MS Thesis
Marketing and International Business

Getting Employees to Advocate the Brand
Overlap and Collaboration Between Marketing and Human Resource Departments

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June 2019
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Thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Marketing and International Business

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This is a 30 credits thesis to obtain a MS degree at the School of Business, School of Social Sciences of the University of Iceland.

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Printed by: Háskólaprent
Reykjavík, 2019
**Preface**

This is a 30 credits thesis to obtain an MS degree at the School of Business, School of Social Sciences of the University of Iceland and is based on a qualitative research approach.

I would like to use this opportunity to give thanks to my supervisor Dr. Friðrik Larsen for giving me great advice and direction, and for always leaving his door open to me during the process. Thanks to all the participants who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me for an interview. Special thanks to my partner Svandís María Ketilsdóttir for encouraging and motivating me, when I was not able to find any motivation myself.
Abstract

Given the complexity of brands and how dynamic they are, they can be challenging to manage. Marketers spend so much energy and effort in figuring out how to impact, attract and retain customers that they often forget the people behind the brand, the employees. Brands are created from within by employees because employee attitudes and behavior affect consumer’s perception of the brand and thus dictate the brand’s performance. More attention has been paid to the impact human resource departments can have on influencing employee behaviour and align it with overall branding strategies.

This thesis is based on interviews with five marketing managers and four human resource managers who work for organizations that operate in the Icelandic economy. The research is based on understanding how marketing departments and human resource departments can collaborate to create brand ambassadors. Nine semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, and open-ended questions were asked. Six themes emerged from the interviews. All six themes inherited approaches marketing and human resource management departments can collectively take to turn employees into brand ambassadors. The interviews highlighted the importance of marketing and human resource management departments collaborating by implementing strategies that include employees in branding processes, establishing an effective internal communications platform and rewarding employee work contributions. This research proposes a model that conceptualizes how a relationship between marketing and human resource management departments can create brand ambassadors.
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1 Introduction

The business environment is becoming increasingly more competitive, and organizations seek every opportunity to achieve an advantage over their competitors. An effective branding strategy can be a successful tool organizations could utilize in gaining a competitive advantage (Kotler, 2003). The value of an organization is determined by the value of its brand (Spark, 2004). A brand has characteristics, and it helps consumers to differentiate between products, it signals quality and it is a promise of value (Kotler, 2003). Given the complexity of brands and how dynamic they are, they can be challenging to manage. Marketers spend so much energy and effort in figuring out how to impact, attract and retain consumers that they often forget the people behind the brand, the employees. Brands are created from within by employees because employee attitudes and behavior affect consumer’s perception of the brand and thus dictate the brand’s performance (Timothy et al., 2005). For that reason, organizations should attempt to influence employee behavior, so it is aligned with the organization’s overall business and branding strategy.

Itam and Singh (2016) predicted that one of the most crucial challenges organizations will have in the decades to come will be to figure out how to engage their employees. Successful businesses have credited their success to an engaged workforce. Employees that are engaged, positively express themselves both physically and emotionally during their performance at work and they are a driver for market and monetary growth. Engaged employees feel the need to go above and beyond for their organization and are much more likely to engage with the brand they work with (Itam and Singh, 2016).

The essential role human resource management departments play within organizations is continually growing. The overall success of an organization depends on an informed, well-trained and motivated workforce. Senior managers have begun to realize the importance of involving human resource departments (HR) in overall business strategies because HR activities can impact personal emotions and attitudes employees have towards their organization and the corporate brand (Ulrich et al., 2009).
The link between corporate branding and employee engagement has not been clearly identified (Itam and Singh, 2016). Timothy et al. (2005) suggested that HR activities could positively affect emotions employees have towards the brand, by aligning HR policies with branding processes. Furthermore, Özcëlek (2015) has pointed out that HR departments should play a significant role in getting employees to nurture and care for the brand. However, organizations keep their HR departments too focused on traditional HR practices like recruitment and retention rather than involving them fully in internal branding processes.

The aim of this research is to explore the link between employee engagement and collaboration between marketing and human resource departments and highlight how collaboration between these two business departments can develop employees into brand ambassadors. The focus of this study is to uncover the experiences, attitudes, motivation and beliefs of marketing and human resource managers regarding how organizations can properly get their employees to be brand ambassadors. Marketing and human resource managers are touch points in this paper since they are responsible for the organization’s brand and human capital. The research attempts to answer this research question:

➢ *In what way, can marketing and human resource management departments collaborate to create brand ambassadors?*

This research is divided up into four main chapters. Following this introduction, chapter two contains a literature review of brands and branding, followed by a discussion of human resource management and its role in marketing. The literature review is then concluded with a discussion on how organizations have attempted to engage employees with the organization’s brand. In chapter three the methodology is outlined, and participants presented. The results of the interviews conducted in this research are presented in chapter four along with a model that illustrates the researcher’s interpretations. Discussions, conclusions, and findings of this study are presented in chapter five.
2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature and research related to marketing, human resource management and employee engagement. The chapter first discusses brands and branding. The second part discusses human resource management and the role of human resources in marketing. The third part discusses employee engagement with corporate brands.

2.1 Brand

Kapferer (2004) stated that a brand is the consequence of an organization’s marketing efforts to differentiate their products and segment its markets. Doyle (1994) defines a brand as a product that has a distinct identity that adds value to its consumers. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as “name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from other sellers” (American Marketing Associations, 2016). Grönroos (2007) criticized the American Marketing Association definition and deemed it to narrow for it fails to take service into consideration. The brand indicates the source of a product which in return protects the consumer and the brand owner alike, from competitors (Kotler et al, 1996). Brown (1992) believes that brands are a summary of every thought, feeling, emotions and all other mental links people have to the organization and its products. Brands are a convenient way of conveying an offering of some sort, and they are a memory shortcut (Jacoby et al., 1977). According to Kapferer (2004), consumers perceive risk when they front the challenge of buying a product or service. The risk consumers experience can be monetary, e.g. price, functional, e.g. performance or quality, psychological, e.g. their self-conceptualization or social, e.g. our social image. These risks offer organizations the opportunity to reduce the risk by instilling and offering consumers their brands and what the brands represent.

Brands have been described as a pyramid with multiple layers. The base of the pyramid is where one would find basic physical and aesthetic attributes. Next step of the pyramid is where one would find tangle benefits, emotional benefits and the personified character attributes of the brand. Up top is where one would find the soul of the brand (Doyle, 1994). Furthermore, brands can be regarded as products that are layered and surrounded by more intangible features. A brand is a product that has been differentiated from other
products and has a secured a place in the consumer´s mind via marketing mix decisions (Doyle, 1994). Brands are a complex and dynamic phenomena, how they can shape stakeholder´s perception and influence consumers behaviour will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.1.1 Brand image
Marketing focus has shifted from practical elements of brandings like symbols, designs, and logos. Instead, their concentration is now on what is behind; the ideas, associations, and meaning of the brand. The brand image consists of these elements. The brand image is how the consumers see and feel about the brand and what it means to them (de Cernatony and McDonald, 1998). Brands store a whole lot of information that can be quickly accessed and the image of the brand can speed up the consumer´s process of recognizing products, evaluate the quality and lowers purchasing risk. The brand image can also give the consumer a sense of belonging and satisfaction by associating himself with brands that are socially accepted by his peers (Lin and Lin, 2007).

Gardner and Levy (1955) put forth the notion that products have tangible attributes, but also a variety of intangible attributes. Tangible attributes such as size, colour, weight, touch, and material compositions often mean less to the consumer than the intangible attributes. Intangible attributes such as a personality or the characteristics of a product dictate how consumers perceive it. The intangible attributes create the consumer´s need to purchase the product. Thus, products are both objective and subjective and have tangible technical features, as well as intangible features which are the attributes consumers build their brand image on (Aaker, 1991). Meaning that feelings, attitudes, and ideas about, and towards, the product affect the consumers buying behavior. These ideas about the tangible and intangible and the brand image have today become regarded as brand equity´s key components (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993).

How an organization conducts itself and how its marketing messages are communicated can affect the organization´s brand image in the mind of the consumer. However, Keller (1993) pointed out that the consumer´s memory and experiences also construct a brand´s image. The individual experience that a consumer has with a brand shapes his memory, how he feels about the brand and his associations with the brand will affect his perception of the brand, thereby the brand´s image also (Keller, 1993).
2.1.2 Brand awareness

Brand awareness is an essential component of the consumer’s brand knowledge system. Brand awareness in the phenomena that enables consumers to identify brands under different circumstances. Brands that have a high level of brand awareness are likelier to come easily to the consumer’s mind (Keller, 1993). According to Keller (1993), brand awareness can be assorted into two sections; brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is the consumer’s ability to process and verify that he has had previous exposure to the brand when given a cue. Brand recall is the consumer’s ability to retrieve the brand when faced with different categories of products and how well he connects the brand to those categories.

Keller (1998) contends that brand awareness plays a pivotal role in the consumer’s buying decision-making process because it is important that the consumer recalls the brand in a situation where he is faced with a variety of products. Brand awareness increases the probability of a consumer taking the branded product into consideration when evaluating what his purchase shall be. Brand awareness will even affect the buying making-decision if the branded product is absent (Keller, 1998). Brand awareness may be a sufficient enough factor to influence the final choice in situations that requires low involvement, that is, the consumer does not have to give the purchase much thought.

Aaker (1991) contends that brand awareness is one of the fundamentals dimensions of brand equity. The others being; perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations. According to Aaker (1991) is brand awareness crucial for brands to be included in the conversation when consumers consider which brand to buy. Aaker (1991) also suggested that brand awareness has a significant effect on consumer’s perceptions and attitudes towards the brand and thereby, is a driver for brand loyalty. Farquhar (1989) defined brand awareness as to how quickly a consumer can retrieve information about the brand from his memory. Farquhar (2000) also suggested that a brand with a high level of brand awareness are the only brands considered when consumers purchase or repurchase brands.

When creating a marketing strategy, marketers should be very aware of the importance of generating brand awareness. Seetharaman et al. (2001) suggested there to be four levels of brand awareness: Unaware of the brand, brand recognition, brand
recall and top of mind. Seetharaman et al. (2001) projected a metaphoric brand awareness pyramid seen in figure 1. Most consumers are unaware of the brand, and as the brand moves up the steps in the pyramid the brand gets some recognition but from fewer people, however, the higher the brand moves it might lose audience but gains stronger and stronger connection with consumers because of the level of brand awareness has risen (Seetharaman et al., 2001).

![Brand awareness pyramid (Seetharaman et al., 2001)](image)

**2.1.3 Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is regarded as the consumer´s preference to choose one brand over another when presented by a product category. Brand loyalty arises when the consumer feels like the brand offers attributes, an image, and features at a price acceptable to him. These feelings or perceptions of the brand may thus lead to a repeat purchase which contributes to brand loyalty. Thus, brand loyalty is connected to the consumer´s preferences and commitment to the brand (Aaker, 1991). Jacoby, Chestnut and Fisher (1978, p. 80) defined brand loyalty as “the biased, behavioural response, expressed over time, by some decision-making unit, concerning one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological decision-making, evaluative processes”. Cunningham (1956) defined three different elements of brand loyalty: How many customers were lost and gained over a specific period of time, the time sequence of individual purchases and the brand´s total market share. Aaker (1991) suggested that
brand loyalty reflects the commitment of a consumer to keep buying the brand when the brand either made changes to its price or product attributes. Aaker also stated that brand loyalty is a core component of brand equity if a consumer buying behaviour suggests that a consumer buys a product concerning features, price, and conveniences without regard for the brand, then there is little to none brand loyalty and thus little brand equity.

Aaker (1991) put forward a brand loyalty model in the form of five-step pyramid. In the bottom of the pyramid, one can find consumers who show lack of loyalty and are just as satisfied with one brand over the next one. The brand does not affect their decisions to buy. The second tier represents a habitual buyer who is neither overly satisfied nor dissatisfied, brands and their differences do not matter much to them. The next step is where one would find consumers that are satisfied with the brand but would switch due to, for example, price changes. The fourth level of the pyramid represents committed consumers who regard the brand as a friend. Top of the pyramid represents hugely committed, and loyal consumers that love the brand and the brand image reflects their self-portrait. These consumers are more than likely to speak well of the brand and would eagerly recommend it and its products to others (Aaker, 1991)

![Aaker's brand loyalty model](Aaker's brand loyalty model (Aaker, 1991))
2.1.4 Brand differentiation

Brand differentiation is the marketing strategy where marketers seek out values which are essential to consumers in various segments (Porter, 1985). Differentiation revolves around separating the brand from others by making the brand different. Porter (1985) suggested that brand differentiation can be executed in different ways, for example; Price, service, the product itself can by differentiation or the marketing strategy and how the message is communicated, and many other factors can be utilized to differentiate one brand from another. Differentiation is crucial for marketers, not only for firms to sell their products to the right people, but also to make it easier for the consumer to access the products he wants. Brand differentiation is also used to meet different consumers demands in different segments (Lancaster, 1984).

Differentiation is instrumental when marketers position their brands on the market and ultimately in the consumer’s mind. Keller et al. (2012) contends that in order to create a positive brand image in the consumer’s mind there has to be a clear differentiation, that is, how the brand is different and what value does that difference create. The value proposition, is the summary of why a consumer should buy a product or service and is rooted in the differentiation (Aaker, 2004). The target group’s needs must be carefully regarded when a differentiation strategy is chosen. Even though there is not a significant difference between the products that the firm is offering and what the competing brands are offering, it is still crucial that the consumer perceives it to be so. The perception is gained through how brands differentiate themselves via their marketing strategies (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Grönroos (1988) stated that differentiation is done through marketing by creating an image in the consumer’s mind that a product or a brand is different, even though there is no real difference, the perception of that difference is created in the consumer’s mind.

2.1.5 Brand value

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) defined brand value as the benefit a consumer receives for what he cedes. In everyday life, where the assortment of products is seemingly endless, consumers are continually seeking for products that suite and satisfy their needs best. Consumers have their expectations about the products and choose the one they believe will fulfill their wants and needs adequately (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).
A brand’s value proposition is the promise of some benefit, this acquired benefit meets and fulfills the needs of the consumer (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). The value proposition or the brand’s promise is deeply rooted in differentiation, that is, how the brand is different and how can the brand fulfill the consumer’s need in a manner that is better than the competition. A brand that delivers on its brand promise will answer the question of why customers should choose that brand and not something else.

Brand value is an essential concept in the world of business because brands create value both for the firms which own the brand and the consumers that use the brand. Generally, brands create monetary benefits for their organizations by products sold, and tangible and intangible attribute create value for the consumer. The concept of brand value has been studied through different lenses throughout the years, depending on what angle is being researched. A brand valuation has three different principles; Objectivity, measurability, and perspective. Each principle dictates the purpose and reason for the evaluation (Yoo et al., 2000).

Huang (2015) suggested that brand value can be categorized into three principles or dimensions. Asset perspective being the first dimension, meaning that brand value is the financial value acquired for the organization by the brand. Thus, brand value is linked to financial value for brands that increase sales and profit margins. Customer loyalty is the second dimension of brand value (Keller, 1993). Keller (1993) believes brand loyalty to be when a consumer repeatedly buys the brand’s products or services, which suggest that brand value is derived from this purchasing behaviour. Huang (2015) suggested that there is a strong correlation to brand value and brand loyalty, stating that if a relationship between a customer and brand is strong the higher the brand value is. The organization benefits financially from repeated buys, and the consumer fulfills his needs which is provided by the brand (Huang, 2015). The third dimension involves assets and customers, meaning that brand value is the element that connects the consumer and the brand. These elements shape the brand image and can to some extent affect the consumer’s perception of the brand. These perceptions can be both positive and negative (Paul and Yin, 2000).
2.1.6 Brand equity

The concept of brand equity has been gaining interest as a research topic because some scholars consider brand equity to be the most cherished asset an organization can have (Aaker, 1993; Keller 1991; Lasser et al. 1995). Brand equity can be extremely beneficial for an organization for many different reasons such as; increased consumer preferences (Cobb-Walgren et al. 1995), higher stock returns (Aaker and Jacobson, 1994), increased feasibility and opportunities of brand extensions, and barring competition to a market entry (Farquhar, 1989). Also, the consumer tends to have more purchase intentions when considering buying a branded product with high brand equity (Cobb-Walgren et al. 1995).

The widespread use of the brand equity concept began by advertising practitioners in 1980 (Barwise, 1993). Scholars like Aaker, Srivastava and Shocker, Keller and Kapferer all made academic contributions to the concept later on. There has not been set in stone one universal brand equity definition nor an accepted means of measuring it (Keller, 2003) however most scholars today agree the brand equity involves added value to a product for consumers and brand owners alike (Winters, 1991).

Early research of brand equity focused heavily around the financial aspect and means of profiting from products with high brand equity (Farquhar et al., 1991). However, in more recent years the focus has shifted to consumer-based context (Keller, 1993). These two perspectives; financial and customer-based are prominent in the academic literature regarding brand equity. The financial perspective is seen from a marketer’s point of view and customer-based perspective is seen from the consumer's point of view.

Leuthesser (1988) defines brand equity as a set of associations and behaviours on behalf of the brand’s consumer, channel member and brand owner that allows for greater margin earnings than it would without the brand and it gives the brand a differentiated competitive advantage. In 1991 Aaker defined brand equity as the value consumers derive from associating themselves with a brand reflecting the dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary assets (Aaker, 1991). According to Lassar et al. (1995) brand equity is the perception of superiority of a product holding a brand’s name when compared to other products or brands.
In his study published in 1992, Aaker conceptualized brand equity and put forward a model, seen in figure 3 on how brand equity generates value for both consumers and brand owners. Aaker (1992) believes that five factors are associated with brand equity that creates value:

- **Brand Loyalty** - The extent to which consumers are loyal to a brand
- **Brand Awareness** – The extent to which the consumers know the brand
- **Perceived Quality** – The perception that a product is of excellent quality by association with a brand
- **Brand Associations** – The associations and feeling triggered by the brand’s image
- **Other Proprietary** - Involves things like intellectual property rights and patents, relationships with trade partners and sponsorships.

Brand loyalty refers to the emotional attachment consumer has to a brand. When a consumer is loyal to a brand, he is more likely to repeat his purchases and shows a commitment to making the first choice when evaluating products. Brand loyalty reduces the organization’s marketing costs. Brand loyalty also acts as a barrier to competing brands, making it less likely for consumers to switch. At the very least brand loyalty gives the organization a buffer of time to respond to the competitions marketing efforts before potentially lose customers. Brand awareness implies to what extent the consumer is aware of the brand, his ability to recognize and recall the brand and the overall visibility of the brand. Perceived quality is the consumer perception of the product’s quality. Products which are attributed to a quality brand are often judged by the consumer as a quality product even though the consumer can have a tough time assessing and measuring the product’s objective quality. High perceived quality brands offer organizations the opportunity to charge a premium price and gain higher profit margins. Brand association is all the emotions, feelings, images, experiences and everything that is set in memory of the consumer which he links to the brand. Brand associations position the brand in the mind of the consumer and differentiate the brand from competitors and give the consumer a reason to buy the brand. Other proprietary brand assets further the overall advancement of the brand and creates a competitive advantage (Aaker, 1992).
The literature has shown that a brand is not just one thing, instead it is a collective set of factors and elements that influence consumers' perception of a product, and the brand also helps organizations to set their products aside from competitors. Brand image is how stakeholders perceive the brand, brand awareness allows consumers to identify and recognize the brand under different circumstances, and brand equity is the benefit that consumers and organizations receive from the brand. Therefore, brands are a complex phenomenon that shapes people's perspectives of organizations and its products and services. Brands dictate how stakeholders identify, remember and feel about an organization and what they do.

A brand is the result of the process of branding. Branding is the process of how organizations go about their way to create and position their brand in the minds of the consumers. A branding strategy is the method organizations utilize to give their products and services meaning to the consumers, and ultimately shape their brand image (Keller and Brexendorf, 2016). A branding strategy informs consumers about the brand in various ways and influences their perception of it. The influence of a branding process is not only limited to consumers. The branding process can impact employees, investors, channel members, and the reputation of the organization (Baker, 2016). Creating a brand that is positively perceived by all stakeholders through a successful branding process can
be tremendously beneficial for organizations. The importance of branding will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.2 Branding

According to Ataman et al. (2010) branding can be defined as the process of implementing a strategy which creates awareness, identity and a reputation of a product or an organization. This strategy should include various marketing activities ranging from product development and innovation to communications. The objective of a branding strategy should be differentiating the brand from competitor brands, thus reducing the level of competition and decreasing substitutes in the marketplace (Ataman et al., 2010).

How successful a branding strategy depends mostly upon how well marketers differentiate their brand from other competing brands. Kotler and Keller (2005) believe that the branding should revolve around creating a difference and then pursue to tell the consumer about how the brand is different from other competing brands. The brand existence is in the mind of the consumer (Kotler and Keller, 2005), thereby should marketing strategist concentrate on creating a cognitive market place perceived by customers and effectively place the brand in their minds. The brand positioning helps both marketing strategist and consumers to get a better understanding of what the brand stands for, its uniqueness and determine how the brand overlaps with competing brands (Erdem and Swait, 2004). The brand strategy should evaluate the product differentiating attributes, e.g. as price, quality, availability, and features (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Branding is about generating knowledge about the brand and then communicate and channel that knowledge onwards to the consumer. Branding should answer questions about what the brand means, who is it for and why should consumers care (Kotler and Keller, 2005).

Louvier (1994) contends that customers perceive brands in their own way and tend to associate themselves with brands that reflect their own characteristic, in other words, the consumer prefers brands with attributes that resonance with them. What the consumer prefers will thus affect what he chooses. This asserts the importance of the branding strategy and how well the brand meaning is established and how well the brand is differentiated (Louvier, 1994).
Mudambi, Doyle, and Wong (1997) put forth a model which shows how a simple branding strategy works. The model shows five interrelated steps and how they affect one and another. Branding influences the consumer’s perception, and the perception will have an impact on the consumers buying behavior. The buying behavior will then affect the brand’s financial performance since sales determines profit margins. Sales and profits will in return dictate the brand performance which in return will affect and determine the branding strategy (Mudambi et al., 1997). If a branding strategy is successful, it then enables marketers to enhance their products and brand in many ways, e.g. add brand extensions and allows for charging a premium price (Kotler and Keller, 2005). A successful branding strategy rewards its owners by creating a product that is in demand and is protected from the competition (Aaker, 1996).

In summary, branding is a strategy organizations implement to create awareness and identity for their products to successfully distinguish the organization products from competing brands. As per the literature, branding clarifies for the consumer what the brand it and its purpose. However, branding does not only apply to consumers that are looking to purchase a product. Internal branding is a branding strategy targeted at employees, and it is intended to inform, motivate and inspire employees to successfully deliver on the brand’s promise to external stakeholders (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The aim of internal branding is also to establish an emotional connection between employees and the brand, and influence employee behavior to support the brand. Organizations should recognize the importance of internal branding because it fosters employees that care for the brand and desire to deliver on its promise best to their abilities (Foster et al., 2010).
2.2.1 Internal branding

Internal branding is an organizational process which is intended to motivate current employees to keep the brand promise and get employees to associate themselves with the brand (Foster et al., 2010). The internal branding process focuses on getting employees involved in the development of the brand and disseminates knowledge about the brand to employees with the hopes of they will feel inspired and motivated by the brand.

Employee brand knowledge is defined as the sense employees have for the brand and it is acquired from organizational knowledge. Brand knowledge gives employees the ability to perform their roles and duties per the brand’s promise (King and Grace, 2008). A brand usually features a guarantee of some value for the consumer that consumes the brand, therefore the employees that are behind the brand play a significant role in delivering and conveying the brand’s promise (Devasagayam, et al., 2010). Employees first need to understand and comprehend the brand before they can assuredly satisfy customers by carrying out the brand’s promise (Miles and Mangold, 2004). Internal branding programs bear significant importance in conveying brand knowledge to employees. Their brand comprehension is connected to the brand performance, and ultimately it is them that deliver on the brand’s promise. If employees are undertrained and therefore unfit to comprehend the brand, they will never be able to convey the brand promise consistently and will certainly not be convincing brand advocates (King and Grace, 2008).

The objective of internal branding is to influence employee behavior, so they support, endorse and have positive emotional ties to the brand. Successful internal branding strategies can benefit the organization for it can function as a compass on how employees should behave, interact with, and deliver the brand promise to customers (Foster et al. 2010). Internal branding efforts have an effect on organization’s identities and their cultures which in turn will affect the commitment and loyalty of employees towards their corporate brand (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). To be able to deliver on the brand promise to external stakeholders, employees must have a good understanding of the brand and its values. Thus, it is crucial for organizations to implement internal branding strategies.
and communicate the brand message to all employees for them to be able to show consistency when delivering on the brand’s promise to external stakeholders.

Internal branding has thus been found to be a successful and effective strategy to obtain consistency in brand perception both to internal and external stakeholders (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). King and Grace (2008) believe that the practice of internal branding is an excellent way for organizations to educate current employees about the brand. That will increase the emotional connection employees have to the brand making them want to engage with the brand and endorse it.

Internal branding can be seen as a force that positively influences employee emotions towards the brand and as a compass that guides employees to deliver on the brand promise to external stakeholders. Internal branding communicates the brand message inwards to employees and reinforces quality. Similarly, employer branding is supposed to signal quality to potential employees (Dell and Ainspan, 2001). An organization that has a strong employer brand attracts potential competent hires, which implies that existing employees work for a desirable organization contributing to positive employee attitudes, which reinforces their belief in the brand (Foster et al., 2010).

2.2.2 Employer branding

The concept of employer branding started to become a topic of scholars at the beginning of the 1990s when it began to appear in human resource management research and literature. The school of thought revolves around and is rooted in the idea that an organization’s brand and human capital are a valuable resource (Backhhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The concept of employer branding is the process of creating an appealing image of the organization in order to attract new desirable employees. Employer branding practitioners should focus on communicating the corporate brand promise to external stakeholders and make the organization seem like a desirable place to work. The main objective of employer branding is to differentiate the organization from other firms and create a perception of the organization, so potential employees consider it a place worth belonging to (Backhhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) defined employer branding as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. By focusing on rewarding and encouraging existent
employees, employer branding can create desired employment experiences for both current and potential employees because current employees will communicate the appreciation they receive from their organization to potential hires (Martin and Beaumont, 2003). Employer branding should focus on aligning the organization’s values, behaviours, missions, and policies in a manner that is attractive to potential employees and motivating for current employees (Dell and Ainspan, 2001).

Employer branding aims to communicate the brand promise externally and to signal quality with hopes of attracting potential employees. Employer branding also gives an assurance to existing employees that they are in the right place. Internal branding focuses inwards on current employees with the hopes of inspiring them to support the brand. Corporate branding considers both internal and external perspectives. The goal of corporate branding is to create a favorable brand image for the organization as a whole and position that image in the minds of all stakeholders (Schultz et al., 2005). A strong corporate brand thus combines different branding processes and gives all stakeholders a positive comprehensive perception of the organization as a whole. That is important because the corporate brand influences the emotions employees have towards the brand they work with and the place they work at (Foster et al., 2010). A positive corporate brand image encourages employees to engage with the brand and to speak pleasantly about their workplace.

2.2.3 Corporate branding
Different from traditional branding, where marketers brand their products to draw attention to them and differentiate them from other competing products, corporate branding is a process where the organization strives to work out its purpose which means something to internal and external stakeholders (Schultz et al., 2005). Einwiller and Will (2002) defined corporate branding as a systematic and organized process which develops a positive image and creates a favorable reputation of the organization which is disseminated to all stakeholders. Corporate branding is the assurance on behalf of the company to employees and consumers that the organization will stick to its values and keep its promises (Foster et al., 2010). The corporate brand is managed by managing employee communications and behaviors, behaviors being a relevant term because it
refers to employee behavior and their competence to deliver on the promise which the organization makes to all stakeholders (Foster et al., 2010).

A corporate brand in itself does not do anything. However, employees play a vital role in creating and developing a favorable corporate brand. Thus, managers should work towards achieving a homogeneous perception of the corporate brand amongst employees (Harris and de Chernatony 2001). Furthermore, the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently within the organization and to have different business departments cooperating becomes a vital component towards creating a united view of the corporate brand identity. Consensus about the corporate brand amongst employees contributes cohesion, knowledge and belief sharing which makes the corporate brand building process more fluid and genuine (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

King (1991) said that employees play a vital role in building the corporate brand because they are the bridge between consumers and the organization. Employee behaviors and actions thus affect consumer’s perception of the brand because they are responsible for delivering the brand promise through their interactions with customers. Employee understanding of the corporate identity is paramount because it reflects the company’s values, aspirations, and ethos which the corporate brand is drawn from (Foster et al., 2010). Managers should strive to cultivating a consensus view and understanding amongst employees on what the corporate brand is and what it stands for because it contributes to employees working together in unison. If employees have a solid understanding of the corporate brand and can thus deliver on the brand’s promise consistently, the result will be that external stakeholders will make a favorable sense of the brand’s image and identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). Because the corporate brand focuses on all stakeholders both internal and external the goal of corporate branding should be to engage and cultivate existing employees while also function as an attraction for potential employees and consumers (Foster et al., 2010).

The corporate brand is intended to create a favourable image in the minds of all stakeholders, internal branding focuses on nurturing existing stakeholders, and employer branding sets its sights on attracting desirable talents to the organization. Thus, aligning all three branding strategies can have great benefit the organization (Foster et al., 2010).
The literature has highlighted that brands are a valuable asset and essential to organizational success. Brands have a tremendous amount of influence on consumers and dictate how they remember, identify and feel about an organization and its products. The process of branding dictates how organizations can successfully create a positive image and position their brand in the consumer's minds. However, the process of branding is not only limited to the process of branding products or services. Branding can also be aimed internally at the employees, and the literature has shown the positive impact internal branding can have on the organization's success. Internal branding contributes to employees supporting the brand, employer branding, and corporate branding reinforces employee's belief in their brand and place of work. The employees are the driving force behind an organization, and their devotion and work contribution have a lot to say about a brand's success.

Employees are often referred to as human capital, and human resource management departments are the authoritative body within organizations responsible for managing employees and securing their well-being and work engagement (Stoery, 2007). Since human resource departments are responsible for employee contributions to the organization, it is essential that human resource policies are aligned with the overall business strategy, including the marketing strategy (Mitchell, 2002). A strong brand draws its power from the employees that stand behind it. Organizations should recognize the opportunity of having human resources and marking departments collaborating to mobilize the workforce to become brand enthusiasts and brand ambassadors (Timothy et al., 2005). The following chapter analyses terms and concepts related to human resource management which is followed by a discussion of the role of human resources in marketing.

2.3 Human Resources

Human resource is the term commonly used to describe the people that work for an organization. The Human resource department of an organization is the authoritative body that is responsible for managing employees, that is the human resource (HR) (Guest, 1987). Storey (1997) believe that human resource departments are essential to an organization’s success. The human resources department oversees determinations of salaries, hiring of staff and implementing performance objectives. It is the human
resources department’s responsibility to ensure that the HR policies are coordinated and syncretized with the organization’s overall business goals and objectives (Purcell and Hutchinton, 2004).

Human resource managers are responsible for creating and administering programs that are intended to increase business effectiveness (Stoery, 1997). HR also revolves around creating and improving the relationship between the employer and employees. Amongst other aspects such as; training, hiring, performing background checks, layoffs and settling all types of conflicts. The HR department also contributes to establishing morale within the organization ensuring a pleasant workspace environment by rewarding the employees for their performance and contribution (Storey, 1997).

Human resource management is the process of keeping day to day business operations stable and running smoothly. Strategic human resource management is the process of combining HR practices with organizational overall business strategy (Besma, 2014). Managing the human capital proactively and strategically is especially important for market orientated organizations if they want to attain their branding objectives.

2.3.1 Strategic human resource management

The importance of strategic human resource management of an organization must not be underemphasized because human beings are the driving force behind any company. The organization itself does not do anything; however, it is the employees that perform on the organization’s behalf (Besma, 2014). Senior management has increasingly been realizing that a well elaborated human resource policy can yield considerable benefits for organizations such as quality of service, productivity, and profits (Besma, 2014).

Human resource managers have to be well informed and involved in the overall business strategy, goals and objectives for a strategic human resource management policy to be successful. It is their responsibility to communicate the business vision onwards to the employees. The importance of the alignment and synergy between SHMR policy and overall business policy is not overemphasized, these policies must be created and implemented, so everyone within the organization is working towards a common goal and preventing confusion (Maheshwari and Vohra, 2015).

The contribution of human resource is the focus of human resource management and is vital in securing a competitive advantage. This vision held by human resource managers
can make all the difference because, in the end, it is the employee’s devotion that separates one organization from another. Thus, human resource management policies can be considered so crucial for the business operation that they should not be the sole responsibility of the human resource management department but the whole organization including senior management. Strategic human resources management is when the managers throughout the organization have become aware of the importance of the wellbeing of the human resource and take on shared responsibility in enforcing human resource policies (Huselid, 1995). Organizations that utilize strategic human resource management methods have demonstrated a positive effect on the workforce such as employer loyalty and increased job satisfaction. Therefore, managers that implement and apply strategic human resource management can reap the benefits of having a happier and more commitment employee (Brandl et al., 2009).

Human resource management is the process of keeping day to day business operations stable and running smoothly. Strategic human resource management is the process of combining HR practices with organizational overall business strategy (Besma, 2014). Managing the human capital proactively and strategically is especially important for market orientated organizations if they want to attain their branding objectives. A successful way of to secure an organization’s marketing goals is to establish a energetic organizational culture (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006).

2.3.2 Organizational culture
An organizational culture involves agreed upon values and methods of work within an organization which the employees share (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). Organizational culture is intangible, that is one cannot see it nor touch it however organizational culture can be felt and experienced. Organizational culture plays a pivotal role in organizations. It affects the employees, their work performance, and every other process within the company (Sadri and Lees, 2001). Often do employees have different backgrounds, experiences, and personalities, so Sadri and Lees (2001) believe organizational culture to be the employee’s guide to the trajectory the organization wants its employees to be working towards. Organizational Culture dictates what is deemed appropriate behavior in different situations and circumstances that might come up in daily business operations (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006).
Schrodt (2002) contends that organizational culture can affect and have an influence on whether an employee identifies with the organization or not. Atchinson (1996) defines corporate culture as the set of employee’s assumptions, values, and opinions that influence their decision making, and the more employees share and agree upon these values the level of organizational increases. Atchinson (1996) also compared corporate culture to an individual’s personality and how that individual conducts himself daily.

Managers are essential to the creation of an organizational culture and how that culture in channelled and communicated throughout the company. However, the relationship between authority and organizational culture is not a one-way street. Even though managers are influential agents when it comes to organizational culture, it is the culture that dictates what kind of leadership is achievable (Schein, 2010). It can be dangerous for managers not to realize their essential role in establishing, maintaining and evolving organizational culture. An embedded culture within a company can exhibit how employees should behave and perform which may help them to achieve their goals. This kind of structure will, in turn, provide higher levels of job satisfaction when an employee feels like he is being helped by management to complete a set goal. This point of view illustrates that organizational culture, leadership and job satisfaction are interlinked and connected (Tsai, 2011).

Human resource management plays a significant role in creating an organizational culture. Thriving company culture defines how employees conduct themselves under different working situations if the culture fosters employee engagement and it aligned with the organization’s brand it is more likely to deliver positive results for the organization. The following chapter will examine the relationship between human resource management functions and marketing.

2.3.3 The role of human resources management in marketing
It has become apparent that the role of human resources (HR) have become increasingly pivotal for organizations. As the business environment becomes more conscious of the positive effect that suitably trained, excited and driven employees can have on the progress and prosperity of their respected companies. Therefore, more attention has been paid to the role of HR within organizations and the demand for its engagement in core business processes has increased (Ulrich, 1998; Becker et al., 1997).
Organizations and their brands have been known to perform better when their employees are more engaged and committed to the brand’s values (Mitchell, 2002). This fact has sparked an increased interest with managers and key personnel to expand the organization’s effort in getting employees in tuned with the brand and even use employees in their marketing endeavours (Mitchell, 2002). Having employees that are in unison with the brand message are more likely to conduct themselves in manner of which the organization wants the external customer to perceive the brand and its products and services (Aurand et al., 2005).

How a customer experiences the brand and whether he does it positively or negatively has a lot to do with the interactions of the employee whom he encounters. Therefore, concepts like employee satisfaction, internal service and employee productivity has become more imperative both academically and in practice (Aurand et al., 2005). Organizations have been putting more emphasis on systems which are implemented by human resources that revolve around getting employees engaged in the organization’s brand mission (Aurand et al., 2005). This kind of involvement of the employees in the marketing efforts, that is getting staff members to live the brand is what is known as internal branding, employee branding or internal marketing (Keller, 2003).

HR practitioners have traditionally been more adept at working with the human capital and have not been occupied with the context of marketing and branding. Similarly, marketers have been inclined to communicate the brand’s message to external stakeholders, rather than to project it internally to employees. Organizations create a competitive advantage when there is synergy between employee actions and behaviours and brand identity. Organizations often fail to achieve this synergy because of the lack of overlap and integration between functions of different business departments, especially HR and marketing (Timothy et al., 2005). Organizations should “pursue incremental improvement in employee brand assimilations” (Timothy et al., 2005, p. 167) in order to motive employees to create a positive image through their actions at work. Employees will be more inclined to reinforce and deliver on the brand promise when the whole organization shares with them what is going on within the organization. Timothy et al. (2005) believe marketing departments and HR departments can by collaboration, bring employee brand assimilation and employee brand association into reality. Organizations
must emphasize on implementing cross-functional initiatives within the company to present and reinforce the brand to employees. Furthermore, organizations should avoid well-worn stereotypes regarding the fields of marketing and HR. Marketers must be willing and able to turn their attention inwards, and HR practitioners must adopt an external oriented focus.

Timothy et al. (2005) contend that employees show more positive emotions towards the brand and perceive the brand favorably when HR has some involvement in internal marketing. Furthermore, employees are more likely to behave in accordance with the brand when HR and marketing collaborate in communicating the brand’s message in the internal marketing process (Timothy et al., 2005). Timothy et al. (2005) highlighted the fact that a productive relationship between HR and marketing can bear tremendous opportunities for organizations. HR and marketing departments should work together in delivering the brand’s message to employees and when the message is clearly and repeatedly communicated to employees they will incorporate the brand attributes into their work activities. HR’s involvement in internal marketing projects can be beneficial in various ways. Employees will gain a better understanding of the brand and what responsibility they hold in delivering on the brands promise. HR’s involvement can mitigate confusion, prevent discrepancy and misaligned messages (Timothy et al., 2005).

By involving HR in all branding and marketing activities enhances the relationship between different business departments and brings them closer together, especially between marketing, communications, and human resources. Strengthened relationships between departments develop employees to connect with the corporate brand (Edwards, 2010). The full extent and impact a brand can have on the organization is not fully realized until employees clearly understand the brand and the brand’s promise (Timothy et al., 2005).

The research literature review has examined how brands and branding can pave the way for organizational success. Furthermore, the literature has highlighted the importance of combining marketing and HR policies to create a culture which revolves around engaging employees with the brand. Employee engagement is when employees are fully energized and motivated to perform and deliver results for their organization (Robertson and Markwick, 2009) if organizations want their employees to advocate the
brand and harness the power of their employees to the fullest extent, the workforce has to be engaged.

2.4 Employee Engagement
The concept of employee engagement has overtime been defined in many ways by scholars, companies, and consultants, so a consensus has not been established in the literature on what definition is the best suitor or the most widely accepted (Robertson & Markwick, 2009).

Kahn (1990) was the first to define the concept of employee engagement, and he based his definition of the Need-Satisfaction Approach (Maslow, 1970). Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as people harnessing their selves where they expressed themselves physically and emotionally in their work roles. Maslach et al. (2001) said that employee engagement was being the opposite as being burnt out, instead of that an engaged employee was in a positive, motivated state of fulfilment. The outcome of an organization success such as productivity, profits, customer satisfaction, and turnover has been linked to employee engagement (Harter et al., 2002).

Saks (2006) said that it is beneficial to organizations to challenge employees by letting them be involved in tasks that are a more significant than their day to day tasks. The challenge fosters engagement which contributes to employees committing to the organization, job satisfaction, organizational optimism and general physical and mental well-being of the employees. Furthermore, an unengaged employee is likelier to be frequently absent or might feel the need to leave his employer (Harter et al., 2002). Bakker and Demerouti (2008) say that engaged employees think bigger and are more adaptable to change. The corporate scene is where the concept of employee engagement is put in to practice and becomes a reality. Employee engagement is where talented individuals become a strong team according to Saks (2006).

Robert and Markwick (2009) defined employee engagement as a group of people collectively committed to a preferred result. Baumruk and Marusaz (2004) believe that the organization must align organizational objectives with individual employee performances to create a company culture that encourages employees and considers employee needs. Robertson and Markwick (2009) further described employee
engagement as energized people that have a passion for their work and have formed emotional ties with their place of work.

Itam and Singh (2016) said organizations should develop employee engagement by striving to get employees to believe in their place of work by creating an organizational identity that employees were proud of. Organizational identity fosters commitment and creates a desire to belong to the organization and remain there. Furthermore, organizational identity creates a sense of security, value and positive feelings towards the organization.

Martin and Hetrick (2007) identified a set of feelings that were associated with employee engagements; belief in the organization, commitment to the organization, identification, and internalization with the organization. These feelings, attitudes, and emotions can be beneficially utilized in practice by providing better services to customers, increased efforts on the job and a more willingness to share knowledge and information with co-workers. Human resource professionals and other senior managers have recognized how important and beneficial this is to organizations and have started to implement employee engagement and its concepts in practice by aligning human resource management with the organization overall business strategy.

2.4.1 Engaging employees with the brand
The branding literature has highlighted the fact that organizations that successfully implement effective internal strategies will enable their employees to “live the brand” while they interact and deliver the brand promise to external stakeholders. Furthermore, employees that understand the brand values and are motivated by the brand can be identified as engage employees that are eager to communicate the brand message to external stakeholders (Ahmad et al., 2014). According to Martin and Beaumont (2003), employee engagement can be achieved with internal branding efforts by aligning brand knowledge dissemination to employees, training, and encouragement. Managers should focus on trying to align employee perception of the brand’s image with the company’s long term objective. Thus, internal branding gets employees involved in building the corporate brand which contributes them to engage with it. Ashforth and Mael (1989) said that distinctive and unique brand values could guide employees and allow them to identify them with the organization where internal branding efforts function as a helpful
tool in order to accomplish that association. Furthermore, organizational commitment theory suggests that employees become emotionally tied with their organization if they understand, believe in and accept the brand’s values (Cook and Wall, 1980).

According to Itam and Singh (2016), the organization should highly consider aligning corporate, internal and employer branding efforts in order to get employees to engage with both the organization and the brand. Engaged employees are the ones that feel a desire to communicate the brand’s message to all stakeholders and fully live the brand. Employees that live the brand gain a better understanding and insights about the brand, so their performance of delivering the brand promise becomes consistent and efficiently delivered to both internal and external stakeholders. Which will result in the development of favorable corporate brand image in the minds external stakeholders making the organization a desirable place of work and also giving off the perception to internal stakeholders that the organization is the best place to work (Itam and Singh, 2016).

2.4.2 Engaging employees to live the brand

Spark (2004) contends that brands are not any more mere symbols that distinguish products from one another. Instead, they define relationships between the brand and people, counting the employees of the organization. Because of the multiplex and complicated process of branding and brand building, top management often fail to recognize what role employees can play in the branding strategy (James, 2000). Employee behaviour and conduct can have a considerable impact on crucial stakeholder’s perceptions of the brand (Simms, 2003). An employee that is “living the brand” is an employee that conducts himself in a manner that mirrors the organization’s brand, message, value and culture (Fram and McCarthy, 2003). In endeavors to get their staff to “live the brand” Bendapudi and Bendapudi (2005) suggest that organizations should think of their employees as a living embodiment of the brand and thus allocate resources and energy into training and development so that the employees reflect the brand’s values in their everyday life. This practice is often referred to as employee or human capital branding. By establishing an emotional connection between the employees and the brand is a concrete way to get employees to live the brand (Mitchell 2002). If such a link is established, Mitchell (2002) believes that the brand will become alive in the eyes of
employees and that will, in turn, influence them to associate their values with the brand’s values.

Getting employees committed and engaged in their work is the key objective of human resources departments (Das, 2003). This engagement is generated by a combination of six factors which are reward, recognition, relationships, opportunity, environment, and leadership (Das, 2003). Engagement will then yield three key elements: “say”, “stay” and “strive”. Say is where employees speak well about their company, stay is when employees stay with their company and lead by an example, strive is where employees go above and beyond for their respected organizations. To secure a level of high-quality service employees must be kept motivated and energized. Managers can achieve this stage of motivation by implementing and practicing internal marketing which in return will result in skill development and employee retention (Czaplewski, Ferguson and Milliman, 2001) Beagrie (2003) defines internal marketing as the act of inspiring employees in such a way that their behaviour and way of thought changes to accomplish organizational goals.

Employees need to be consistently measured and evaluated on their performance in order for the engagement to last (Welbourne 2003). This notion is supported by Mullich (2003) who suggest that managers need to assess and rate employee engagement and then give an assessment on how their performance did compare to the organization’s desired goals of employee engagement. To successfully monitor and evaluate employee performance and engagement managers must implement and follow some system. Armstrong (2000) believes that the objective of a performance management system is to create a company culture where employees experience accountability and take responsibility for the improvement and progression of their organization. Incentives and rewards should be an essential element of performance management. McDermott (2002) believes that by rewarding your employees for achieving set company goals, managers motivate their employees to go above and beyond in their performance. By implementing a successful performance management system organization have a considerable advantage in getting their employees to live the company’s brand (McDermott, 2002).

This research’s theoretical framework has summarized that brands are an organization’s most valuable assets and that branding is a process that should be
thoughtfully and strategically implemented to create a brand that resonates with consumers. The process of branding is not limited to the differentiation of products for consumers to purchase. The literature has also shown the necessity of directing branding efforts inwards to employees. Internal branding contributes to employees recognizing the product’s tangible and intangible attributes, and employees will also gain a better understanding of the brand’s values and meaning which increases the chances of employees supporting the brand. Furthermore, employer branding and corporate branding reinforces employee’s belief in their place of work and the brand they work with. As with brands and branding, human capital plays a significant role in an organization’s success. Scholars and practitioners have pointed out the importance of aligning HR policies with the organization’s overall business strategy. Marketing and human resource management departments can and should collaborate to create a company culture that inspires, motivates and encourages employees to associate themselves with the brand. Branding strategies, brands, motivated and an engaged workforce, thriving company culture, alignment of HR policies and business strategies and collaboration between marketing and human resources are all factors that can be considered as ingredients to get employees to advocate their brands. However, the literature has not explicitly highlighted how organizations can go about to turn their employees into brand ambassadors.

Howell (2012) contends that inductive qualitative research approach, where the research starts with a research question followed by collection and analysis of data to generate a hypothesis, is best suited to explore research topics that lack the support of established models that explain a social phenomenon. This research aims to identify how a relationship between marketing and HR departments can create brand ambassadors. Since there are no pre-existing models or theories that support the research topic, this research attempts to identify the essential factors to that relationship by adopting a qualitative research approach. In the following chapter, the methodology of this research is outlined, and participants presented.
3 Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of this research paper will be outlined. A qualitative research method was utilized to attain the objective of this research paper. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, and open-ended questions were asked.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods are designed with the purpose of revealing behaviour and perceptions of a group of people or an individual with reference to a particular topic (Punch, 2014). Qualitative research methods draw their origins form social sciences and are designed in a manner that is intended to shed light on and understand what people think and how they perceive different matters of the world. Results and findings of qualitative researches are communicative and descriptive. In-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research, content analysis, and a case study are all types of qualitative research methods. The researcher is one of the primary tools in qualitative research. The researchers have to be careful not to influence his interviewees with his own opinions, perspectives and beliefs, preconceived ideas should be avoided. The researcher gathers data and analyses that data with emphasis on interpretation rather than being descriptive. The findings in qualitative research should not be generalized, the focus should be on researching the individual in order to find the silver lining in the experiences of the individual (Esterberg, 2002). After the data gathering has been concluded the researcher interprets and processes the data and finally puts forth a hypothesis which is intended to reflect the findings of the research.

Interviews are the primary and most important form of data gathering in qualitative research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1997). The researcher is in a power position in relation to his interviewee because the researcher is extracting information and knowledge from the participant. It is important that the interviewee experiences trust and intimacy from the researcher in order for the interviewee to open up and share his feeling, attitudes, and beliefs with the researcher. The goal of qualitative research is to understand the participant’s perspective, his story and how he experiences the topic of discussion (Esterberg, 2002).
Interviews can be categorized into three different types; unstructured, structured and semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews are like a normal conversation with few or any predetermined interview questions. This is a style of interview is formless and can be useful to use when the researcher has to establish a rapport with the interviewee especially if the research material is sensitive and hard to talk about. The researcher should note that if he chooses this method, he might have to conduct several interviews before the researcher can gather all the information he needs because the discussion is not guided in any particular direction (Howell, 2012). Structured interviews strictly adhere to a list of questions the researcher has prepared before the interview. Only questions on the interview protocol are asked. Therefore, the researcher does not get much opportunity to probe and explore further the answers of this participant to gain a better insight into his attitudes regarding the research topic (Punch, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are interviews where the researcher guides the discussion in a specific direction with the support of an interview protocol. The protocol is used to maintain some structure on the interviewee, but the researcher has the freedom to probe and ask follow-up questions to explore further his participant’s answers. There are several critical questions on the interview protocol which determine the area to be explored. The questions asked are open-ended, so the participant has the chance of expressing himself fully. Each interview usually is 45-60 minutes (Esterberg, 2002).

3.2 Data Gathering and Participants

Qualitative research is founded in descriptive data which is then analysed by the researcher. Qualitative data can be anecdotal records, transcribed interviews, personal and public records, and video recordings (Shenton, 2004). In-depth semi-structured interview as conducted where the researcher asked open-ended questions.

When an in-depth interview is conducted, it is essential that the interviewee is in his natural environment, for example at home, at work or somewhere where the participant feels like at home. It is good form to start the interview with a light topic and preferably with something the researcher and the interviewee have in common, and this is done to lighten the mood. Before the interview, it is important that the researcher promises the participant full anonymity and confidentiality. While the interview is ongoing, the researcher should avoid being suggestive and should never ask questions that are leading.
Suggestive questions are questions that imply that a particular answer should be given in response. The researcher should also avoid asking questions that only command one syllabus answers. The researcher should try to keep a good flow while conducting the interview, and silence can also be a valuable tool if used correctly, silence can be used to observe and solicit information. While the interview is being conducted the researcher must be watchful and alert to things like tone of voice, facial expression, hand gestures and what is being said and how it is said (Howell, 2012). When the interview has concluded it is best to start to transcribe immediately while the content is still fresh in memory. After the researcher has finished transcribing his interviews, he should begin to identify and analyze themes derived from the interviews and then write up his conclusions. (Esterberg, 2002; Punch, 2014; Howell 2012).

The participants in this research were nine in total. The sample of this research was marketing managers and human resource managers that work for Icelandic corporations. Marketing and human resource managers were selected because they are responsible for managing the organization’s corporate brands and human capital. A purposeful sampling method was used in this research. A purposeful sampling method is defined as a strategy where the researcher purposely seeks after participants that have expert knowledge that is relevant to the research topic (Punch, 2014). In this research, the researcher asked many marketing and human resource managers for interviews via e-mail. Some recipients accepted the interview invitation, and some did not. Interviews were taken with all those who accepted the interview invitation. All the interviews were conducted at the participant’s offices. To secure anonymity, all participants were given the letter P and a number:

- **P1**, a marketing manager of a large information technology organization. The interview was conducted in his office on the 11th of November 2018.

- **P2**, a marketing manager of a large fast-food organization. The interview was conducted at his office on the 13th of November 2018.

- **P3**, human resource manager of a large fast-food organization. The interview was conducted at his office on the 13th of November 2018.

- **P4**, a marketing manager of a large organization that produces and imports alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The interview was conducted in a conference room in his office building on the 18th of November 2018.
P5, a human resource manager of a large organization that produces and imports alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The interview was conducted in a conference room in his office building on the 20th of November 2018.

P6, a marketing manager of a large telecommunication and media content distribution organization. The interview was conducted in a conference room in his office building on the 22nd of November 2018.

P7, a human resource manager of a large telecommunication and media content distribution organization. The interview was conducted in a conference room in his office building on the 23rd of November.

P8, a marketing manager of a small sports media organization. The interview was conducted at his office on the 7th of November 2018.

P9, the marketing and the human resource manager of a small film and advertising organization. The interview was conducted on the 6th of November 2018.

3.3 Data Analysis

As previously stated, the interviews that were conducted in this research were in-depth and semi-structured. After the interviews were taken and recorded they were then transcribed the following day. A phenomenology method was used during the whole researching process. Phenomenology is rooted in philosophy and anthropology, and in its essence, the researcher is encouraged to experience the world as he sees it (Smith et al., 2009).

This research was conducted in accordance with the three steps of phenomenology; the first step is description, the second step is reduction, and the third step is interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

The first step was when the interviews were being conducted and then transcribed the following day. The second step was when themes were drawn from the interviews, and all the data was studied with an open mind. The researcher read over the data several times in order to highlight specific words, phrases, and remarks made by the participants that were relevant to the research and could be useful to answer the research question. Some themes had many similarities and could be unified under a single theme, some themes were deemed unimportant to the research and were dismissed. The themes identified in this research were six in total and will be presented in the following chapter.
On the third step is where the data was interpreted, on this third and final step is where the researcher tries to arrive at an understanding and uncover what was said in the interviews. The researcher attempted to be interpretive avoided being descriptive.
4 Results

The conclusions of the research will be presented in this chapter. The six themes that were drawn from the interviews of the research are:

- Brand expression.
- Physical and mental presence.
- Brand cohesion through collaboration.
- Employee appreciation.
- Breaking down silos.
- Knowledge dissemination.

How the themes are connected is illustrated in a hexagon (seen in figure 5), with the overlapping efforts of marketing and human resource departments in its center. The overlap between marketing and HR is placed in the center because their relationship is instrumental to the creation of brand ambassadors. Brand expression revolves around how employees can be utilized in branding, and how brands are created from within by letting employees be involved in the organization’s marketing endeavors. The involvement of employees in marketing is much more efficient and effective if marketing and human resource management departments are kept in a physical and mental state of presence. Marketing departments are responsible for the brand, and HR departments are responsible for the human capital, so it is essential that these two departments have access to each other and communicate freely and frequently. If marketing and HR collaborate effectively and efficiently they better chance of creating a united view of the corporate brand amongst employees which unites the employees and encourages them to associate themselves with unique brand features. If organizations want their employees to rally behind the brand and communicate its message internally and externally, it is essential for employers to provide the best possible work environment and make employees feel like they are valued members of the team. Therefore, showing appreciation towards employees and rewarding them for their work is an essential motivation for employees to deliver for their organization. It fosters interdepartmental collaboration and synergy when employees have a consensus view of the brand and feel motivated to behave in accordance with the brand. The synergy yields creativity and
contributes to the breaking down of organizational silos. Organizations that have departments that cooperate effectively and trust each other are more willing and acceptable to receive and share knowledge about the brand and the products. Transparency, sharing of knowledge, receiving and giving feedback within an organization requires competent tools. Therefore effective internal communications are essential to brand advocacy. Employees that are knowledgeable about the brand are likelier to be genuine brand ambassadors and more willing to express the brand message.

![Figure 5 Connection of themes drawn from the interviews](image)

### 4.1 Brand Expression

The traditional role of marketing has a general focus on communicating the brand’s promise to existing and potential customers. It is the employees within the organization which take on the collective responsibility of delivering on the brand’s promise successfully. Therefore it is crucial that employees know precisely what it is that their company does and how their role in the company fits in the bigger picture. All interviewees in this research spoke about the importance of participation and involvement of employees in the organization’s marketing efforts to get employees to engage with the brand and act as brand ambassadors. A predominant agreement was amongst interviewees that partnership between the marketing department and human
resource management departments could have significant positive effects when it came to employee brand engagement. When efforts of both marketing and HR overlapped within an organization the employees associated themselves more with the brand, they understood the meaning of it better and thus were more inclined to be its advocate. The interviewees that worked for an organization that had little or no overlap between marketing and HR wanted to see more cooperation between the two departments and were positive about the potential upside the partnership could foster. Those interviewees that worked for an organization were there was an overlap between the two departments were genuinely convinced that the partnership had a positive effect on both the brand and the employees. P1 described how his organization was positively impacted by having marketing and HR working together. The two departments strategically involved employees in a rebranding process which sparked great satisfaction amongst employees and made them more connected to their brand:

In the rebranding preparation process we looked to our employees and asked their opinion on what the corporate brand should stand for and asked them to partake in the process and they appreciated that, and so when the change accrued you could feel that they were much more prepared for what was in the balance, they felt like their new look, message, tone and all that were piece of them

P1’s organization wanted to create something new; its old brand was stagnant and performing poorly. P1 wanted his employees to apart of the new things the brand wanted to accomplish and give his employees the chance to make it their own. Because in the end it is the employees who make up the living organism of the company and therefore the brand, so it makes sense that they are involved in the rebranding process. By giving the employees the chance to be a part of the process P1 is ensuring his employees involvement in the brand, and it is more likely that they become satisfied because they helped create this new brand and it stands on the pillar of what they deemed to be important.

P2 talked about how the brand could function as a point of compass for employees and how it can positively affect their behavior at work. If the external brand focus is clear it helps employees to begin to grasp how they should conduct themselves:
Our brand personality traits are; honesty, when we make a mistake we make amends, we don’t use Photoshop in our marketing material. Another trait is being fun and social, and I believe that is apparent in our marketing content, yet another one is being competitive both in price and positions.

P2 believes they have been successful in creating a clear focus of what the brand is and what it stands for and what customers may expect from it. The brand’s personality traits are honesty, fun and social and competitiveness. It is easier for employees to gain an understanding of how they should conduct themselves and what is expected of them when the brand focus is clear. It is more attainable for employees to associate themselves with the brand when the brand is defined, and its traits are distinctive. P2 believes that the brand function as a kind of tour guide for the employees of the organization and they will follow their guide because he is clear, articulated and they can relate to him.

P1 is convinced that partnership between marketing and HR bear opportunities for organizations in their quest to create a brand that resonates with both external and internal stakeholders:

We work really closely with the human resources department, which I think is important, and our work overlaps quite a bit on various routine and daily tasks, but the key point in our partnership is creating this single brand ideology.

It is essential for the marketing and human resources department to have a good relationship and to be in sync if the organization wants to present a single-brand message. The organization seeks to create a desirable image in the minds of consumers. To be able to accomplish that, a similar message has to be conveyed to the market and employees. If the company wants its brand to be perceived by consumers in a certain way, it’s important that the employees know and understand what the brand stands for and what it is trying to achieve in the market. Therefore, there has to be a strong link between the messages that are being channelled into employees and out to consumers. There cannot be a discrepancy in how the employees operate and how the company wants to portray its brand. Therefore, the human resources department must understand what the marketing department is trying to achieve in the market so that they can support and guide the employees in a manner that correlates to what the brand is attempting to do on the market. Likewise, it is just as crucial for the marketing department to understand HR’s needs so they can fashion their marketing efforts accordingly, so it matches
employee’s capabilities. P1 continued to support his argument by taking an example of how the partnership between marketing and HRM benefited the organization during a rebranding process:

At one point we wanted to change our brand, so we worked really closely with HR during the change, we wanted to figure out how we could change the company’s tone of voice, we wanted go from being perceived as “a dull know it all” to “being a helpful and cheerful” we wanted to present humility, initiative and be perky both with our customers and employees.

The marketing and human resources department worked in cooperation to find a way to change the brand’s image. The brand was perceived as dull, old, slow and withdrawn and even worse people did not fully understand what the company did. The marketing department had the basic idea of how they wanted the new brand to be presented to the market and perceived by customers. The human resource department took that information and started to work out how this change of voice and character could be performed internally and presented to employees. Because of this, the company was successful in creating a single brand cohesion within the company. There is no inconsistency in the brand’s marketing content and the message that is being preached within the organization. P1 believes this will result in a better experience for both employees and customers so, when a customer is in contact with an employee of the organization, whether if he is in customer service or maintenance, he should be communicated with the embodiment of the brand. This demonstrates the benefits an organization can reap by having marketing and human resource cooperating on tasks that revolve around branding and internal branding. P1 mentioned that in a time of change the partnership exerted a lot of positive influence and helped the organization advantageously turn the tables when the corporate brand image had become unfavorable:

“A service orientated company in the information technology business” is what we wanted to be the silver lining in our company after the rebranding process because the market has changed, our client base is different, now a days the customers wants us to be in touch….5-10 years ago, the culture within this company was different, in those days you had these introverted technologist that knew everything better than everyone else and they were just like kings and kind of controlled everything but they were in no contact with what the customer wanted...what so ever.
At some point, the P1 had realized that the organization had fallen behind the competition and were operating ten years behind the present. The company realized they had to turn this situation around and get in line with the current market needs and demands which was proactive customer service. The brand’s image had become the very introverted technologist P1 described. In the rebranding process of the company, marketing- and HRM departments linked together to change the brand’s image and they had to do it in a manner that reflected the brand’s new message to the market. The company had to make sure that they did not merely change the outlook of the company with a new logo, name and flashy advertisement they had to make sure to change within also. This change in company culture, parallel to the rebranding process had to be authentic and not just a pretense. That is where the connection between marketing and human resource becomes paramount according to P1. Together these departments had to make sure their new brand identity was communicated effectively and efficiently to the employees. It was crucial the employees got the right information about what the new brand stood for and how to express it. This idea of accomplishing a holistic change throughout the organization with a marketing-HRM partnership is further supported by P4’s challenge of making his brand reach a new and different audience:

Our brand image has seen better days, I think we are perceived as being too old-fashioned, we want to change that and reach a younger audience, but it is easier said than done... I think we all need to change if we want to fully achieve it

Change is necessary when the brand needs some renovations to pick itself up. That change has to come from within the organization, and that demonstrates the relevance and importance of different departments within the organization working together. P4 Believes that more people from different fields and areas in the company must come together more often and be in more contact with each other to ignite the change needed. If marketing, HRM, sales and IT and other fitting departments collaborated more frequently, they would understand each other needs better. That practice would make for an authentic change because different departments strived collectively for a common goal with regard for one and another, that authentic change would then be reflected in the external marketing and communications. By putting the effort in deciding and performing marketing efforts as a unified entity instead of putting it on the shoulders of
one man in a single department in isolated office space the company has a much better chance in rallying its employees behind the brand and engage with it to both internal and external stakeholders.

P6 concurred with P1 on how a fabric of a brand could positively affect employee behavior and impact their willingness to perform at work:

What I find to be really intriguing and positive is that everybody here relates strongly to the red color of our brand and you can feel the sense of passion and fire especially because we are working in a volatile market.

P6 believes it to be essential to inform employees about what the company stands for, so they can present what it stands for to both external and internal stakeholders. If employees can clearly define the brand, they are capable of aligning their behaviour in accordance with it and understanding their role in turning organizational aspirations into being. P6 believes that building a connection between employees and the brand to be a highly prized asset for the company because the meaning of the brand coincides with what employees must do in order to thrive in the market and keeping customers happy. P6 stresses the importance of inspiring employees to correlate themselves with the fierceness and passion which inhabits the brand because the organization operates in an ever-changing environment where people have to be quick on their feet, creative and be adaptable. When the work ethic of employees is aligned with the brand’s connotation, they are better equipped to perform their work as is expected of them giving them a sense of accomplishment, generating self-worth and satisfaction. P3 also gave an example of how the brand could function as a booster for employees. Some intangible element that made the brand what it is affects the behaviour of the employees, it motivates them, they rally behind it, and it makes them push themselves:

We always close our stores after our routine marketing campaigns comes to an end and we celebrate by throwing a party for our employees, that is exactly this work hard play hard signature that characterizes our brand, this has really stuck and we are proud of this, this energizes us you know?

The phrase “work hard play hard” is something that characterizes P3’s corporate brand. This phrase or mantra has the purpose of motivating the employees. P3 wants his employees to show diligence at work because that is the driving factor in keeping up the level of service expected by customers. There is a lot of pressure on the employees while
the marketing campaign is ongoing, and employees fight meet the challenge head-on, knowing that they will be rewarded when the campaign has been concluded. This demonstrates how overlapping efforts of human resources and marketing can motivate employees. The competitive spirit and diligence are welded into a mantra which is communicated to employees. The perseverance is then the driving factor in making the marketing campaign successful. The determination is consistent throughout the marketing campaign’s time frame because employees know there is a reward waiting at the end of the tunnel. The company and the brand benefits by performing a successful marketing campaign and keeping their customers happy and the customers get to enjoy a product at a low cost. The competitiveness commands hard work from employees, and when they deliver on that, they celebrate as promised.

Not all of the interviewees in this research worked for an organization that had a constant or a structurally based partnership between marketing or HR. P4, for example, would like to see his organization do better in that area and would like to see more cooperation between the two departments. P4 talked about potential benefits and missed opportunities:

There is a lot of talk but no walk when it comes to involving employees in the brand somehow, everybody knows how important it is, but nobody seems to have the time for it, its like everybody is waiting for somebody else to take the initiative, of course we should be doing this with more heart.

P4 recognizes the importance of having employees engage in the corporate brand but admits that there is a lacking effort on the company’s behalf in executing that practice. P4 believes that by implementing better time management, it is possible to find ways to direct and communicate the values of the brand to staff members to make sure they can deliver on the brand promise. The employees are the most crucial component for creating a corporate brand, so they should have a good understanding of what the brand truly is and what it stands for. P4 recognizes that management has to put more effort into containing and maintaining a collective perspective of the brand among all employees. That would confer the benefit of the company coming off as a united entity to external stakeholders and would also get the employees to rally behind and associate themselves with the corporate brand. P4 continued to express his concerns:
There is always this confusion of who is responsible for internal marketing, HR points a finger at marketing and marketing points a finger right back at HR, and somehow nobody has time for anything.

P4 thinks it is worrisome how little contact there is between the marketing department and the HR department. There is a missed opportunity within this company in creating a program that forces the habit of employees communicating the brand of the company in a way that it resonates with them. The two departments are now operating in a way that is discouraging and counterproductive when they have the chance to do the exact opposite. By joining forces instead of working in the dark of each other P4 believes that the company could by all mean align the brand from within by getting employees to understand the brand and encourage them to protect it. The two departments could do this by getting employees involved in marketing efforts to let them partake and give feedback and thereby creating a consistent brand experience for the employees.

P7 shared P4’s concerns on lack of partnership and believes there is a lot to be gained by having HRM and marketing working more closely together. P7 approached the issue from a practical approach:

Our chief of marketing is always performing NPS measurements and all kinds of internal and external marketing research and I don’t ever get to see the results unless I specifically ask for it, I think it would benefit us greatly if we were working on things like these, like, it was a standard.

P7 wants to see more cooperation between HR and marketing within the organization. P7 believes that if HR and marketing worked more closely together, they would have the chance to create a solid consensus on the employee identity. P7 believes HRM should be involved in the marketing research performed by the marketing department and utilize the data gathered to get employees to engage with the brand and reflect the brand’s elements to external and internal stakeholders. P7 believes a partnership between HR and marketing to be a crucial factor in creating a unified identity for the brand which employees can then relate to.

Most of the interviewees in this research put a lot of emphasis on a clear focus, both internal and external when it comes to communicating the brand. P1 described the benefits his organization received when they had much regard for sharpened focus during a rebranding process:
We put a lot of work into the preparation of what the company should stand for, the tone of voice and all these things, we built it on our company values so we succeeded in narrowing our messages to our employees, so we started talking to them with the same voice which communicated the same message and you could feel immediately there was a common satisfaction amongst the employees.

Before P1 and other executives rebranded their company, they gave a lot of thought to what messages should be communicated to their employees and what the message should contain. They did this because they wanted to create a single brand cohesion. If the brand message which is communicated to the market is clear and focused, the employees will find it easier to understand and will, therefore, be more apt to get behind the brand and engage with it. Not only is it easier for customers to understand what you do and what you are as a company, but also for employees and that will get everyone to be on the same page and working together as a unit towards a common goal.

When organizations have a clear focus on who they are, what they stand for and why they do what they do, they enable their employees to assimilate, understand and embrace the brand better making them more plausible to advocate and endorse the brand. The focus allows the organization to express the brand internally and employees to express the brand externally.

Figure 6 shows that if employees are invited to partake in the organization’s marketing efforts, it contributes to a mutual satisfaction to what the brand is and what it stands for. When employees are kept in the loop, get to be involved and are asked to for their input...
on the brand’s direction it increases the chances of them associating themselves with the brand. Organizations that allow their employees to participate in marketing are likelier to establish a clear and united view of the brand which leads to employees communicating the brand message both internally and externally. When the brand’s message is clear, and employees relate to it, they have a better understanding of what is expected of them when they are performing at work. Getting employees to be willing to partake in the organizations marketing can be challenging and is no menial task. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to have marketing and HR departments in a constant state of cooperation for the marketing department is responsible for the brand and HR is responsible for the human capital. These two departments have to be in sync if organizations wish to combine brand elements and employee contribution.

4.2 Physical and Mental Presence

Most of the interviewees in this research spoke about how beneficial it is to be close to other people and not only people from their department but also employees from different areas within the organization. Interviewees shared positive perspectives of sharing space with colleagues from other departments. They felt like the physical proximity will lead to a mental connection between them and their colleagues. When both a physical and psychological connection has been established, the workflow and atmosphere becomes more fluid and dynamic. Getting different perspectives, enabling innovation and creativity, bouncing off ideas and receiving support were all terms interviewees used that operated in proximity to their co-workers. Those interviewees that did not operate in the same mental and physical proximity used these same terms but mentioned a lack thereof. P3 described his department’s relationship with marketing and expressed his satisfaction with the arrangement. Being close to marketing made daily operations more effortless and joint-department initiatives are done more naturally:

We liked to believe that we are marketing oriented company and we have to ensure that our image stays positive both to customers and employees, so that is why I believe that it makes sense that marketing and HR talks to each other everyday.

For the company to achieve its objectives on the market, P3 believes that it is essential that the employees have the capability and ingenuity to perform their work per the
brand. That demonstrates the importance of marketing and HR operating in cohesion. P3 described the relationship between HR to the effect that the marketing department decides how they want to present the brand to the market and the HR department trains and prepares the employees in a manner that supports the brand’s vision. That is only viable if the two departments are in a constant state of cooperation. According to P3, it is more difficult to establish a continuous state of cooperation unless both parties are open and accepting of one and another. P3 spoke about how his department’s proximity to HR influenced the work environment to the better. P3 said employees that belonged to each department got to know each other better, they started to see a familiar face every day. They mitigated formal communications between each other which increased creativity and built chemistry, because people are less careful what they say around people they know. P3 and his team found it easier to get opinions and guidance in person because the distance between the departments is short. That is a significant benefit because the two departments are indented to solve challenges collectively. P3 continued to express his appreciation towards this structure because he has a comparison to a structure where the emphasis was not keeping different business units close or establishing some connection between them:

What I find positive where I work now is the contiguity of different departments, we are close to one another, so communications are effortless, and we get to know one another, so even though we have different job descriptions we are feel like we are on the same team.

P3 is happy about how his current organization operates when it comes to partnership and cooperation between departments. P3 thinks it is a change for the better compared where he previously worked. P3 believes the close mental and physical presence between the business departments can have a positive result for the whole organization because the departments get to know each other’s needs, and the close presence contributes to teamwork and creativeness solutions rather than friction. P3 believes this presence and proximity inspires his and other employees to be unafraid to take on big challenges rather than to be struggling in isolated silos.

P5’s organization recognizes the importance of interdepartmental collaboration and communications. However, P5 also expressed the urgency of continually being alert so that the practice of interdepartmental cooperation and its benefits do not deteriorate:
We have grown too accustomed to our environment, sometimes I just assume everybody is thinking what I am thinking, and my thoughts will automatically make sense to my colleagues, so I think we have to make sure that we facilitate constant communications between departments and why try to do so.

P5 is aware of the threat that a lack of collaboration and communications within the workplace can be for his organization. If People fail to communicate with their coworkers they can become fixated on what they are doing without having any regard of how their style of work fits in with the overall puzzle of making the company run smoothly. Failing to communicate with others could create friction between employees. P5 talked about the importance of a constant state of communication because that contributes to empathy between employees and they will thus get a better understanding of each other preferences and needs. P5 would like employees to maintain a respectful consideration of everybody’s perspectives and ideas because that prevents egocentricity and all those involved in a discussion feel free to stretch their imagination to find a creative solution to challenging tasks. P5 knows how important it is to uphold communications between departments, to keep everybody on the same page, but he also recognizes how easy it is to drop the ball and neglect that practice. Even though P5’s organization recognizes the importance of collaboration between departments, P5 would like to see the organization put more effort into creating a venue where employees strengthen their mental connections. That venue could be physical, for example a break-room furnished with recreational opportunities like a foosball or ping pong table. The venue could also be intangible, for example a social media page where coworkers interact online. Connected employees’ function as a single unit in every regard whether they belong to marketing, HRM, sales or IT and connected employees do not miscommunicate, and they learn from each other's mistakes and triumphs according to P5.

P4 agreed with P5 about how important it is to be attentive to keeping interdepartmental communications active:

We are really zeroed in on what we are doing, and I think sometimes we forget to get a second opinion from the people around us, they definitely should be more involved because sometimes one department does something that doesn’t sync with what others are doing and that can be a lot of hassle... It is just better when we are all involved.
P4 believes interdepartmental collaboration to be a positive thing because it prevents frustration and finger pointing when the capabilities of other departments cannot sustain a project proposed by another. P4 believes that department teams do not deliberately skip on getting other teams involved in projects, they simply sometimes forget to do so. P4 is convinced that interdepartmental collaboration fosters team spirit and unity because the employees collectively take on responsibilities and share in the triumph.

In this research, interviewees have all spoken positively about sharing space and collaborating with other departments. Some described the benefits their organizations were actively receiving by being close both physically and mentally with other departments. Others spoke about how vital it is for their company’s continued growth to maintain collaboration, and what challenges their organization could face if the partnership were dismissed. Then there were those participants that were experiencing little to no structural cooperation between departments. P6 expressed his concerns over the lack of interdepartmental collaboration:

The overlap between marketing and HR is little to be honest, if it were up to me I would have these two departments appertain under the same governing function because these two departments need so much support from each other.

P6 feels like he is missing out on the benefits that his organization could inherit by keeping different departments in a close physical and mental presence. Members of the departments would get to know each other’s needs, and the close presence contributes to teamwork and creativeness solutions rather than friction. P6 talked about that it was necessary to inspire employees to be brand advocates and that they were able to deliver on the brand’s promise. For that to become a reality, marketing which is responsible for the brand, and HR which is responsible for employee contributions must cooperate in order for the brand and employees to merge. Because of this, P6 expressed his concerns for marketing and HR were not structurally synchronized in his organization. P6 believes that marketing and HR need to collaborate more frequently to bring the vision of creating brand ambassadors to fruition. P6 also talked about wanting to see marketing and HR positioned in proximity to one and another inside the office building:

We think we have to be closer, like physically, with HR because our tasks are often such in nature that we need support from each other and when you are
close it is easier to get that support, when we have to meet for something we have to go another floor.

P6 feels like the relationship would be more dynamic and better if the distance between marketing and HRM were shorter and more accessible. Employees would then have easier access to each other and communications would become less formal and seeking help and support would be done more effortlessly. When the two departments operate in distance to each other physically and mentally, they are more likely to spend their time focusing on their crafts individually, rather than joining forces and combining their expertise to attempt to create brand ambassadors.

P7 shared a very similar view as P6 and felt like the organization is operating at and disadvantage due to lack of both physical and mental connection between HR and marketing:

I’m not saying I cannot reach out to marketing, but it would be better if our work would interlink and collaborate more, I would like to see HR and marketing operating under the same business unit.

P7 spoke about the importance of HR being in proximity to marketing. More time spent together would create more synergy between the two departments which would benefit the organization. Together HR and marketing could find creative ways to implement internal branding using expertise from both fields. P7 believes the physical distance between the two departments to be a hindrance of creativity. It can become harder to get inspired by good ideas when members of different departments must communicate via e-mails and not in person. Internal branding initiatives might be performed more inconsistently if the people working on it are far apart.

Participants agreed that in order to be able to create brand ambassadors from the organization’s workforce it is essential to have a mental presence and connection between marketing and human resource departments. Many participants also mentioned that having the two departments close physically had many benefits. When the two departments operated in proximity to one another, it made day to day operations demand less effort which fostered creativity.
Figure 7 illustrates that the connection between marketing and HR helped with presenting the brand through their employees, and they were more aware of what to do and what to say while interacting with customers and coworkers. Generally, the relationship between marketing and HR resulted in employees to be more in sync with the brand. The marketing department could adopt its efforts to employee capabilities with the help of HR, and HR could assist marketing to communicate the brand to employees whose work had nothing or little to do with the marketing aspect of the organization. When the brand was clear and continuously communicated to employees by a collective effort of marketing and HR, the brand became a factor that unified the employees under the same banner. The brand became something employees had in common and represented their team.

![Figure 7: Physical and mental presence between marketing and HR departments](image)

### 4.3 Cohesion Through Collaboration

All the participants in this research agreed how much the brand mattered to create a team. The brand is something that the employees had in common, and it connected them and reminded them of who they are and what their role is. The more employees understood the brand and got to be involved and a part of it the more they were engaged with it. The engagement was attained by presenting the same message internally and externally and by involving employees in social events that were directly connected to the brand. Most of the interviewees believed there to be some connection between brand endorsement and cohesion amongst employees. The brand functions as a unifying
phenomenon and the positive feelings employees had towards their colleagues somehow magnified because they felt a sense of belonging to the brand making employees collectively advocate it. P1 spoke about the employees of his organization connected through the brand, P1 spoke about it in a context of family:

Right after the merger we got all our employees involved in the rebranding process and figured out what we wanted to stand for, what should the brand stand for, our workplace values and now I feel like we function as a one big family it is incredible really.

P1 described a successful effort of overlapping marketing and human resources of getting employees engaged with the brand. The preparation involved getting employees together and let them figure out how to build a workplace and a brand that they desired to be a part of and belong to. The employees banded together and broke down silos in a collective effort to create cohesion. P1 spoke about cohesion and how it stimulated teamwork which is extremely beneficial to the organization because it improves efficiency and productivity. Coworkers feel comfortable to share the workload which can reduce pressure and increase chances of certain tasks to be completed on time. Goals are now more reachable, and the sense of accomplishment will spread throughout the workforce for it was a collective effort that attained set goals. P1 described the brand as a team and how it fostered teamwork that stimulated innovation where employees will learn from one another and gain insights from opposing perspectives. P1 talked about his employees feeling like they were bound to each other like a family and that these family ties were formed by the brand itself which the employees helped create and develop.

P6 had similar experiences as P1 about how the brand and its intangible elements motivated employees and functioned as unifying force:

The environment in the communication industry is quick and agile and that is also what our brand represents, also feel like our brand color, this red color has a lot to do with this, there is this energy and robustness in our employees and they are always willing to pull for each other, stick together and adopt to this volatile environment that kind of mindset is invaluable.

P6 had mentioned before that passion and fierceness were elements that inhibited and characterized the brand and that employees had shown willingness to adopt these elements, so they reflected their work ethic. P6 believes that the meaning of the brand, in this case, passion and fierceness, can unify the employees in taking on the challenges
the company faces from day to day because of the business’ nature the company is in. When the employees get a clear sense of what the brand stands for it affects employees so, they are more prepared to perform at work and approach their work with a different mindset. P6 believes that if the brand meaning and its elements function as a blood infusion for employees, it unites them, and they feel a sense of belonging to the same team that is fighting a fight together.

P4 spoke about how marketing and HRM at his organization operated cooperatively in establishing social initiatives where employees got to be involved in marketing activities:

What I think has been a positive factor in creating cohesion and good atmosphere here is that we sometimes have this count-down for new products launches and also last Christmas we gave everybody the Friday off to join us down town to put up decorations around town for our Christmas-product-launch.

P4 believes social events such as these to be an innovative way to create a brand experience to win over the employees and get them to engage with the brand. They draw the employees out of the typical day to day work settings and create a positive mood where employees are involved in marketing in a fun way. Employees will interact with each other in a more social manner rather than professional, which will undoubtedly create synergy and friendship between them because of the social engagement that goes beyond the event itself. P4 believes that marketing oriented social events are an ideal way of getting employees to gain a better understanding and insights into the brand and will undoubtedly have an impact on their loyalty towards the brand. P4 realizes that these kinds of social events that have regard to the corporate brand are an excellent platform for marketing and HR to work together in creating unity amongst employees and encouraging them to associate themselves with the brand. P5 described similar social initiatives that demanding little effort but had significant effects:

We went on an annual celebration trip to Berlin for Octoberfest and before the trip we had an Oktoberfest theme in the lunchroom where we ate bratwurst and had our alcohol-free pilsners on tab.

P5 describes a fun social activity performed at his workplace that did not command much effort, time nor money. P5 believes these kinds of incentive to be a valuable strategy for the company to entertain its employees by breaking up routine while playing
on the anticipation of the upcoming annual celebration trip. By promoting occasions such as an annual celebration or staff outings and connecting that kind of events to the company’s activities are a great way to create cohesion and unity between employees. These kinds of promoted occasions will undoubtedly teach, intrigue and inspire employees and bring them together in a manner that is unlike routine internal branding efforts or any other marketing efforts. This initiative is creative and is something that the employees will remember and talk about both to each other and to others. P1 also spoke about how the brand could be utilized in connecting employees in a festive manner:

One of the things this company does which I really admire is that it pays for all employees to partake in the Reykjavík Marathon, I mean not everybody does this... We also partake in the WOW Cyclothon and it is always a somewhat of an event here and people get excited.

These kinds of social events supported by the company as described by P1 can have a great positive effect on the organization. Undoubtedly initiatives like these will spark satisfaction and gratitude amongst employees towards their employer. Employees will also take pride working for a company that actively participates in a charity event, and the brand will also receive some public goodwill being visible in a charity event. Supporting social will likely boost employee morale and foster team spirit and strengthen cohesion among employees. Furthermore, it is an excellent opportunity for the company to represent what the brand is all about by engaging in a social event that reflects it. This might even become a phenomenon that the company and it’s brand would become known for making it a desirable place of work where employees want to belong to and are proud to do so.

A lack of collaboration between marketing and HRM bothered P7 a great deal. He expressed his concerns about employees sometimes being fragmented and had misconceptions about their identity. He said, “When marketing and HR worked more closely together there was much more consensus on who we were, now we are kind of like tribes all over”. P7 believes there is a missed opportunity in not having a more extensive partnership between HRM and marketing. P7 wants to see HRM and marketing joining forces and combine their expertise. Generally, marketing departments have the skills to target and reach an audience by establishing passionate and emotional connections with people through branding and marketing endeavors. P7 believes that
the marketing department could assist HRM by utilizing their expertise to get employees intrigued, interested and engaged with their work for an extended period of time. HR could likewise help marketing by shaping employee, so it aligns with the brand’s promise. By partnering up, both HRM and marketing can take a fragmented group of employees and unify them behind the brand they represent. P1 had a similar story to tell which reinstates the importance of utilizing the brand to create a consensus on employee identity:

Some years ago, I was working for a company in the telecommunication business and that company was an amalgamation of many smaller businesses and in the integration process there had not been any effort to merge these units as a unified entity and you could feel the staff members had an huge inferiority complex towards our competitor which was dominating the market at this point in time.

The employee morale and work performance were directly affected negatively because the organization and its departments were operating fragmentary with nothing to bring them together. Employees lacked believe and experienced themselves lesser when they compared their organization to its competitor. This shows the importance of creating a strong, unified brand vision and a clear market focus. By creating a unified brand vision, it is possible to break down silos and build a team that believes in each other and is ready to pull and work together as a unit towards a common goal. It creates something that the staff members belong to and can be proud of.

The participants said that the brand was a reason for employees to be with each other and spend time together. Organizations could organize social events that revolved around getting employees together and partake in activities connected to the brand. The social events contributed to employees getting to know each other better and getting to know the brand better, in a manner that both fun an innovative. The one thing all employees had in common was the brand they worked with, and participants agreed that the brand was an essential element in building a team. Unique brand features influenced employee behavior and they adopted those features into the work, so in a way, they could dictate how employees performed at work. Organizations ask many things of their employees, and they need their employees to behave in a certain way, deliver results on time and uphold the organization’s reputation. Demands like these can become encumbering if employees do not feel like their employers appreciated their work
contribution. Getting employees to rally behind the brand and communicate its message internally and externally is much easier for organizations if they make their employees feel like valued members of the company.

4.4 Employee Appreciation

All the participants in this research put a lot of emphasis on showing appreciation towards employees for a job well done, recognizing and praising their efforts. Interviewees believe that expressed appreciation towards employees confirmed that their work was valued by the organization which resulted in increased levels of productivity and satisfaction. Participants in this research all spoke about how an employee that feels like his work is valued can make a lot of difference within an organization. Appreciation drives engagement, improvement, and motivation. A satisfied and motivated employee is keener to be a brand ambassador. All my interviewees described various ways to show appreciation towards their employees. However, they all concurred that the goal of employee appreciation was to ignite employee motivation so that they would engage with their work. P3 described how his organization implements a monetary incentive to fuel employee engagement:

We have in place a monetary incentive system and store managers and other employees reap the benefit when they are successful, I don’t know the specific amounts they receive but this system has a turnover in the tens of millions.

P3 believes that the success of the company can be traced to the fact that the organization rewards its employees for profitability and progress. Employees receive bonuses, and in return, they experience gratitude and respect towards its employer. Therefore, the employee is fully willing to apply himself, and he is aware that his contribution must have a lot to do with the company’s overall success. Otherwise, his employer would not be rewarding him. Incentive scheme implies that there is some objective that has to be reached to receive some reward. Achieving a goal requires a strong work ethic and motivation, employing employees with such traits is in the best interest of the company and its customers. By implementing an incentive scheme P3 is bringing in to being better employees, they will strive for more success, and they will avoid repeating mistakes because they will be rewarded when they are successful. P1
described an example where his organization showed their appreciation towards their employees by giving them a desirable product that the company is offering for the holidays. The gesture was a clever marketing tactic where everybody wins:

Even though we are in the information technology business we sell all sort of physical products for example Bose headsets so right before last Christmas we gave all our employees a Bose headset gadget, I think it was about 400 headsets that we gave away.

This example described by P1 is a clever way to use your employees in a marketing strategy which is beneficial to both the organization and the employees. All 400 employees will take home an expensive product and an attractive item to own. P1 believes this gesture by the organization could have a multiplier effect. Employees will show the product off to friends and family which will increase the probability of them buying the product because it was someone they knew that recommended it to them. This is also an excellent way for the organization to show the employees that their work is valued and appreciated. This gesture will increase the likelihood of employees speaking well about their employer to others and thus enhancing their employer’s reputation.

P6 spoke about how providing an excellent work environment and facilities is a great way of validating employee’s effort and showing them that their work is much appreciated:

We have put a lot of effort in building the best possible working facilities and dining areas for our employees that makes a huge difference in making people feel good at work, you can’t expect people to go the extra mile for you, if you can’t be bothered to do everything in you power to make them go the extra mile for you.

P6 believes that providing the best possible facilitates for employees is crucial in making staff members feel good at work. If employees are in good spirits, they will be more willing to embrace the brand elements that play a vital part in shaping the company culture. P6 believes that employees are more willing to talk to each other and interact with one and another when the environment is pleasant and encouraging. The more people interact, the better they get to know one another the more likely they will form camaraderie and P6 believes a pleasant work environment fosters team building and unity. By providing a dining area with free lunch and snacks is also essential according to P6. Employees will thus save money and interact with people they might otherwise never
do, that contributes to the task of creating a strong, unified team. This pleasant working environment described by P6 will conduce towards employees showing gratitude and appreciation towards their employer making them less likely to leave to the organization and more likely to endorse it. P1 also spoke how providing an excellent working environment and facilities fostered employee engagement:

Where I am working today, at least compared to other places I have worked, there is genuinely put a lot of effort in making the employees feel good at work. All facilities are top notch for example down stairs we have a gym, a lounge area and a playroom. There is just this flexibility, like people are free to step outside and run personal errands during work time if they have to.

The organization shows trust to its employees by being flexible and avoid keeping the work environment ceremonious, which can create frustration. P1 believes that creating spaces where employees can come together and enjoy some activities, like working out or playing cards can create synergy amongst coworkers. If employees are kept happy while at work and they feel like they are trusted, they will look forward to coming in to work. They are likely to speak well about the employer and place of work, in the long term this positive outlook on employee policy could become a part of the brand, at the very least, it will enhance the organization reputation.

P4 spoke about the urgency of showing appreciation for staff member’s work obligations and demonstrating how the work obligations of different individuals are interlinked. P4 believes that if employees were informed on how their work affected the work of their colleagues, it would generate appreciation:

It is crucial that we let our employees know how important every link is in the chain, every individual plays a huge roll in making this thing work, like if one forgets something it affects all of us, and if one department does good in some way it is collectively good for all of us.

P4 realizes the importance of employees feeling valued for them to feel the need to excel at work. It must be communicated and shown to them that other internal and external stakeholders need them too. By informing employees about the impact, their daily tasks have on the progression of the business, and the bigger picture can be a huge motivational factor. P4 believes that by showing employees how various job responsibilities within the organization are connected, it demonstrates that they are doing something meaningful at work which in return will create a sense of satisfaction.
with employees and they will, therefore, take pride in their work. It is essential to let employees know they are not present at work merely to collect a paycheck, but they are contributing to something and are a part of something. Thus, it is crucial for management to explain to employees how their efforts affect the progress of the company and they should receive feedback and gratitude for it.

P2 described an interesting way to show employees that they are appreciated, and that was to include them in the organization’s decision making:

Market research tells us that this generation, that is working with us now wants to be more involved in the decision-making process, and we are a marketing orientated company so we have to consider that, and it is true, its really true.

P1 knows that employees want to take part in the company’s decision-making process and that could be in the company’s best interest. By giving employees a chance to be a part of the decision-making process the company is showing a tremendous amount of trust to its employees and they experience themselves as a valued member of the team whom can contribute to the company’s success. Individuals that feel valued will certainly raise their level of commitment when facing their tasks. Employees would share a sense of increased responsibility when they are included and involved in the decision-making process and be more determined to make the right decision because they will share the blame if the decision were ill-conceived. Employees will ultimately make better decisions on their own when they get used to decide for themselves and thus get a better insight into the activities of the company. Employee morale will increase because they will feel like there are making a difference by being involved and will, therefore, engage fully with their work rather than being mindlessly following orders.

All participants emphasized the importance of recognizing, showing support and appreciation towards employees for their work contributions. Employees got a confirmation that their efforts actually contributed to the brand’s success when their employers showed them gratitude for a job well done in the form of monetary incentives or verbal appraisal. Figure 8 demonstrates that the confirmation motivated and inspired employees to further engage with their work and is a significant contributor to employees
advocating their brand and their workplace, which will ultimately lead to a better brand performance.

Providing the best facilities, the organization could offer was often the topic of discussion during the interviews. Employers could also show their employees that they were valued by creating a comfortable working environment for their workers. Participants spoke about the danger of employees experiencing depression and frustration if the space they operated in was deficient. A depressed and frustrated individual is not best suited to communicate the brand message. However, when employees operated in a preferable work environment and they had the sense that their work mattered to the organization they become more acceptable to information and more willing to utilize that information to further the brand’s progression. Information sharing and dissemination is a key component in turning employees within an organization into brand ambassadors. Internal communications are vital for information sharing, so a competent internal communication platform must exist within an organization.

4.5 Knowledge Dissemination
All participants agreed on communications being key to the organization’s success. Means to efficient communications are essential. Also, pleasant interactions and communications between co-workers were also just as important. In-house communications enables interdepartmental teamwork and brings people closer together. One participant described effective communications to glue and said effective and pleasant communications links different departments together, and it connects different individuals together. Communications is the main ingredient in building a team people desire to belong to.
Interviewees all spoke about the importance of knowledge dissemination to employees. Employees have to know a great deal about the service and product that their organization is offering. Participants said the employees had to be knowledgeable about the products not only to be able to service customers, but that knowledge would lead them to endorse the product and advocate it. People tend to care little for things they know nothing about. Employees should also be kept in the loop of what is going on within the organization, knowing what is going on with colleagues sharpens focus, promotes teamwork and encourages cross-departmental cooperation getting different business units working in unison.

P3 described how his employees are kept in the loop and are presented with sales and performance numbers. P3’s organization utilizes the software Facebook Workplace which allows employees to communicate and interact with each other:

We routinely measure our sales, productivity and performance of our stores and that information is discussed on our Monday meetings and afterward it is forwarded via e-mail to our store managers which informs his employees and then the employees get curious about how the other stores performed so they ask each other on Workplace.

P3 had previously stated that competitiveness characterized the organizational culture and management wishes that competitiveness is associated with the brand. The performance report flows down from senior management down to employees, who then want to know how their branch performed compared to other stores. By giving the employees access to easily operated communications platform can surely ignite that competitive spirit amongst employees. No employee is going to call or write an e-mail to every colleague at all the other local branches. However, it is easy to post a status on Workplace on how they performed and receive numbers back on how others performed. By comparison and in the spirit of friendly competition employees want to outperform their colleagues by generating more sales, more production, and fewer complaints. This will in return automatically make the brand more competitive on the market.

P5 said that it is crucial to share knowledge about the product to employees. P5 believes that employees cannot speak confidently about the products and certainly not be its advocate if they lack understanding of its attributes:
like for example I don’t think all of our employees were aware that we are importing red wines, so we started, semi regularly, hosting little fun vine promotions and now everybody knows that we import vines and we are all excited about recommending vines to our friends and we now can look hip when a waiter offers us the vine menu at restaurants.

P5 stresses the importance of keeping employees in the loop and getting them familiarized with the company’s products and marketing. When employees are informed and up to date on what their organization is doing it will generate higher levels of employee engagement. Hosting a wine presentation like P5 described is a creative way that commands little effort to familiarize employees with the organization’s products and brands in a manner both informative and entertaining. By informing employees about the product in a way that is entertaining increases the likelihood of the information to be remembered. The company is also ensuring that the employees get the back story needed for them to talk about the product confidently to both internal and external stakeholders. P5 believes that it is crucial for employees to get to know more than just the product’s practical information. As soon as the employees recognize the details and the story behind the product and the effort and ideas that went into marketing the product they are better equipped to speak about it, recommend it and endorse the product. They are also likelier to buy the product for themselves.

P4 also spoke about the importance of his employee’s product knowledge. He was worried that some of his coworkers did not know enough about the products to become their advocate:

I really wish that some of our employees would know our product better you know? There are people working here that do not have the slightest clue about our products... I mean it doesn’t have to be complicated just a little presentation or something.

P4 would like to see more effort put into getting employees more familiar with the organization’s products. P4 believes that the company could host internal initiatives to introduce employees to the products like for example product presentation or a sales course. The products attributes and the brand values have to be communicated better to P4’s employees. P4 believes that employees need to acquire product knowledge in order to be perceived as genuine and credible brand ambassadors. P4 is convinced that the more employees know about the products, the more they will believe in it and thus
become more enthusiastic when speaking about it to others. P4 believes that his organization can confidently cement product enthusiasm in his employees by systematically communicate its features and benefits to them.

P1 spoke about how general knowledge about the workings of the organization, seeing how the pieces fit and how different departments work with each other can make a huge difference in making people feel like they are a part of and belong to something:

Once we held a kind of work presentation which I thought was great, it is a part of breaking down walls and create knowledge about our company and organization for our employees... various departments held presentations about what they do and people walked around the office familiarized themselves with what others were doing and I think that kind of conversance is an important component in creating pride and making people feel like they belong.

P1 is convinced that it can be a great asset for organizations to equip their employees with knowledge about the organization and its brand. If employees can gain some insights on how their company operates, corporate conquests and development increase the likelihood that employees will talk positively about the company to others. The more employees know about their company increases the chances of them associating themselves with their place of work. P1 wants his employees to have genuine and meaningful information about their place of work because then it is easier for them to see how they fit in with the organization’s overall goals. The more employees know about their organization, the more understanding they gain about it, and therefore it becomes easier for them to recognize solutions to internal or external problems that may have gone unnoticed.

A collective brand view amongst employees is gathered through a fundamental knowledge about the brand. Employees that are provided with a good working environment, and feel like their employers appreciate their work contributions are more likely to engage with what they are doing at work which in return ignites interdepartmental cooperation. The collaboration then contributes to the breaking of organizational silos and gets everyone within the organization paddling towards a common goal.
4.6 Breaking Down Silos

Breaking down silos is a phrase that was used by most of the participants in this research. Interviewees defined the phrase in a similar fashion and emphasis was put on that departments knew each other’s roles and knew the people working in them. Understanding different business functions have a positive impact on the whole organization. Interviewees also said that information must flow down from the top down but also from the bottom up. It creates friction and frustration if employees do not have the platform to express themselves and give feedback to their superiors. Maintaining a good and lively relationship between colleagues was also often mentioned. Free flow of information and good communication practices brings employees closer together and are a vital component in keeping the organization operating efficiently.

P5 spoke about how important it is for departments to be aware of other department’s situations at any given time in order for them to support each other when needed:

It is crucial that employees are informed what is going on with everybody within the company and that there is a sense of transparency and we need to know if there is pressure and strain on some departments or something like that, the bottom line is that we are all syncing together... I am not going to ask the marketing department for favour when there is time pressure on them making some content, I rather go and offer my help.

P5 believes that in-house communications are one of the best tools to prevent friction and silo formation within the company. In-house communications are vital in making employees aware of initiatives undertaken by other departments or management teams. It runs the risk of employees feeling left out and not a part of if the information is not being spread sufficiently within the organization. P5 stresses the importance of transparency, and that can only be achieved if the flow of information is adequate. For example, it could be bothersome if the marketing department receives a request on short notice to create a marketing campaign or content for a new product launch that has been in development for some time. That kind of gap of information could create friction and be counterproductive in creating synergy between different departments. By letting information flow run freely and on time throughout the organization will contribute to breaking down silos and forming a single strong unit which employees will endorse and seek to belong to.
When P4 was asked about how marketing and HRM communicated with each other and how good communications between the two departments might benefit the company, he had this to say:

We are separated too much, I think we operate too independently of each other, I would definitely want to see more cooperation. I don’t think we do this intentionally we are just sometimes so preoccupied with what we are doing so we sometimes forget to look up and offer our help and receive help from other departments, I think that would work to the benefit of the whole company because then we function as one.

P4 feels like his department, and other departments in his organization have to be more alert and more aware that they can benefit from collaborating by being in more effective communications. P4 believes his team has to be more proactive in seeking support from other departments because lack of communications can form silos which could have detrimental effects on the whole operation of the organization. Clear and consistent communications between departments where employees could collectively solve challenges would build trust and co-workers would gain an appreciation for each other. P4 would like to see the whole company operating in more unison because if departments become isolated they will inhibit their values instead of the company’s values and they will communicate their own message instead of the brand’s message.

P6 spoke about how access to a good in-house communication platform could create a fun atmosphere within the workplace and bring people from different departments together:

We implemented Facebook Workplace and that has played a big role in bringing people closer together, for example all of a sudden people at the office could catch a glimpse into the life of the maintenance crew when they posted videos of them fixing a radio tower, before they did not even know these guys existed and vice versa.

P6 believes good and effective inhouse-communications to be a great way of breaking down silos and bringing people within the organization closer together. She describes how the Facebook Workplace communication platform has been the driving factor of letting people from different fields of the company get to know each other. By implementing such a communication platform for employees to utilize for team bonding can make a big difference according to P6. Employees can see and get a better insight
into how different fields within the organization connect which will help them to gain a better understanding of the big picture. When employees can interact with each other in this kind of way, they will appreciate their colleague’s contributions to the organization as well as their own. P6 is seeing that effective collective in-house communications create cohesion amongst employees which contributes to a collaborative environment which makes it easier for employees to seek out ideas or ask for guidance from colleagues on problems they might be facing professionally or even personally.

P2 believes that there may not be any communication barriers between employees and their superiors, the flow of information must run freely up and down the chain of command:

Oh Yes! they certainly let me know what they are thinking or when they come up with something, some ideas are very good some aren’t, but I think it is really important when they do think of something that they tell me about because I want them to feel like they are listened to and who knows? One of their ideas might just become the next big thing.

P2 believes in order to keep her employees engaged they have to be listened to when they have something to say. P2 doesn’t want his employees to feel like they cannot express themselves because that would make them feel isolated and left out. P2 is convinced that employees are more eager and inclined to excel at work when they sense that their input matters and that they can partake in the development of the company. P2 encourages his employees to fully engage in their work because it will increase the chances of them coming up with a good idea that could be used in further advancement of the company and the brand. A fully engaged employee or a good idea could be invaluable for the brand.

4.7 Summary and Conclusions of the Interviews
A model is presented to illustrate how a relationship between marketing and HR can turn employees into brand ambassadors:
In summary, the creation of brand ambassadors starts with the relationship and interactions between marketing and HR. Organizations should, therefore, keep marketing and HR close on the organizational chart and preferably under the same business unit, and close physically if possible. The mental and physical presence between marketing and HR is the origin of the factors which are essential to employees advocating the brand. By looking at the model above, one can imagine that the presence of marketing and human resources is a seed which sprouts three branches, each branch containing essential elements that produces brand ambassadors.

Marketing and human resource management departments should agree upon and adopt an internal communications platform accessible to all employees. The platform should be interactive where management could disseminate information and knowledge about the brand and employees could share information, give feedback on projects and interact with each other. Employees would get a better understanding of the brand through the knowledge disseminated and shared via the internal communications platform turning them into experts about the brand. An effective internal
communications platform would foster interdepartmental synergy where employees from different departments could discuss and come up with creative solutions to challenges facing the organization. Furthermore, the communications platform could be utilized to discuss progressive ideas that could be used in the company’s marketing.

The best chance organizations have in achieving a brand consensus amongst employees is to have marketing and HR departments working together on that challenge. These two departments are best suited for the task since marketing in charge of brand and HR has the best capability of reaching and influencing employees. Marketing and HR could partner up and decide what the brand should be, what it should stand for, what its essence should be, its personality and how to behave per the brand and how to deliver on its promise. The two departments should involve employees in this process by, for example, hosting brand workshops or social events connected to the brand for employees. That way the brand becomes more apparent to employees which would positively affect their behavior and increase the chances of employees engaging with the brand.

In order for employees to feel the desire to engage with their brand and perform for their organization, they must feel like their employer appreciates their work contributions. Therefore, the organization must continuously motive and encourage its employees by rewarding their performances with monetary incentives or verbal appraisals. Providing excellent facilities and securing a good work environment is also essential for the brand’s success. An employee that is frustrated or depressed because of his surroundings is ill-suited to deliver on the brand promise and is very unlikely to advocate the brand.
5 Discussions

Participants in this research agreed that it was essential to their organization’s success to get employees involved in marketing endeavours to get employees familiar with the brand, understand it and ultimately endorse it. In order to achieve employee involvement in marketing, participants spoke about how important it was to involve the human resource department in the process. This belief is consistent with the work of Martin and Hetrick (2007) where they stated that it is beneficial and valuable to the organization to align human resource management with the organization’s overall business strategy, including the marketing strategy. Because employees implement the feelings they have for their brand into practice, if they have positive emotions towards the brand it will translate into better customer service and therefore more customer satisfaction. Those participants that worked for an organization that had marketing and human resources departments collaborating said that employees understood the brand better and were more willing to endorse and “live the brand”.

In contrast, those participants that work for an organization that had little overlap between marketing and human resources said that they felt like their organization was missing out on opportunities in getting employees engaged with the brand. These opportunities include getting employees to convey a message that support and reinforce the brand image, employees that are in sync with the brand come off as more believable and are more trusted by organization’s target audience which ultimately adds to the credibility of the brand. According to Hatch and Schultz (2001), getting employees to understand the brand is vital to the organization’s progress because brand understanding contributes to employees working in unity and feeling like they belong to a community. When employees understand the brand, they are more competent in delivering the brand promise to consumers which in return enhances the corporate brand’s image in the minds of external stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). The benefits of marketing and HR departments sharing a connection like my participants described is further supported by Edwards (2010), organizations can create synergy between different business departments by involving HR in marketing projects. HR’s involvement in branding has shown to connect employees to the corporate brand making them more likely to engage with it and behave in accordance with the brand (Edwards, 2010).
One participant described how his organization utilized the employees in external marketing during a rebranding of the company. Even though the rebranding effort was intended to serve as an external marketing procedure, the process also had an internal marketing function. Employees appreciated that they were included in the process and that their input and ideas were listened to and taken into account regarding what the new brand should stand for. Employees felt a sense of emotional connection to the brand because their advice was considered. The participant also experienced that employee behaviour was more consistent with the brand’s promise after the rebranding was concluded because they got to partake in the process making them understand the brand. This description of letting employees be a part of the branding process correlates well with what Saks (2006) said about employee involvement and employee engagement. Employees that get to be involved in tasks that are not frivolous will engage more with their work. Employee engagement contributes to beneficial factors such as organizational commitment, optimism and job satisfaction (Saks, 2006).

The significance of having a clear external marketing focus was a common theme in the interviews. Participants spoke of the importance to keep a clear focus on what the brand stands for; its values, promise, and segments. When the focus is clear to external stakeholders, it makes it easier for managers to communicate the brand within the organization to employees. Therefore, maintaining a favorable corporate brand image can pave the way and make internal branding efforts be performed much more efficiently and effectively. According to Foster et al. (2010), organizations will be positively affected in numerous ways if they align corporate branding with internal branding. Having marketing and human resources working together made it easier for the whole organization to communicate the brand to employees, resulting in employees implementing the brand’s intangible elements in practice. Two participants compared their brands to a compass, the brand’s personality traits helped employees to recognize how they should interact with co-worker and consumers. This is supported by Foster et al. (2010) notion’ that an organization’s internal branding initiatives can instruct and maneuver employees when it comes to delivering the brand’s promise to external stakeholders. This is also supported by Timothy et al. (2005), but he stated that HR and marketing should work together in communicating the brand’s message to employees so
they will be able to incorporate its attributes in their work. Thus, making them understand the brand, identify and relate to it.

Human resource departments are generally responsible for the well-being of employees (Storey, 2007). All participants in this research said it was vital for the organization’s success that employees felt like they were appreciated and valued. Some organization showed their appreciation by implementing monetary incentives. Some emphasized the provision of top-notch facilities and lunchrooms, and others said a simple verbal encouragement goes a long way. All these factors contribute to employees feeling like they are a valuable part of the organization and are thus more inclined to be its ambassador. This is supported by Martin and Beaumont (2003) they stated that organizations should express their appreciation for employees by encouraging and rewarding them for their performances. That will trigger engagement and employees will also communicate their received appreciation to external stakeholders.

In most instances in the interviews, it became apparent that participants considered the brand to be an element that could unify the employees. They said that the brand had the ability to be utilized to build a team spirit within the organization and to be the main thing employees had in common. One participant explained how fierceness and passion characterized the organization’s corporate brand and expressed his amazement of how well the brand intangible attributes correlated with employees. This was particularly important because the organization operates in a fast pace volatile market where employees have to be sharp and agile. Two participants had the same idea of how marketing and HR could collaborate to use the brand to create cohesion amongst employees but had two different experiences. One said that HR and Marketing should collaborate more and work together in creating a corporate brand consensus; he compared his workplace to scattered tribes. The other participant was on the other end of the spectrum, the focus was clear and the corporate brand’s image positive, he described how his employees had bonded like a family through the brand. This is supported by Hatch and Schultz (2003), managers should strive to create a united view of the corporate brand amongst employees because it contributes to employees working in unison and experience a coherent brand identity. Itam and Singh (2016) said that
organizations could enhance employee engagement by developing a strong organizational identity.

To be in the know, the flow of information up and down the chain of command, knowledge dissemination to employees about brands and products were all factors participants thought were crucial for organizational success. The flow of information enabled departments to coordinate, keeping employees informed with what is going on with the organization contributed to job satisfaction and loyalty. However, product and brand knowledge dissemination bore the most weight according to participants. On numerous occasions, participants spoke about the importance of employees knowing and fully understanding brand elements and product features. The more employees know about the brand, the more they relate to it and the more believable brand ambassadors they become. This is supported by Miles and Mangold (2005), they contend that employees have to fully comprehend the brand if they are to satisfy consumers per the brand’s promise. Ultimately it is the employee who stands behind the brand responsibility to deliver the brand’s promise to consumers and if he is unfit or unable to do so consistently the brand’s image will damage (King and Grace, 2008).

Marketing and human resource departments could collaborate to engage employees with the brand and make them into brand ambassadors in various ways. First off organizations should keep marketing and HR close on the organizational chart. Organizations need to clarify each department’s central role, but it is crucial to have them come together to create consistent messages to employees and external stakeholders. Research has shown the positive impact HR activities can have on employee’s emotions towards their corporate brand and how they implement the brand’s message into their work (Timothy et al., 2005).

To communicate the brand message internally to employees HR could implement an in-house communications platform which all employees have access to and the ability to use. Management could utilize the platform to disseminate information about the product to get people familiar with the tangible and intangible attributes. Give insights to what ideas went to the marketing process and tell backstories. Share news about the corporate brands, progress reports and organize company events. Employees could use the platform to interact and get to know each other, share ideas and give feedback on
organizational projects. When employees can efficiently express their opinions, it would influence the decision-making of the organization, resulting in employees feeling like there are listened to and valued. Implementing a communications platform which all employees have access to would contribute to better coordination within the organization and cross-functional collaboration.

The brand’s success is dependent mainly on employee performances. Therefore, organizations must secure employee engagement by rewarding them for their accomplishments, making them feel valued and appreciated. Organizations should allow employees to be involved in the decision making of the company that will make employees feel like they are trusted, they will experience fulfillment for they are actually contributing to the organization’s progress and collectively sharing in its success. Organizations should contribute to a pleasant working environment by providing the best possible facilities for their employees when an employee feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied at work he will not feel motivated to perform at work. Also, he will share his frustration with others which will damage the corporate brand’s image and hurt the organization reputation.

The best option organizations have in creating a strong corporate brand which unites the employees and makes them feel proud and committed, is to have marketing and HR departments overlap to make that brand become a reality. Strengths of marketing practitioners are creating creative attractions and strengths of HR practitioners are supporting and developing competent employees. Marketing and HR departments should work together to design and develop the brand’s characteristics in a way that they make employees want to associate themselves with the brand. The brand’s association will motivate employees to act in accordance with the brand both professionally and personally.
6 Final Thoughts

This research aimed to explore how organizations could get employees to endorse the corporate brand. A particular focus was on how marketing and human resource management departments could collaborate to create brand ambassadors. Corporate managers can use the findings of this research to recognize what factors are important when trying to turn employees into brand ambassadors. The academic contribution is the model presented in the results. The model explains how collaboration between marketing and human resource management departments fosters several factors which are essential to the creation of brand ambassadors. These factors can be implemented and tested later in quantitative research or they can inspire other ideas that can be tested in quantitative research.

The findings of this research showed that it is truly beneficial to both the organization and employees by having marketing and human resource departments in a constant state of cooperation. When trying to create brand ambassadors, it is essential for marketing and HR to establish a united view amongst employees on the corporate brand, and then communicate the brand to employees via an effective in-house communications platform.

This author encourages further research on this topic. For instance, two different business sectors could be researched to enable benchmarking. It would be interesting to see if different factors would influence the creation of brand ambassadors depending on the business sector.
References


Tsai, Y. (2011). “Relationship between Organizational Culture, Leadership Behavior and Job Satisfaction.” *BMC Health Services Research BMC Health Serv Res* (11)1, 98.


Appendix 1

Introduction letter sent to various marketing and human resource managers via e-mail.

Góðan dag,

Ég heiti Haldór Halldórsson og er í framhaldsnámi við Viðskiptafráðideild Háskóla Íslands. Ég er að vinna að mastersritgerð sem hluta af MSc. gráðu í markaðsfraði- og alþjóðavískiptum undir handleiðslu Dr. Friðriks Larsen. Ég er að rannsaka skórun milli markaðs- og mannaðsmála fyrirtækja, en rannsókninni er aetlað að greina hvaða þættir það eru í vörumerki sem mynda samhljóm milli starfsmanna og vörumerkis. Tilgangur rannsóknarinnar er sýna fram á með hvaða hætti stjörnendur geti virkjað starfsmenn sína í markaðsmáulum fyrirtækisins.

Aðferðin sem ég mun nota eru einstaklingsviðtöl við markaðsstjóra og mannaðsstjóra fyrirtækja þar sem stuðst er við ákveðinn spurningaramma. Miðað er við að viðtalið muni taka um 50 mínútur. Að viðtölum loknum mun ég greina og túlka það sem fram kom og setja fram ályktanir sem endurspegla niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar. Ert þú til í að lofa mér að taka við þig viðtal?

Í von um jákvæð viðbrögð,

Bestu kveðjur,

Halldór
Appendix 2

Interview protocol used during the interviews.

- Responsibilities of marketing manager
- Responsibilities of human resource manager
- Relationship between marketing and human resources
- Measurements
- How are employees utilized in branding/marketing?
- If it were up to you?
- Most important
- Why is it important?
- Company culture