Carolina Pozzolini states:

“So I think there are many advantages that you could find with having more of the fast moving things internally in an agency like doing the social media post internally, having that kind of work in a faster pace ... So it’s a little bit like the speed and go to market, that’s of course a true benefit when it comes to more tactical, the last layer of productions to have it in house. But then when it comes to more of the strategic thinking, ownership of

things, then there are many many benefits to own that kind of brand management related areas internally... I would say that it's necessary to have that in house."

As mentioned in the above quotation, certain aspects of brand management, such as tasks and responsibilities that require more strategic thinking, long term brand strategies or the development of identity, are favoured to keep internally. An important reason to bring certain tasks and responsibilities internally, as discussed during the interview, is the great understanding of the company, together with its values and the culture, on which strategies and identity are built. Carolina Pozzolini states:

"I mean, when it comes to parts like developing the long term brand strategies or even identity like the expression, then I think you have a very good sense for that internally. It's like the DNA of your organisation, like the values, the culture, that's where it's built on. Even your top management. It's a lot about listening and getting the sense of the organisation."

The reason to bring such tasks and responsibilities internally was also related to the prevention of spending extensive time on educating external agencies about the company as well as of the corresponding risk of mistakes or misunderstandings. The interviewee states:

"... a disadvantage of working with externals is that the relationship is shorter and then every time you start over there is a learning process for that agency to learn about us. There will be more mistakes and misunderstandings. Whereas if you have a long term internal relationship, you learn all those things so you can be faster by avoiding things that are already decided or navigating that."

4.10.2 Vattenfall: reasons to outsource

Vattenfall operates with a budget for agencies rather than maintaining a large in-house staff. Consequently, they allocate their budget towards larger projects by employing external agencies. The decision to outsource to external agencies, according to the interviewees, is driven by this setup, as hiring and terminating employees on short notice is not feasible. The interviewee states:

“It's also about resources, right? That is kind of the starting point or that's kind of our strategy right? Either you have a big staff in house and then you have budget for that but we have a budget for our agencies. That's the way we are set up. And that means that if it's a bigger project, then we can put our money there and employ more external consultants, agencies. So that's also a way of handling the resources and that's of course a conscious choice to start with. But once you're set up that way, you of course need to use resources that way because you can't start and terminate employments on a too short notice.”

The decision whether to outsource or do things internally, is argued to almost always start with the question whether the task can be done internally or whether external support is needed. The main reason given for the decision to outsource to external agencies is the lack of the necessary competencies internally. Carolina Pozzolini states:

“But then also when it comes to communication, if we develop new concepts or even the visual parts of the brand, that also lies within the agency's support as well. So we don't have the creative parts of developing our brand internally. But rather the strategies and concept developments sit outside but always with a clear ownership within the team of ours.”

According to the interviewees, the external agency's experience in working with other large international brands, which is considered to lead to 'fresh input', is an important reason to outsource as this is considered something that cannot be built internally. The interviewee states:

“I was part of the tender for our brand strategy partner, for example. ... And one reason to go with external there is to really get that experience from working with other big international brands that we think we can't build in house with one and the same person staying with us too long. So we want people who get that global, international, diverse, constant input from different categories, different areas of the world, to always have that fresh input.”

The most frequently mentioned argument for outsourcing to external agencies by Vattenfall was the outside perspective that the external agency is able to offer, as the interviewees mention to be cautious about becoming too conservative or overly attached to past successes. Therefore, the interviewees consider it highly valuable to incorporate an external perspective in tasks and responsibilities such as strategic decision-making and brand development. The interviewees highlight external perspectives to be invaluable in providing neutrality and ‘fresh insights’. While the ownership of certain tasks and responsibilities is taken on internally, the company relies on external agencies to support them. Carolina Pozzolini states:

“Or it could also be like in the very long term initiatives that referenced in the beginning like reviewing the purpose or the vision of the company, then we can see that there's always good to have more neutrality from an outside perspective or even fresh minds that can both push us but also to have more of an outside-in perspective on things which you tend to get into quite delicate like internal stakeholder management topics for doing something like that. So usually at least my experience is that it becomes more fruitful both to have the outside-in perspective but also the best in the field to sort of coach you and drive you even further than maybe you had in mind before.”

5. Analysis

In this chapter, we will analyse the data, and connect and compare our findings as presented in the previous chapter. Moreover, we will discuss the results of the analysis and how these findings relate to the literature discussed in the literature review. The analysis will be accompanied by additional findings from our interview with two external agency directors, providing support and counter arguments to our findings from the company perspective. The identified themes arising from the analysis will facilitate an overview of our findings and aid us in answering our research questions.

5.1 The three types of in-house agencies

“From an agency standpoint, even when we were working as sort of an external resource, ... you'd kind of see a variation of what different clients had in terms of availability of in-house resources. So some would just be strictly a couple of big marketing people and you'd be doing all the work. Others would have established their sort of in-house agency themselves. And you're kind of complementing whatever they can't do, basically.”

- Kevin Lynch, Oatly

While observing the phenomenon of in-house agencies, we encountered a wide range of definitions and working models among the ten companies partaking in our study, as also observed by Kevin Lynch, Creative Director at Oatly, in the opening statements to this chapter. Based upon the different roles of the in-house agencies within the companies of our study, we identify three different types of in-house agencies: *the internal service provider*, *the internal advertising agency*, and *the multifaceted marketing department* (see Figure 1). The suggested typology categorises the in-house agencies encountered in our study based on their capabilities and responsibilities.

The internal service provider may be defined as an in-house agency with capabilities often limited to graphic design and video production. It may enclose further capabilities such as copywriting, social media content creation, motion design, marketing analytics, marketing automation and project management. However, it is characterised by its executional role in the marketing and brand management process. Its core business is the production of content and

marketing materials on behalf of related departments and business units, such as marketing, brand management, communication and sales. The internal service provider is often organised as a business unit under the marketing department. Examples from our study are the in-house agencies of Company B, Trelleborg, Maersk and Ericsson.

The internal advertising agency draws on a range of capabilities, the internal advertising agency complements the marketing and brand department by accounting for the day-to-day execution of both strategic and operational aspects of marketing communication, providing the company with the ability to perform most marketing and brand management functions internally. Consequently, the scope of the internal advertising agency encloses a variety of tasks from communications strategy to campaign development and content production. While typically being briefed by the marketing and/or brand department, the internal advertising agency might provide input on brand strategy, positioning and content requirements, working closely with the respective offices. Examples from our study are LEGO and Company A.

The multifaceted marketing department is considered an evolution of the classic marketing and/or brand department, involving the full integration of the internal advertising agency into the department. As a result, the entire department is redefined as an in-house agency, and department-internal silos are largely eliminated. Consequently, the multifaceted marketing department is involved in the entire process from brand identity development to marketing communication, accounting for most of the process. It can be further described as a marketing and/or brand department with enhanced capabilities. Examples from our study are Oatly, Polestar and Flying Tiger.

According to Sinclair (2020), the degree of in-housing can vary from smaller teams handling specific advertising activities to fully staffed internal advertising agencies. This range encloses both *the internal service provider* and *the internal advertising agency*. However, the findings of our study show that LEGO's in-house agency, OLA, works in close cooperation with the respective departments in defining brand strategy and positioning, hence proving an influence and responsibility not usually attributed to external advertising agencies. This extra-definitional responsibility becomes particularly evident with the third type of in-house agency suggested, *the multifaceted marketing department*.

During our study, we discovered that the roles and forms of the in-house agencies examined have developed over time. Consequently, the examples from our study may be mapped onto a horizontal continuum, encompassing the three typologies, as visualised in Figure 1.

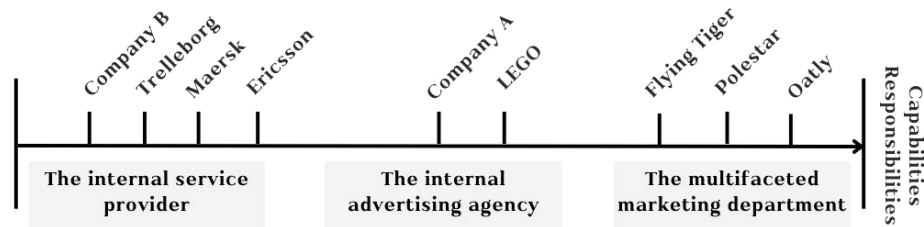


Figure 1: The In-House Agency Continuum

By expanding their in-house capabilities and allocating greater responsibilities to their in-house agency, companies could develop their in-house agencies and transition to another category of in-house agency. With time, companies may start to recognize the value of internalising further aspects of marketing and brand management, prompting the company to invest in building additional capabilities and expertise within their in-house agency.

As Ericsson emphasises the value of further investing in in-house capabilities to develop the skills and expertise of its in-house agency, the company may provide a useful example to explain the suggested model. Initially categorised as an internal service provider, Ericsson may incorporate additional internal capabilities. As the in-house agency enhances its skill set and demonstrates its ability to handle more strategic tasks, it gradually evolves into an internal advertising agency. In this phase, the agency’s responsibility may go beyond executional roles to involve strategic planning and campaign development. This progression within the continuum represents the growth and development of in-house agencies in response to changing business needs and opportunities.

5.2 Reasons to in-house

There are several reasons as to why companies have increasingly started setting up in-house agencies to handle tasks previously outsourced to external agencies. Whilst companies may have very specific reasons to build in-house capabilities, there was a strong overlap of several reasons

and advantages formulated by the majority of companies. Therefore, these are considered the main reasons as to why companies decide to build in-house agencies or in-house capabilities.

5.2.1 Internal knowledge

According to Milfeld and Haley (2021), in-house advertising agencies can benefit from intimate business expertise due to their position at the heart of the company. Similarly, the companies in this study discussed the profound knowledge of the brand and its products in-house agencies possess as a significant advantage. This brand knowledge can be related to the brand expression and visual identity, but the advantage most frequently discussed is the substantial knowledge relating to the strategy and direction of the brand. Similarly, knowledge of the product has been further mentioned as an advantage of an in-house agency. Thus, a superior understanding and expertise of the product may lead to a preference for keeping product specific tasks in-house. Many companies considered this extensive expertise of both brand and product difficult to transfer to external agencies, especially within the short timeframe of a project-based collaboration. An in-house agency may allow for better knowledge retention and eliminate the need for extensive explanation, echoing the findings of Silk (2012), who argues that its position at the heart of the company provides the in-house advertising agency with proximity to and accessibility of information. Similarly, external agencies consider the importance of getting to know the client they are working for:

“But of course, in-house agencies, ... they catch the little things that agencies might miss and so on. But I think that's also where agencies need to be better at getting to know the client. And the closer you are and the more open and the more you listen, I think you can also kind of understand more of the issues, try to help them.”

- ANR+1

However, the lack of knowledge of the external agency regarding the brand was also considered to be helpful by another external agency.

“I think not knowing the product in depth might be a help sometimes, or the service of the brand. Because you sort of look at it from an outside and see from the outside ... whereas

when you know the product or the company from the inside, then you have the tendency to focus on something that is really clever or [a] brilliant feature or something the brand does that no one else does.”

- Agency A

5.2.2 Efficiency & speed

Quick turn and time savings have long been considered a primary reason for the internalisation of advertising (Belch & Belch, 2001; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). Correspondingly, one motive for insourcing, as discussed by several companies within our study, is efficiency and the opportunity to save time. As aforementioned, in-house agencies possess a comprehensive understanding of the brand and its products whilst external agencies may require time for familiarisation with the brand. Several participants argue that by working with in-house agencies, the need for extensive explanation, reviews and onboarding processes can be reduced. Thus, the comprehensive understanding of the brand and its products or services is considered to lead to time savings and enables faster project execution.

Horsky (2006) and Milfeld and Haley (2021) both argue that companies will favour in-house agencies for all or some of its advertising tasks should they be able to carry these tasks out more efficiently. This goes in line with our finding that a majority of the companies interviewed consider in-house agencies to be able to work more swiftly and effectively due to their close proximity to the brand and its intricacies, allowing for shorter time-lines and more efficient communication. The companies in this study discussed the in-house agency's proximity to information about the business, as also discussed by Silk (2012), as well as access to internal data and results, as an advantage of an in-house agency. Silk and Stiglin (2016) discussed the ability of in-house advertising agencies to accommodate the frequently changing and time-sensitive needs of their clients, and their ability to collect feedback and make adjustments accordingly. Similarly, within this study the ability to swiftly adapt to changing needs and quickly respond to campaign performance was confirmed and considered an advantage of bringing tasks and responsibilities in-house. This was specifically mentioned in relation to digital tasks, which goes in line with Hughes and Vafeas (2019), implying that support for the digital environment, which requires rapid digital response, may be better carried out in-house.

5.2.3 Streamlining

Not only was the close proximity to the brand and its intricacies considered a contributing factor in increasing efficiency, the proximity of in-house teams to the business and its product and services also allows for direct collaboration and communication with internal stakeholders. Being part of the same company, an in-house agency was argued to possess the advantageous ability to closely work together with internal stakeholders, fostering opportunities for collaboration, interaction, and engagement. This is in line with Silk and Stiglin (2016), who argue that the in-house advertising agency has unlimited opportunities to listen and learn from others within the company, acquiring company specific knowledge and insights and building deep client relationships. This ability to directly communicate with internal stakeholders, was argued by the companies within the study to provide the in-house agency with an increased understanding of what is going on inside the company and with its products. Hereby, the findings are conforming to Silk and Stiglin (2016) who argue that the in-house agency's position and frequent engagement with its 'client' provides the in-house agency with an understanding of the real-time challenges within the company. The companies within the study argue that the possession of a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies and strategic direction of the brand as well as a better understanding of what is going on in other departments, may ensure a better alignment with the company's strategies as well as better coordination and alignment across departments. Furthermore, according to our findings, this knowledge may allow for the consistent incorporation of strategic considerations into department-individual projects. This is consistent with previous literature on in-house advertising agencies, arguing that the 'new' in-house agency works hand in hand with its clients in developing and executing strategies that support the company and brand objectives (Silk & Stiglin, 2016).

Thus, within the study, the benefits of close proximity and constant communication were considered to improve the coordination within the organisation, similarly discussed by Belch and Belch (2001) as a motive to bring advertising capabilities in-house. Likewise, within our study, in-house agencies were regarded to play a crucial role in significantly increasing consistency of the brand, ensuring everyone within the company stays 'on brand'. Additionally, in line with Milfeld and Haley (2021), the deep knowledge of the brand is considered to facilitate a cohesive brand delivery across various touchpoints and different markets. As consistency is considered a key factor contributing to the building of strong brands (Kapferer, 2012; M'zungu, Merilees and

Miller, 2010), it can be argued that in-house agencies may be advantageous in brand building. The fact that the in-house agency is part of the same organisation is considered to encourage a shared sense of purpose, as everyone works towards common goals and objectives. This finding aligns with research conducted by Simoes and Dibb (2001), emphasising the significance of integrating the ‘brand spirit’ throughout the entire organisation to obtain comprehensive support for the strategy and facilitate its successful implementation.

5.2.4 Control

Nordigården et al. (2014) argue that when an activity is outsourced, the control of that activity is transferred. A commonly mentioned reason for the allocation of tasks and to in-house agencies as discussed in previous literature is a desire for control (Belch & Belch, 2020; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). Affirmatively, a primary reason to establish an in-house agency or assign tasks and responsibilities to the in-house agency as discussed by several companies within the study, was the desire for increased control. Some companies considered unfavourable experiences with external agencies, sometimes taking the brand too far from the core, a significant reason for the decision to bring control in-house. This need for control was often related to the articulation of the brand due to the in-house agency’s clear understanding of the company’s values and desired representation. By having an in-house agency, companies argue that there is the inherent advantage of the embeddedness of the in-house agency within the company which facilitates a shared knowledge and mutual understanding of the brand expression, strategy and organisational direction, that is not naturally given when working with an external agency. Consequently, an in-house agency is considered to provide a higher level of control of the brand and its expression, as similarly suggested by Belch and Belch (2001), who argue that companies can enhance control over processes by in-housing advertising activities.

5.2.5 Cost

Coase (1937) regarded the relative cost of internal versus external exchange as decisive in determining whether to make or buy. Similarly, Jensen and Sund (2010) argue that companies will prefer the in-house advertising solution when this entails lower costs as opposed to outsourcing to an external advertising agency. While this disregards the wide variety of other factors influencing the decision to go in-house, in this study, and in accordance with outsourcing

literature, a frequently mentioned reason to build in-house capabilities or invest in the creation of an in-house agency was the cost efficiency related to the in-house agency. Frequently, participants mentioned the high prices of external agencies as an important reason to bring tasks and responsibilities in-house. It was argued that, considering the extensive scope of the operations a company may have, the costs would be significant should the company depend exclusively on external agencies to fulfil its requirements. In some cases, certain tasks and responsibilities are considered more cost-efficient to be performed in-house. Moreover, bringing agency functions in-house was considered a way to reduce the often substantial overhead costs, including unutilized hours, connected to external agencies. One company highlighted the need for financial prudence in relation to the relative novelty of the company. According to literature, an important reason for companies to make use of an in-house agency for advertising purposes is the reduction of costs (Belch & Belch, 2001; Silk & Stiglin, 2015). This importance of cost as a driving factor to build in-house agencies was further highlighted in this study.

Interestingly, one company within the study acknowledged that the high costs of external agencies may lead to different decisions in terms of prioritisation, which could potentially undermine purpose-driven initiatives due to financial restrictions. The in-house agency is considered to enable the ability to prioritise projects without being constrained by budgetary limitations.

5.3 Reasons to outsource to external agencies

However, despite the increasing number of in-house agencies arising, although the extent to which they outsource varies greatly, all companies in the study continue to outsource certain tasks and responsibilities to external agencies. Several explanations have been brought to light as to why companies employ external agencies.

5.3.1 Outside perspective

Prior literature on in-house advertising agencies discusses the risk of employees becoming restricted or growing still and lacking objectivity (Belch & Belch, 2001). The companies in this study discussed the challenge of remaining objective about the brand as the in-house agency can sometimes become too familiar with the brand and the company. Similarly, this was reflected upon by external agencies:

“... sometimes you know the product much better and you can do something much more interesting in the ways of explaining it and taking that message to the public. But oftentimes the thing is that it becomes too inside-out rather than looking at it from an outside and say what is interesting from a fresh perspective ...”

- Agency A

Therefore, it is considered highly important for in-house agencies to take the outside perspective on their brand into consideration, which is frequently considered a significant challenge. In-house agencies strive to counteract the ‘home-blindness’ that may arise when working in-house in several ways. Supporting existing literature, in which external agencies are argued to have an objective and unbiased outside perspective of agencies (Belch & Belch, 2001; Newton, 1965), the vast majority of companies in our study posited to use external agencies to bring in such outside perspectives and provide a fresh and unbiased assessment. Therefore, a significant determinant in outsourcing to external agencies is the outside perspective these agencies may offer, as similarly discussed by external agency ANR+1:

“A lot of people can’t keep a healthy distance (brandwise/creatively) to what they’re doing when all they see and experience is one company and all the internal processes and politics that come with it. There is nothing wrong with that, many people can’t, but that’s why I’ve always felt we have a role to play that is very appreciated. I think our role as an agency is to be honest with our clients, sometimes that can hurt a bit, if you work in-house you might be more scared to offend someone. There has been some friction, but we are doing it with the best interest of their brand and business. We can push ideas that can seem scary, or even insane but it’s our job to challenge the status quo.”

- ANR+1

Moreover, we found some companies to outsource tasks and responsibilities to external agencies due to their work with multiple and competitive clients and in several industries, allowing them to stay on top of trends and demands of the market and bring a broad range of experiences to the table. This reinforces the findings of previous studies in which the experience of the external

agency in working for competitor brands was found to be an important factor in the selection of external agencies (Henke, 1995). The experience in working with different clients has previously been argued to enable the external agency a more diversified perspective (Newton, 1965), which was confirmed in our study by external agency ANR+1:

“Good creative agencies possess, if you add up all the people that work in them, hundreds of combined years of experience and talent with a constant flow of new perspectives. That is invaluable to companies.”

- ANR+1

However, the need for caution when relying on external agencies is also emphasised during the study, recognising their potential biases. This may stem from an emphasis on awards over serving the business’s objectives, unlike in-house agencies that are fully dedicated to serving the business. While acknowledging that external agencies may sometimes be too focused on awards, it was argued by Agency A that solving the problem is the first priority of the external agency, and that winning awards stems may be a consequent result of great ideas:

“So I think there's definitely some truth to that. Awards are very important, too important I would say. But there is a difference between doing work to win awards and then doing work to do something for the client and then afterwards decide whether or not that idea is award worthy. So I think at least for us, we never do spec work, we never do work that's just to win awards. Usually if you do a great idea, then that idea will win awards afterwards. So I mean if you start with solving a problem, then the awards come second.”

- Agency A

Moreover, external agencies may be influenced by their location, which may limit their perspective on markets and trends outside their immediate surroundings. Consequently, the companies within the study highlighted that companies must ensure objectivity and alignment of external agencies with the company objectives and values.

5.3.2 Cost

Prior literature on outsourcing has argued cost savings or cost reduction to be among the main motives for outsourcing (Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009). However, cost reduction is most frequently mentioned as an important rationale for bringing tasks and capabilities in-house rather than outsourcing. Nonetheless, some companies within our study argue that they may outsource to external agencies for cost related motives. This is primarily related to the substantial expenses associated with setting up an in-house agency. While the long-term cost savings of in-housing are acknowledged in the study, the initial costs of staffing up an in-house agency team are significant. Moreover, the project-based nature of certain initiatives was considered another motive for outsourcing to external agencies. Projects may require extensive development over a significant period, however, once the project is completed, the need for the dedicated team and skills diminishes. Bringing in in-house capabilities for such projects is considered a significant financial investment and the resources may not be continuously needed after completion of the project, leading to a preference for outsourcing to external agencies. Correspondingly, companies often have a predetermined strategy regarding the allocation of resources. In the case of Vattenfall, this involves budgeting for external agencies rather than maintaining a large in-house agency. This necessitates using the budget in a way that aligns with the chosen strategy, as quickly hiring and firing staff may not be viable. Similarly, a company may simply decide to outsource because the company has the financial capacity to afford outsourcing.

5.3.3 Creativity/Talent

Creativity is considered essential to the success of advertising (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016). Consequently, the creative skills of external agencies is an often argued motive for companies to seek support from external agencies (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2016), as companies may lack these skills internally. Similarly, companies in the study frequently consider finding in-house setups that can match the calibre of agencies, even at the tactical production level, a challenge. As discussed by Belch and Belch (2001), external advertising agencies have the ability to attract the best creative talent across a broader range of services. Similarly, in this study, hiring external agencies was frequently discussed as a way to allow companies to source the best talent in the industry and benefit from their expertise and fresh perspectives. External creative agencies are driven by the need to produce highly creative work to secure awards, maintain their relevance as

an agency and attract new clients. Thereby, they are driven to raise their creative standards higher. Moreover, external agencies are frequently argued to attract highly creative individuals who may prefer the agency environment over an in-house setting. External agency ANR+1 confirms the difficulty companies may experience with bringing creatives to in-house agencies:

“To even consider in-house it’s all about what product or service the company has to offer the world. Is it something that is attractive for talented people? Then in-house could be the way to go. And secondly does the company have the power to attract talent in other ways? Money can be one thing but talented creative people usually value variation, atmosphere/culture and challenges over money in the long run.”

- ANR+1

Likewise, several companies within the study argue that the difficulty of bringing creatives in-house may be driven by in-house agencies’ inability to provide the same level of creative freedom as external agencies. Creative individuals are argued to feel more attracted to the external agency environment due to the freedom and less process-oriented work days it offers. This capacity of in-house agencies to attract and retain both creative and strategic talent has frequently been subject to scrutiny (Silk & Stiglin, 2016). Throughout the study, bringing the required creative talent in-house was posed as a significant challenge in setting up in-house agencies. Accordingly, many companies in this study argued that they employed external agencies when they needed highly creative skills, or creative talent. However, some companies, such as Polestar, LEGO and Oatly claim to possess the ability to attract such creative talent. This supports the observation made by Silk and Stiglin (2016) that the stigma associated with strategic and creative talent within in-house agencies, although not completely eliminated, may be experiencing a gradual decline. Similarly, in previous literature, external advertising agencies have been considered to be more risk seeking (West & Ford, 2001), whereas in-house agencies are argued to potentially obscure creativity that is considered risky (Milfeld & Haley, 2021), as similarly discussed by agency A:

“.. I think we are now at a point where a lot of companies have started internalising some aspects of the agency business. And I think what we’ve seen is that actually what we can

offer are those big ideas, those ideas that they can't themselves come up with. So the unexpected work that goes completely counterintuitive to what they're doing."

- Agency A

While this was confirmed by some companies within the study, arguing that the external agency may help push the limits of the company, the findings from Polestar suggest that in-house agencies could sometimes also be considered to possess a level of 'boldness' that surpasses external agencies, due to the creative talent within the organisation.

5.3.4 Efficiency/Speed

While efficiency and speed were considered advantages of in-house agencies in the study, some companies connected similar advantages to external agencies. The decision to outsource may be dependent on the competencies available in house and the time constraints of the project. Sometimes, outsourcing is preferred if there is a need for faster execution, even if this may result in higher cost. Therefore, time constraints were considered an important motive necessitating the outsourcing of certain tasks and responsibilities. This goes in line with Heikkilä and Cordon (2002) who argue that among the most common drivers for outsourcing are the need for quick reactions, speed, or time to market. In some cases, a company may choose to outsource tasks and responsibilities to an external agency due to efficiency reasons. This may be influenced by the scale of campaigns, whereas some companies within the study frequently outsource bigger campaigns, one company considered it more efficient to engage external agencies to manage smaller campaigns. Moreover, the efficiency of outsourcing was connected to the ability of external agencies to assign the required resources to a project to manage the scope and ensure timely project delivery without interruptions. External agencies were considered effective due to their ability to assemble a specialised team dedicated solely on resolving a particular project. Additionally, external agencies were considered to be more easily pressured to deliver work quickly, even within tight deadlines.

5.3.5 Capabilities, competencies & capacity

One motivation for outsourcing may be to enhance capacity, including gaining access to resources unavailable in-house and highly skilled labour, and compensating for the absence of

specific in-house expertise (Hätönen & Eriksson, 2009; Heikkilä & Cordon, 2002; Quélin & Duhamel, 2003). Accordingly, numerous companies in the study engage in outsourcing due to the lack of required expertise and capabilities in-house. In such cases, the decision to outsource is often driven by practical considerations and allows access to external agencies that commonly possess the necessary expertise and capabilities needed to fulfil the company's requirements. This is consistent with Horsky (2006), who argues that the choice of whether to outsource tasks and responsibilities related to advertising or bring these in-house depends on the competency of the in-house agency. The, sometimes temporary, lack of resources, of specific expertise or the lack of the necessary amount of capacity internally was frequently posed by companies within the study as an important reason to outsource to external agencies. This goes in line with Heikkilä and Cordon (2002) who argue that lack of capital and the absence of know-how are among the most common drivers for outsourcing. Several companies argued that some functions may not be performed frequently enough to justify dedicating an internal team to them, leading to outsourcing, as it is not considered to make sense to have these capabilities internally when they are not regularly required. Correspondingly, one company within the study decides to outsource to external agencies, even though they argue to have the capability to run everything in-house. This challenges Horsky's (2006) statement that companies should perform advertising tasks in-house if they have similar or the same in-house capabilities as external agencies, however supports Hughes and Vafeas (2019) argument that companies will only use external services when they lack the resources themselves or if they believe the tasks may be performed more effectively by an external agency.

More specialist functions may be more likely to be provided by external agencies, as suggested by Hughes and Vafeas (2019). Affirmatively, the findings of the study suggest that many companies seek help from external agencies when there is a need for the specialised skills and expertise that external agencies are able to provide, as such specific skills and expertise are not typically available in-house and may be challenging to achieve with an in-house agency. Even the companies in the study that primarily operate in-house acknowledge the utilisation of external agencies when faced with the need for highly specific skills or expertise. This may be related to a specific campaign or the need for expertise relating to a highly specific audience. Such specialised tasks may be costly to maintain in-house, especially considering the often short

amount of time such specialised skills are required and the challenging aspect of finding the right talent.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the reasons to in-house and outsource as suggested by previous research. New findings derived from our research are added in **bold** letters.

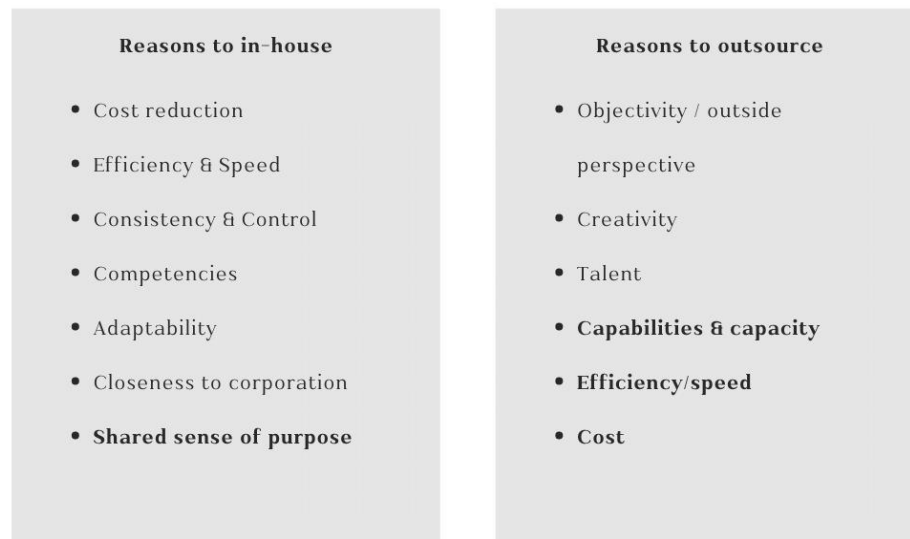


Figure 2: Reasons to in-house and outsource

5.4 Balancing the in-house agency and the external agency

Throughout the evolution of modern advertising, advertisers have relied on external rather than internal agencies (Horsky, Michael & Silk, 2008) and consequently advertising agencies have been considered instrumental in supporting companies by providing capabilities that the company alone might lack (Beard, 1996). However, over the course of the last years, companies have increasingly started to set up in-house agencies to take on certain tasks and responsibilities (ANA, 2021; Sinclair, 2020). Throughout this study a variety of operating models were discussed. Similarly, according to Belch and Belch (2001), some companies may opt for exclusive use of the in-house agency, whereas other companies may prefer a combination of both internal and external agencies. Nine out of ten companies within the study employed some sort of in-house agency. However, throughout the course of the study a significant difference was found between companies regarding the amount of tasks and responsibilities taken on by the

in-house agency and those taken on by external agencies. Nonetheless, none of the companies within the study fully operate in-house, and consequently, all companies within the study outsource certain tasks and responsibilities to external agencies. While the scope of outsourced tasks and responsibilities varies significantly from company to company, it is to be noted that even the companies where the in-house agency was highly ingrained still utilise external agencies, and consequently all companies operate via some sort of hybrid policy of make and buy. Favourable views were given on hybrid versions of in-house agencies and external agencies, which were deemed highly effective. This is similar to the findings of both ANA (2021) and Silk and Stiglin (2016) who suggest that increasing numbers of companies are discovering that the most effective choice is often a combination, and that their need for advertising and marketing services is best fulfilled by coordinating and integrating internal and external resources, as opposed to assuming that the options of make and buy are mutually exclusive. Not only are our findings in line with Silk and Stiglin (2016), who argue that advertisers today frequently pursue hybrid policies of make and buy to obtain the specific combination of tasks they require for the development, production, and implementation of advertising campaigns, the findings of our research also suggest that this may be the case for a broader range of marketing and brand management functions. When operating a hybrid model of in-housing and outsourcing, the question arises how the roles and perspectives of all parties involved may be balanced. As the operational models within our study vary between ‘mostly outsourced’ to ‘mostly insourced’, the division of tasks and responsibilities among external agencies and in-house agencies greatly differs. This is in line with Hughes and Vafeas (2019) who suggest that there are no hard and fast rules in place concerning what is done by external agencies and what is provided internally. Similarly, where the ‘perfect balance’ lies differs significantly from company to company.

All companies in the study see value in building strong in-house agencies with skilled professionals. Consequently, the vast majority of the companies within the study either expressed interest in building up the capabilities of in-house agencies or strived for exclusive use of the in-house agency. However, all acknowledge the challenges and potential issues arising when bringing tasks and responsibilities in-house. Besides, external agencies continue to be seen as instrumental in providing capabilities that companies may lack, as suggested by Beard (1996),

when discussing advertising agencies. Therefore, none of the companies within the study argue to fully refrain from employing external agencies.

5.4.1 Flexible balance

According to the companies within the study, the perfect balance may be dependent on the specific company or industry, as well as the project or situation at hand. As the perfect balance is considered to constantly change, it is argued that the perfect balance may not be a fixed or static approach. Rather, the finding of the optimal combination of the in-house agency and external agencies is considered a continuously evolving process that may change over time. The importance of recognising the potential for changes in directions and being aware of the current and future capabilities, needs, and direction is emphasised, arguing for the importance of remaining open to changes in the point of balance. Consequently, the degree to which involvement of external agencies is required to create the perfect balance may depend on the specific situation, requirements of a project, or the resources available. Thus, with which resources the external agency is able to add value does not only vary per company, as suggested by Hughes and Vafeas (2019), but may also vary depending on the project or period of time.

5.4.2 Leveraging strengths

The careful distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the in-house agency and the external agency was mentioned as an important factor in finding the ‘perfect balance’, similar to Probert, Cáneez and Platts’ (2002) suggestion to carefully consider the strategic decision of outsourcing. The necessity to evaluate the skills and capabilities of both in-house agencies and external agencies as well as the specific needs for each project or campaign to determine the ‘perfect’ balance were highlighted when discussing the perfect balance. Specifically, the attainment of the perfect balance was highlighted as contingent upon the evaluation of the strength and weaknesses of in-house resources as well as the strengths of external agencies. Commonly, the companies within the study argued that the perfect balance requires finding ‘the best of both worlds’, highlighting the idea that the perfect balance involves capitalising on the valuable contributions and strengths of each party to achieve objectives or tackle challenges. Consequently, the point of perfect balance is highly dependent on the strengths and resources of the in-house agency.

A collaborative process was described in which both the strengths of the in-house agency and the external agency are leveraged. It was argued that the perfect balance involves seamlessly integrating the contributions of both parties and capitalising on the strengths of each party. Moreover, it was argued that all roles should be managed effectively. A situation in which the in-house agency and external agency effectively communicate and collaborate without much need for management involvement was reflected on positively.

5.4.3 The right partner

The importance of finding the right external agency was emphasised to play an important role in what was considered as the perfect balance. One company even highlighted that, just as the right balance should be evaluated frequently, it should be frequently evaluated which external agencies are the right fit for the company. Most commonly, the ‘right partner’ was considered to both have a solid understanding of the brand and the brand values whilst also providing a challenging and fresh outside perspective. Moreover, the importance of close collaboration and familiarity was particularly highlighted when engaging with external agencies.

5.4.4 Internal ownership

As suggested by Beverland (2021), brand managers must ensure for their brands to remain fresh while simultaneously remaining true to the brand’s desired position. While all companies within the study employed external agencies to a certain degree, frequently for more creative ideas and fresh outside perspectives, the importance of internal ownership was also brought to light. According to Hätönen and Eriksson (2009), when an activity is outsourced, the ownership of that activity is transferred. To ensure activities are carried out in the desired manner, and for everyone to ‘stay on brand’, companies strive to keep the ownership of the brand in-house, whether within the in-house agency or internally. This goes in line with Jensen and Sund (2020), who argue that while companies may outsource to a variety of advertising agencies and agency types, as opposed to a one-stop-shop, companies seemingly keep control through internal coordination of agency work (Jensen & Sund, 2020). Consequently, despite a significant difference in the role of the external agency in marketing and brand management and the building of the brand, all companies considered themselves to have the ownership of the brand. Some companies consider long-term lead agencies to play a significant part in the shaping and forming of the brand and its

identity. However, while maintaining a collaborative approach, companies ensure that the company maintains control and guidance, while being receptive to input from external agencies.

5.4.5 Who owns the brand? Who builds the brand?

All of the companies in this study considered the company the main owner of the brand, despite the sometimes significant number of tasks and responsibilities outsourced to external agencies. Similar to Hughes and Vafeas' (2019) findings that some companies consider the relationship with their external agency a partnership, some companies within the study discuss a partnership with their external agency due to their investment in understanding the business of the company, resulting in a close relationship with the company. Hughes and Vafeas (2019) related this to a high level of reliance on agency resources. Similarly, the more companies outsourced to external agencies, the more they expressed to external agencies to play a significant role in the building of the brand. On the other hand, and as discussed by Hughes and Vafeas (2019), some companies in this study solely employ the external agency for support and for highly specialised skills and knowledge which may occasionally be needed. Consequently they only rely on the external agency to a limited degree. Similarly, the companies within the study that outsourced less to external agencies were more likely to consider the external agency to solely take on a supporting role in marketing and brand management rather than considering them to co-create the brand.

6 Discussion

Within this chapter we abstractly discuss, reflect, and elaborate on the key findings that have been derived from the research.

As discussed throughout this research, in recent years, companies have increasingly set up in-house agencies to handle tasks previously outsourced. However, whereas previous literature has mainly focused on the role of in-house agencies as limited to advertising (Silk & Stiglin, 2016), throughout the course of the study several conceptualisations of the role and function of in-house agencies were encountered, expanding beyond the borders of marketing communication. Consequently, our findings suggest that Silk and Stiglin's definition of the in-house agency as "an advertising organisation that is owned and operated by the corporation it serves" (2016, p.1) does not reflect the diversity of in-house agencies in current practice. Defining three different types of in-house agencies as found within our study, we argue that the scope of in-house agencies stretches beyond the current definition and the task of advertising to include brand strategic decision-making. This is particularly evident within the *multifaceted marketing department*, the novel form of in-house agency brought out in our study. Its notion to eliminate internal silos accommodates Gulati's (2007) suggestion to change the organisational structure to facilitate a culture that enables successful brand delivery. Consequently, we argue that a comprehensive definition of in-house agencies should not only cover a wider variety of marketing and brand management functions, but should also take into account the often disregarded brand management task of internal branding. In line with our findings, we argue that while internal branding may only occasionally be regarded as a specific task of the in-house agency, the organisational structure of the internal team may strengthen a company's internal 'brand spirit' (Simoes & Dibb, 2001)

The significant interest in investing in the in-house agency and its capabilities and the wide variety of motives to in-house as expressed by the companies within the study indicates that some companies may transition to increasingly insource marketing and brand management functions beyond advertising. Our proposed framework suggests that by expanding in-house capabilities and allocating greater responsibilities to the in-house agency, companies can transition to another category of in-house agency. Our findings imply an elevated importance of

hiring the ‘right talent’ in order to ensure the internal allocation of the necessary skills. This goes in line with Gulati’s (2007) notion of capability development, further indicating an interlace of in-housing and internal branding. However, companies may face significant challenges in building up their in-house capabilities. In our research, we identified cases of companies who successfully in-house the majority of their marketing and brand management functions. Contrary to the belief that in-house agencies may not be as creative as external agencies, these companies seem able to attract creative talent, a task that poses a challenge to most in-house agencies according to our study. Consequently, the lack of creative talent was listed among the main reasons to outsource to external agencies. Thus, the ability to bring in the right creative talent may be one of the most important factors contributing to the role and scope of the in-house agency. To be able to attract creative talent, corporate culture is identified as a driving factor to the role and scope of the in-house agency. Reversely, it was found that a strong presence of creatives in-house contributes positively to a creativity-driven culture. As creatives were found to seek creative freedom, we further argue for changes to the organisational structure to ensure a suitable working environment.

While the findings of our study may imply that the reasons to in-house outweigh the reasons to outsource, interestingly, all companies continue to outsource to external agencies to some degree. The findings of our research imply that the make-or-buy decision is a constant evaluation of advantages and disadvantages of both options. Companies that employ their in-house agency for the vast majority of their marketing and brand management functions, may face the challenge of missing an outside perspective or lack highly specific skills and expertise. Companies that outsource a significant amount of tasks and responsibilities in marketing and brand management to external agencies, may miss a certain degree of control over their brand or the benefits of cost efficiency when operating in-house. Certain factors may contribute to reaping the benefits related to in-house agencies and external agencies, such as finding the right external partner who provides a combination of knowing the brand while remaining a fresh outside perspective, or keeping the control of the brand internally to maintain control while being receptive to input from external agencies. Therefore, the findings of our research suggest that rather than implying that the choice of employing an in-house agency or an external agency is a static approach, this approach of make-or-buy should be regarded as dynamic and subject to continual evolution. This provides companies with the opportunity to find ‘the best of both

worlds' and capitalise on the valuable contributions and strengths of each party to achieve the company's objectives or tackle its challenges.

Consequently, no clear answer may be given as to what role within marketing and brand management the external agency may take on in the future and to what extent the external agency will be considered a co-creator of the brand. However, while the potential of in-house agencies taking over the role of external agencies has been up to considerable debate, the findings of our research suggest that the external agency may continue to play a role within marketing and brand management.

“If you have a right recruitment strategy, if you have support from the top, then sky's the limit. Then you can be just as good as any external agency. So perhaps a big part in there is the culture that is within a company.”

- Agency A

7 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the purpose of the thesis will be revisited and the research questions will be answered. Moreover, this chapter discusses the theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the research, followed by a presentation of the limitations of the study and potential for future research.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the dynamics of make-or-buy decision in the context of marketing and brand management. Specifically, we sought to explore the role and scope of in-house agencies beyond advertising and analyse the motivations driving companies to either insource or outsource marketing and brand management functions. Therefore, the following research questions guided the research:

RQ1: What are the motives for in-housing and outsourcing in marketing and brand management?

RQ2: What role do in-house agencies and external agencies play in marketing and brand management?

RQ3: How do companies balance the roles and perspectives of in-house agencies and external agencies?

The findings from the qualitative interviews shed new light on the phenomenon of in-house agencies and the make-or-buy decision within marketing and brand management. Based upon the analysis of the empirical data, collected through qualitative interviews with 10 companies and 2 external agencies, we move on to answer the research questions.

What are the motives for in-housing and outsourcing in marketing and brand management?

While a wide variety of motives may drive make-or-buy decisions within marketing and brand management, there are several factors that primarily compel companies to either make or buy.

Firstly, companies are driven to employ an in-house agency for marketing and brand management functions due to its *intimate business expertise* and extensive knowledge of the brand and its products. Moreover, companies are driven to employ the in-house agency due to

faster project execution and efficiency. Besides, the close proximity of the in-house agency to the brand and its internal stakeholders increases efficiency and helps in fostering *alignment* and *coordination* across departments. Due to their comprehensive understanding of the brand, in-house agencies contribute to ensuring *consistency*, cohesive brand delivery, and a shared sense of purpose within the organisation. Furthermore, in-house agencies provide *control* over brand expression, strategy, and organisational direction. Finally, companies may opt for in-house agencies for increased *cost efficiency*.

The decision to outsource to external agencies is driven by their ability to provide fresh and *unbiased outside perspectives*. Some companies may outsource to external agencies due to high initial *costs* of setting up in-house agencies or due to project-based resource needs. External agencies are also chosen for their *creative skills* and expertise due to their ability to attract highly creative talent. External agencies may also be preferred when there is a need for *faster execution* or *efficiency*. Finally, companies may outsource due to the external agency's *specialised expertise* and resources unavailable in-house.

What role do in-house agencies and external agencies play in marketing and brand management?

Based on the findings of our study, we can conclude that in-house agencies and external agencies have distinct yet complementary roles in marketing and brand management. However, the individual roles differ from company to company. Our research identified three types of in-house agencies, which we coined *the internal service provider*, *the internal advertising agency*, and *the multifaceted marketing department*. While sharing common attributes, they play different roles in the process of marketing and brand management. Operating as a business unit under the marketing department, *the internal service provider's* role is to provide creative services to various departments and business units within the organisation, ensuring efficient and effective execution of marketing activities throughout the organisation. Similarly, *the internal advertising agency's* role lies in complementing the marketing department's activities in strategic and operational aspects of marketing communication. It has a broader range of capabilities and responsibilities, including the development of communications strategies, marketing campaigns, and the production of content. Working in close cooperation with the marketing and brand departments, it may further provide valuable input on brand strategy and positioning. Lastly,

representing the highest level of integration, *the multifaceted marketing department* takes on the complete marketing and brand management process. From brand identity development to marketing communication, the multifaceted marketing department oversees and executes all aspects of the organisation's marketing initiatives. However, even when having an in-house agency companies are likely to continue to outsource certain tasks and responsibilities to external agencies. The make-or-buy decision hereby depends on factors such as the need for an outside perspective, access to creative talent, or the availability of specific capabilities and competencies. Consequently, the role of external agencies lies in complementing the individual in-house capabilities, filling gaps in the organisation's skill set and providing the necessary resources to achieve desired outcomes. Thus, the role of external agencies can vary from solely providing support to (co-) building the brand.

How do companies balance the roles and perspectives of in-house agencies and external agencies?

How companies balance the roles and perspectives of in-house agencies and external agencies is considered to differ significantly per situation or project. Rather than considering the balance of roles and perspective of in-house agencies and external agencies as a static approach, companies consider the perfect balance as constantly changing. With the great amount of factors contributing to make-or-buy decisions and the great variety of roles in-house agencies and external agencies may take on, companies must carefully consider what balance may be best and thus must take great caution in the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the in-house agency and external agency. Companies may strive to achieve a balanced approach by evaluating the strengths of both the in-house agency and external agency. By capitalising on the valuable contributions and unique strengths of both parties, companies may balance the roles and perspectives of in-house agencies and external agencies. The right partner may play a significant role in balancing the perspectives, as achieving the perfect balance between the in-house agency and external agencies may involve finding the right external agency that understands the brand and its values while also providing a fresh outside perspective. Evaluating the fit between the company and external agencies may be seen as an ongoing process to maintain the desired balance. Furthermore, to balance the roles and perspectives of the in-house agency and external agencies, companies may consider the importance of both fresh outside perspectives and internal

ownership of the brand. While external agencies may be employed for various reasons, such as creativity, fresh outside perspectives or highly specialised skills, companies prefer to keep the ownership of the brand in-house to ensure activities are carried out in a desired manner and to maintain control over the brand.

7.1 Theoretical contribution

While, over the course of the research the high relevance of the topic of study was frequently highlighted by the participating companies, previous research on the phenomenon of the in-house agency has so far been limited to advertising. By focussing on a broader array of marketing and brand management functions, the findings of this study add to previously conducted research. Our findings broaden the scope of research on the phenomenon of the in-house agency as limited to advertising and add to the current understanding of an important and highly relevant topic in the current field of marketing and brand management.

Moreover, previous research on the topic of in-house agencies as related to advertising has not been able to provide a holistic understanding on the phenomenon of an in-house agency. Throughout our research, theoretical insights have been developed regarding the motives for in-housing and outsourcing and the different roles the in-house agency and the external agency may take on within marketing and brand management. By conceptualising the different models found in practice, our research sheds light on the different models of in-house agencies present within companies and provides an understanding of the various ways in which companies organise and utilise their in-house agencies. We identify the characteristics and roles of the in-house agency, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the overall dynamics and operations of in-house agencies. This holistic perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of in-house agencies and sheds light on both its strengths and potential implications for companies.

Furthermore, the large sample of our study, comprising a wide variety of multinational companies from various industries, as well as the qualitative nature of the study provide a deeper understanding of the motives and further factors influencing companies' make-or-buy decisions in the realm of marketing and brand management, than previously provided.

7.2 Managerial implications

When facing the decision whether to outsource or in-house, marketing and brand managers should carefully consider a variety of factors. Our research provides a comprehensive overview of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each decision, offering valuable guidance in the decision-making process. This insight enables practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of the strategic considerations involved in establishing and managing in-house agencies, facilitating exploration of different approaches to the make-or-buy decision and investment in their in-house agency.

Maintaining consistency is a critical responsibility of brand managers, and our findings suggest that the use of in-house agencies can contribute to consistent brand delivery. Therefore, our research highlights the relevance for brand managers to address the topic of in-house agencies within their company. However, it is important to note that our research also emphasises the advantages of gaining a fresh perspective through external agencies. By presenting a balanced assessment of the pros and cons of in-house agencies, our study provides guidance for individual evaluation and definition of the optimal make-or-buy decision-making process.

Our study offers valuable insights into the role of culture and internal branding in the establishment process of an in-house agency. As a result, our findings underscore the importance of evaluating the company's organisational structure, culture, and decision-making processes. Brand managers should consider this as a reminder to reflect on brand management both externally and internally, recognizing the impact of culture on the success of an in-house agency.

7.3 Limitations and future research

Throughout our research, the high relevance of the topic of the research was frequently mentioned by the companies participating in our research. However, while the topic is clearly of significant interest for companies, research within marketing and brand management has not yet investigated the topic to a great extent. By exploring the phenomenon in our study we hope to have opened the doors for future research to further investigate the topic and contribute to highly relevant research in the field of marketing and brand management.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, a wide variety of perspectives from companies operating within several different industries has been studied. While this wide variety of

perspectives accounted for valuable insights into the topic of in-housing and outsourcing within marketing and brand management, we are unable to determine whether certain findings may be more prevalent within certain industries than others or whether differences among industries exist. As suggested by some companies within the study the roles in-house agencies and external agencies take may differ among industries. Therefore, future research may be fruitful to focus on industry specific aspects of this phenomenon.

Moreover, the results of the research imply that the ability to bring in the right creative talent may be one of the most important factors contributing to the role and scope of the in-house agency. Consequently, the role of culture and internal branding came forward as significant factors in the establishment process of an in-house agency. However, due to the scope of our research it was not possible to investigate the phenomenon with the necessary depth to fully explore all of its aspects. Therefore, future research into the role of culture and internal branding within in-house agencies is suggested to be of particular interest.

As students in International Marketing and Brand Management, our exploration of the topic has primarily revolved around its examination from a marketing and brand management perspective. While this approach has provided us with valuable insights into the subject, we strongly believe that a comprehensive understanding of the topic necessitates exploring it from alternative perspectives. One such perspective that we suggest to be particularly beneficial is the lens of human resources. By broadening the perspective and incorporating the viewpoint of human resources, future research may unravel the intricacies of the topic in a more nuanced and holistic manner.

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Appendix A - Interview guide companies

Interview Guide: In-Housing vs Outsourcing the Brand Management Process

Nicholas Kisling & Julia Bosveld, Lund University School of Economics and Management

Goal of the interview

To explore the motives for in-housing and outsourcing, the role of internal and external agencies in the brand management process and how these roles and perspectives are balanced within companies.

General understanding of how the company approaches insourcing and outsourcing

- Can you tell us about your experience with in-housing and outsourcing brand management functions?
- What is an in-house agency to you? Does your company have an in-house agency?
- Can you describe the role and composition of your in-house agency? What departments does the in-house agency work the closest with?
- What brand management functions do you typically do in-house and outsource? Why?
- How do you determine which brand management functions are most critical to keep in-house, versus those that could be effectively outsourced? Are there any factors that are particularly important in making this determination?

Challenges and strategies for balancing insourcing and outsourcing

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an in-house agency versus outsourcing work to external agencies? How do you weigh these factors when making a decision?
- What are the biggest challenges within the in-house agency?
- How do you balance the perspectives and roles of your in-house and external agencies?
- Is there such a thing as a “perfect balance” between in-house and external agencies?
- Who has the biggest influence on your brand (identity)? To what extent are the in-house agency and/ or the external agency involved in shaping and forming the identity of the brand?

Appendix B - Interview guide external agencies

Interview Guide: In-Housing vs Outsourcing the Brand Management Process

Nicholas Kisling & Julia Bosveld, Lund University School of Economics and Management

Goal of the interview

To explore the role of external agencies in brand building and the external agency perspective on the phenomenon of in-house agencies.

Interview Questions (exemplary)

- Can you tell us about your personal experience in working with in-house agencies?
- What are some of the key trends or shifts you've seen in the industry over the past few years in terms of in-housing vs. outsourcing?
- What benefits do external agencies offer that in-house agencies may not provide? And reversely?
- How do you differentiate your agency's services from in-house agencies and other external agencies? How do you adapt your offerings in face of the in-housing trend?
- What are the challenges that typically arise in agency-client relationships? What are the specific challenges you face when working with clients who have in-house agencies?

- To what extent do you consider the external agency to be involved in shaping and forming the client's brand and brand identity?
- In your opinion, what types of companies are better suited for in-housing, and which ones are better suited for outsourcing?
- In your experience, what factors do companies typically consider when deciding to outsource or in-house their brand management and marketing functions? And what factors do you find important for companies to consider in this decision?
- How do you see the role of external agencies changing in the future as companies continue to evolve their approach to brand management and marketing towards in-house agencies?

Appendix C - Participant consent form

Information and Consent Form: Master Thesis Interview Participation

I, _____, have agreed to participate in an interview on the topic of in-housing and outsourcing and the role of in-house and external agencies in marketing and brand management, conducted by Nicholas-Joel Kisling and Julia Bosveld as part of their Master's thesis in International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund University.

I understand that the interview has been recorded with my consent to facilitate the transcription and analysis process for the researchers. I am aware that the recordings will only be used for research purposes and will not be published or shared with any third party. I further understand that the data collected from my participation will be used in the thesis, which will be published online, and I provide my consent for its usage in that manner.

By signing this consent form, I hereby grant authorization for the inclusion of the content, as shared with me prior to publication, within the final and publicised version of the thesis.

Please indicate your preference by checking the box corresponding to the information that can be shared within the final thesis:

- I agree to the inclusion of the following personal details, in the final thesis.
 - Name and surname
 - Position
 - Company name
 - Industry
- I do not agree to the inclusion of my personal information in the final thesis.

Date

Signature

Thank you for your participation and your valuable insights!

Nicolas-Joel Kisling and Julia Bosveld