THE EXPLORATION OF A "HOLY TRINITY" WITHIN INTERNAL MARKETING

- A qualitative study of the relationships between the areas within the field of internal marketing

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Spring term 2016
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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of three key areas within internal marketing. We suggest that the areas brand identification, brand platform and vision and goals are essential for internal marketing's ability to provide organizations with the tools to operate at their full potential, as well as generate successful external outcomes. This research was implemented through a qualitative method, based on an inductive research approach including studies of previous research literature and a case study of the Swedish yacht club SA. By conducting a series of interviews and exploring previous research we have been able to identify surrounding aspects, such as leadership and cross-functionality, that influence the three areas and further reflect on the possibility of a relationship between the three areas. Our study illustrates a relationship resembling a trinity consisting of brand identity, brand platform and vision and goals. The idea of a trinity differs from how previous research has presented the field of internal marketing and opens up for an alternate view of the construction of the field.

Keywords: Internal marketing, Brand identity, Brand platform, Vision, Goals, Cross-functionality, Leadership.

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1. Introduction

"[…] it includes vision, mission, brand, what we represent. And it's the brand in principle. The internal brand is what comes to mind."
-Employee H

The field of marketing is generally known as a one-way process between businesses and consumers. Not many are aware of how organizations can improve the outcomes in external marketing by implementing marketing internally. As the citation states, internal marketing includes the same significant aspects as the external brand and marketing process. But many organizations as well as employees lack the perception of how these aspects could be used internally.

Previous research has contributed to various ideas of how internal marketing can be defined and implemented within organizations, depending on various contexts. The objective of this study is to explore and illustrate how internal marketing can be used to unify an organization towards clear vision and goals so that the organization can operate at its full potential.

2. Background

In the following chapter we present a short description of internal marketing and continue with a presentation of the investigated organization. The background creates an overall perception for the reader to keep in mind when taking part of the study.

During the 1970s a new approach of marketing was introduced, highlighting the need for internal marketing within organizations (Schultz 2004). Internal marketing is a concept applicable in all kinds of organizations and has two primary focuses. It should complement the external strategic marketing through employees and the organization's customers as well as serve to motivate and satisfy the workforce to contribute to the external marketing outcomes (Ahmed & Rafiq 2003).

This thesis is based on a study of one of the biggest yacht clubs in Sweden. The yacht club is a non-profit organization founded in 1860 and today has approximately 2700 members. The club arranges multiple kinds of activities such as sailing schools and camps educating children, teenagers as well as adults, corporate events, match racing events and professional training. Beyond these activities the club also manage membership services and provides the official club harbor. (SA 2014)

According to SA (2014) there are eight employees working within the daily operations all-year around. During spring and summer the organization's operative activities intensify and the work force grows to approximately two hundred operative employees. The club's organization structure consists of a board of directors that sets the strategic level and is managed by nonprofit club- and committee members. In the interface between the strategic and operational level follows a working committee, a club for the Olympic games, an event corporation and a corporation for a property used as a regatta expedition. On the operational level, the club director has the responsibility to guide the operative work so it follows strategy and vision as well as unifies the operational work towards common goals. The part of the organization that turns strategy into operative actions is the organization's eight committees along with the chancery. As this is a nonprofit organization the club director and the chancery are the only sections in the organization structure that get compensations for their work.

In recent years the organization has had several changes in leadership after a long period of time under the same club director (SA 2014). As evident after discussions with members of the organization, the changes in leadership have led to changes in focus within the organization and influenced how the organization executes daily tasks. Consequently, the line of argument within the organization has changed and has become more intangible. Due to the frequent changes within the organization, the vision and goals for the organization's operational direction have become unclear and inconsistent among the employees. The vision and goals differ depending on the employees' position within the organization, creating different core values for the employees. The discussions with members of the organization

also highlighted that the organization had a tendency to magnify vision and goals without being able to realize them.

Further on, the organization has historically focused on external marketing, leaving internal marketing unexplored. In the past the brand has represented an ancient and privileged approach as well as exclusiveness through a royal term in the club name. These brand values still exist among members and within the operative organization, although other elements have broadened the view of the brand. For instance, the club's professional sailing teams, noted sponsor relationships, successful match racing events and developed sailing school concepts have enriched the brand with more modern brand values.

The conflicted brand identity and the changes in leadership result in discrepancies regarding the organization's goals and vision. With the problem at hand, the field of internal marketing could be a potential instrument implemented to change the view of the daily operative functions within the organization and to unify the employees.

3. Problem discussion

In the following chapter we present the perceived problem within the investigated organization and the purpose of the study. To conclude the problem discussion, we state our research questions, which have operated as guidelines during the study.

The current situation as described by the members of the organization constitutes of an internal marketing problem within the yacht club. Issues with the internal marketing are rooted in the lack of a clearly indicated brand among the employees in an organization. The lack of a clear brand identity can lead to differentiated perspectives of what the brand stands for and why the organization exists (Chapelo 2001).

Due to the lack of a clearly indicated brand identity, the core values become unidentifiable and inconsistent throughout the organization. The core values of an organization guide and indicate how the employees should act and execute the day-to-day work according to the organization's basic principles (Punjaisri et al. 2009). The core values are also in line with why the organization exists and assist in enforcing the employees' ability to identify with the organization's brand. Without well-defined core values the employees' strive to work after the organization's guidelines and fulfill the goals becomes mediocre (Mårtenson 2013, s. 110).

In absence of well-stated core values, it is difficult to create vision and goals that seem inherent within the organization and its operational work (Mårtenson 2013, s. 110). Due to frequent changes in leadership, the studied organization's vision and goals have shifted depending on the leadership at hand. As the vision gives the organization perspective and acts as a guideline towards the organization's goals, it is fundamental that the employees have a clear picture of what the vision and goals represent (Mårtenson 2013, s. 106). Therefore, the lack of clear goals and vision obstruct the employees' abilities to visualize the organization's future and how the means of reaching the goals should be accomplished. As the employees in the organization are expected to work in line with the vision and goals, the daily tasks will be harder to accomplish without the clarity that the leadership should provide (Mårtenson 2013, s. 111).

The absence of working actively with internal marketing, opens up for new possibilities to implement internal marketing in order to create a more dynamic and functional organization. To accomplish a more dynamic and functional organization, there are multiple aspects that the organization should explore. As the yacht club lacks the daily practice of internal marketing as well as a stable brand platform, a clear brand identity and vision and goals, it is of great importance to investigate whether these areas are connected, and if so, how they should be used in collaboration with each other to enforce internal marketing in the

organization.

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explore and illustrate the role of brand identity, brand platform as well as vision and goals and their relation within internal marketing.

3.2 Research questions

- In what way can the use of internal marketing be beneficial for an organization?

- In what way can internal marketing create a line of argument within an organization to unify the employees towards a clear vision and common goals?

- How can a possible relationship between the prominent areas and surrounding elements affect internal marketing?

4. Method

In the following chapter we present and discuss the method chosen for the case study, as well as how the method affects the gathering of theoretical and empirical information. Further on we present how we conducted the study, critical aspects and the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study.

4.1 Qualitative research method

We chose to conduct a qualitative research method as the aspects of a qualitative method are well adapted to the purpose of our study. According to Bryman and Bell (2013, s. 395), the qualitative research method follows a six-step process, starting with formulating general research questions that investigate the theoretical perspective and the significance of the empirical study. In the second step we examined the selection of relevant employees to interview within the chosen organization. The chosen employees were selected as they have a deep insight into the organization's daily operational work. Further on in the third step, the gathering of relevant and informative data was conducted. The method of gathering the data consisted of qualitative interviews with the employees of the chosen organization, as well as secondary information from scientific articles and additional literature. The interviews were conducted early in the information gathering process, as the results of the interviews operated as a foundation for our research. The interpretation of the data was conducted in the fourth step of the research process. We interpreted the data by comparing the theoretical material with the empirical information from the interviews. As we interpreted the information at hand and the analysis developed, new themes for the study were observed and included in the process. The fifth step consisted of a theoretical process where we specified the research questions and rephrased the purpose of the study. The objective of rephrasing the research questions and the purpose was to adapt them to the recent developments in the study and analysis, as well as to the addition of data. Finally, in the sixth step we compiled and documented our research, findings and analysis in a report.

The most prominent differences between a qualitative and a quantitative research method are the ideas that the qualitative method concentrates on the importance of words rather than numbers, has an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and practice focusing on generating theories rather than testing them, as well as having an interpretive attitude (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 390). The gathered data for a qualitative research approach generally consist of a wide and varied amount of information, as the qualitative research includes several different methods of research (Bryman & Bell 2013, s.394). The qualitative research method is well adapted to our study as the method allows us to view the investigated organization through the eyes of the employees and gives us the opportunity to interpret and illustrate the reality within the organization.

The research design of this study is in accordance with the concept that the literature mentions as a typical case study. Within the qualitative research method, a typical case study represents a research design including an ethnographic intended intensive study of solely one case or one individual, such as an organization's actions on or lack of internal marketing. (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 95)

4.2 Inductive approach

The setup and formation of this study reflect the research pattern that characterizes an inductive approach. An inductive research approach does not include any stated theories or patterns that need to be tested when observations are implemented. Instead, an inductive approach is based on learning through experience. Patterns, resemblances and reoccurring social cases are observed in order to result in conclusions and empirical generalizations or to generate grounded theory (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 31-35).

When this study was executed, we started by reading relevant literature within the field of internal marketing. We then stated which areas within the field that seemed interesting to investigate in the organization chosen for this study. With the stated areas as a foundation for the operationalization, we conducted the study within the organization by interviewing the employees. According to Bryman & Bell (2013, s. 31-35), the inductive research approach is commonly perceived and associated with qualitative research methods including induction, subjectivity and meaning instead of deduction, objectivity and causation when discussing type of reasoning. The research questions have open-ended and process-oriented focus within the inductive and qualitative field, rather than the pre-specified and outcome-oriented that represents the deductive and quantitative field.

Along the interviewing process, we were able to distinguish patterns in statements, thoughts and behaviors that were connected to areas within the field of internal marketing as fulfilled or defaulted. The patterns from the operative case study in combination with our knowledge of internal marketing led us to subjective, narrative, comparative analysis and conclusions. According to Bryman & Bell (2013, s. 31-35), the form of analysis differs between the inductive and the deductive approach, where the inductive form of analysis consists of narrative descriptions and constant comparisons, and the deductive form of analysis consists of numerical estimations as well as statistical inferences. This claim supports the usage of an inductive approach in this case study.

The literature describes the inductive research approach and its methods as a bottom up process that concentrates on understanding the dynamics, emergence, individual and mutual behavior as well as constructing alternative futures. The qualitative and inductive research approaches focus on how the social actuality, described as a constantly changing capacity, is related to individuals' ability of creation and construction (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 31-35). The idea of the view of the world as a constantly changing social phenomenon including social actors, leads us to the ontological concept of constructionism (Bryman & Bell 2013, s.

43). Constructionism is an ontological attitude that represents the qualitative as well as inductive research implementation (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 49). The constructionism is transmittable to this case study as the investigated organization operate in a constantly changing environment.

4.3 The interviews

As described, the gathering of the empirical information consisted of a series of interviews with the employees of the investigated organization. The interviews were carried out at the organizations headquarter. The purpose of the interviews and the location was to acquire a deep insight into the organization's operational work and employees' approach to internal marketing. Before the interviews were conducted, the employees were notified with the specific time and place through an individual email, as well as briefed about the subject of the interview and what to consider before the interview. To achieve a flexible and relaxed interview process, we performed semi-structured interviews with open questions, giving the employees the opportunity to answer the questions in a reflective and independent manner. In order to obtain a line of argument in the semi-structured interviews, we compiled an interview guide with specific themes and questions relevant to our study (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 475). The questions and themes that the interview guide contained, formed a solid foundation for the course of the interview, as well as allowing us to formulate additional questions during the interview. To be able to return to the interviews at a later point in our study and review the answers again, we recorded the interviews with permission from the employees as well as took notes during the interviews. Recording the interviews allowed us to be more involved and show a greater interest in the interviews without being distracted by meticulously taking notes of every answer (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 489). In order to properly reflect the employees' opinions and to be able to use the interviews for the analysis of the study, each interview was transliterated. The transliteration allows the researcher to maintain context of the interview and picture the employees' opinions through citations (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 491).

As previously stated, the interviews were conducted with the employees of the investigated organization. The selection of the employees was limited to the full-time employees within the chancery of the organization, as the full-time employees at the chancery are deeply involved in the organization's operational work, as well as the ones with the ability to influence the organization and its operative actions. We chose not to include the members of the organization as a part of the selection, as the study is limited to the more internal processes of the daily operations. By including the members, the study would have become too widespread, as well as lacking a specific focus. A change of method would have been appropriate in that case. Rather than conducting a qualitative method alone, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods would have been better suited (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 51).

To complement the interviews with the employees, an additional interview was conducted

with the organization's marketing and brand consultant, who is also a long-time member of the organization. The purpose of the interview was to get an external perspective on the organization's operational work, as well as a professional opinion regarding the organization's internal marketing approach.

4.4 Table and illustrations

To get a clear overview of the field of internal marketing we have created an illustration in the literature review. The illustration is based on the theoretical material by Bansal et al. (2001), Ahmed & Rafiq (2003), Lee et al. (2015), Lings (2004), Mårtenson (2013), Maxwell and Knox (2009), Punjaisri et al. (2009) and Chapelo (2013) who all describe different parts of internal marketing.

To be able to illustrate our findings and reoccurring themes within the analysis, we designed a table of the significant elements and an illustration showing the possible relationships between them.

4.5 Reliability and validity versus trustworthiness and authenticity

As the research design of this study was earlier stated as a typical qualitative study, it is important to highlight how the empirical findings, analysis and further conclusions last in the evaluation of the study (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 86). The importance of reliability and validity tends to differ among researchers, while some describe the criteria as useful, others describe how case studies can be developed to fulfill the criteria. At the same time, other researchers do not pay attention to mentioned criteria at all. From a quantitative research point of view, the criteria are of great importance, contrarily, qualitative researchers seem to neglect or disregard reliability and validity and focus on trustworthiness and authenticity when evaluating qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 86). Rather than evaluating the study by reliability and validity, terms used in the case of a quantitative study, one should use trustworthiness and authenticity as the two primary criteria when assessing a conducted study. Trustworthiness and authenticity are more suitable for a qualitative research approach as the two criteria allow the exploration of several possible of outcomes instead of one absolute truth within the world of social studies, as well as raising a wider set of issues concerning the impacts of the study. As our study is based on qualitative interviews, the empirical results are based on subjective ideas and opinions of the employees within the investigated organization. The investigated organizations employees' differing ideas and opinions show several views of the subject, which in turn results in more than one absolute truth. Hence, making trustworthiness and authenticity more suitable criteria for assessing the study.

A study implemented within the qualitative research approach tend to be difficult to generalize. As the study focuses on a specific organization as well as its internal strategic and operational processes, the conclusions and results are not necessarily representative for organizations overall (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 87).

Due to facts about the criteria that are supposed to be applied on a business research, we aim to remind the reader that the result and conclusions are not representative as a norm for any organization. However, we aim to create arguments, aspects and ideas that may lead to further actions which can be implemented as the concept of internal marketing within an organization.

4.6 Ethical aspects

In order to conduct an ethical study, a few aspects had to be taken into consideration. No interviews were conducted without the employees' consent or without the leadership's knowledge. The employees were also informed that they had an option to terminate the interview if necessary. The recording of the interviews was approved by the employees before each interview in order to avoid feelings of discomfort and any perceptions of misuse of the material from the employees.

We aimed to not interrupt the daily operational work, as well as not include the specific details of the daily business. Instead, we intended to serve as an external party, with which the employees could discuss ideas and opinions. Even so, some of the employees regarded us with caution, which may have resulted in a higher level of integrity than we aimed for regarding the answers.

In some aspects, the case study concerns contents classified as confidential. With regard to confidential contents, an agreement on making the studied organization and its employees anonymous was made. As a result of the decision regarding anonymity, we titled the organization the Sailing Association and in abbreviation in the references as SA. The interviewed employees received aliases in form of random letters without any regard to the order in which the employees were interviewed. As the organization's name is anonymized, the references in the bibliography do not include the organization's web page address.

4.7 Critical aspects of the research method

Following a qualitative research method, some critical aspects of the method have appeared. Although we have been striving to conduct a study with a general result applicable on other organizations besides the investigated one, a qualitative research method may be hard to apply to other situations than the one it was conducted in. The selected employees and organization cannot be representative for an entire population (Bryman & Bell 2013, s. 417). However, some parts of the empirical material and analysis can be viewed as useful insights when investigating other organizations.

One critical aspect regarding the interviews, is the manner in which the questions were stated. During the interviews we aimed to use open questions that allowed the employees to answer independently. However, due to the occasional lack of knowledge regarding internal

marketing, we had to clarify the meaning of the question, which in turn lead to more directing questions. The clarifications of some questions might also lead to a more subjective interview approach. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Swedish, possibly resulting in some of the employees' expressions being lost in translation.

5. Literature review

In the following chapter we present previous literature and theories regarding brand identity, brand platform, vision and goals as well as the field of internal marketing. The presented theories are not representative for the entire field of internal marketing, but highlights matters relevant to our case study.

5.1 Internal marketing

In previous marketing research, Kotler (1994, s.170) displays a triangle representing the marketing relationships that exist in service businesses. The triangle represents a triad of marketing relationships that can be defined as; the relationship between the customer and the company which is pictured as external marketing, the relationship between the customer and the employees which is the interactive marketing and finally the relationship between the company, the management and the employees that in short terms is defined as the internal marketing

The concept of internal marketing has developed since the 1970's and during which the definitions has varied in the marketing and organizational behavior literature. Some researchers define it as "… selling the firms to its employees", others describe it as "internal market of employees is best motivated for service-mindedness and customer-oriented behavior by an active, marketing like approach, where marketing like activities are used internally".

Lately, the definition has expanded and now includes multiple aspects and theories that aim to guide the organization towards one common goal. Internal marketing is a combination of marketing, human resource management and other connected theories, techniques and principles. These aspects aim to motivate, mobilize and manage an organization's employees on different levels to continually amend the way they serve both external customers and each other as internal customers (Bansal, Mendelson and Sharma 2001).

The human resource management can include the task to successfully hire, train and motivate employees to serve the customer well. Beyond this, changes in strategy require efforts in internal marketing to overcome organizational obstacles and to keep motivating the employees. As most of the strategic changes include several departments, internal marketing aims to work with integrated cross-functionality over and within the organizations different departments (Asiedu & Acheampong 2014).

The organization needs to create a sense of involvement, commitment and following empowerment to create a clear sense of purpose. These aspects are crucial for the organization to produce successful outcomes, both internally and externally (Ahmed & Rafiq

2003). Due to a well-developed internal marketing structure the organizational performance will be enhanced through the employees' true commitment (Lee et al. 2015).

Illustration 1
The illustration shows the internal marketing aspects relevant to this study and the possibility of external outcomes.

THE CONCEPT OF INTERNAL MARKETING
- From inputs in internal context to external outcomes
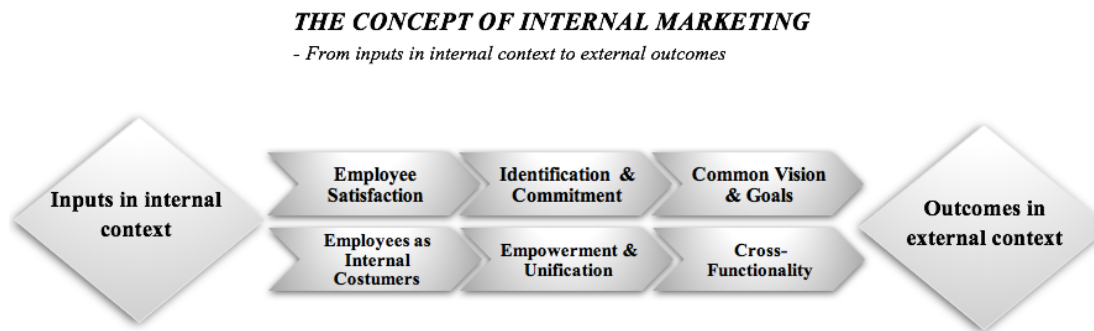
Source: Bansal, Mendelson and Sharma (2001); Ahmed & Rafiq (2003); Lee et al. (2015); Lings (2004); Mårtenson (2013); Maxwell and Knox (2009); Punjaisri et al. (2009); Chapelo (2013).

Lings (2004) declares that the concept of internal marketing stresses the need to view the employees as internal customers as the view highlights the importance of satisfied employees. This need leads to the persuasion that organizations should strive to satisfy their internal customers (the employees) in the same way as the organizations work with satisfying their external customers.

As an extension to Kotler's (1994) perspective of marketing relationships, Bansal et al. (2001) describe the link between the external marketing and internal marketing. The link that creates a bridge between the two, is composed of the employees, as earlier mentioned the internal customers and their behavior directed at the external business environment and its customers. Further on, Bansal et al. (2001) state that the internal marketing consists of six HR management practices that ought to result in internal customer commitment, job satisfactions and trust in management. To describe these terms in short, the employees' involvement in, their identification with and their affection for the organization are what internal customer commitment entail. The job satisfaction comprehends the employees' assessment of their tasks and their emotional experiences at work. Trust in management is acquired when the employees have trust in the words and actions that are shown in the management. To achieve these internal customer components, the HR management practices, need to be fulfilled. The employment security aims to provide the employees with the assurance that they are in the organization to stay and that the management trust in their efforts at work.

Further on, Bansal et al. (2001) pronounce that an organization that shares information about strategy, financial performance and expenditures in a transparent way, will be able to build trust in management among the employees. The transparency will also redeem the

bureaucratic principles that traditional organizations often are steered upon. Instead, within a flat steering concept, the employee empowerment will grow and as an effect of that the freedom, respect, expectations and accountabilities within the organization, between employees and the management, will be enhanced. The enhancement will have a positive effect on the employees' attitudes resulting in an impact on their behavior in the segment of external marketing. With focus on information sharing and empowerment, an organization that sees its employees as internal customers should also work with reduced status distinctions that can differ employees to be more or less valued than their colleagues. An organization that puts efforts in limiting potential status differences will get more loyal, satisfied and trusting employees. As the mentioned elements within internal marketing will get operationalized, the organization's external marketing effects will grow.

An essential part of internal marketing is the understanding of an organization working together as a whole towards a common vision and goals are far more efficient than an organization where the employees operate in isolation. One way to unify an organization is to implement internal marketing (Ahmed & Rafiq 2003).

Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) states that an organization's internal communication is a necessity in cross-functional projects and their processes. One of the most common internal marketing enforcement is in the creation process of internal communication strategies. There must be a clear structure of what parts of the operative work should and should not be shared, and how it should be communicated between the employees. Cross-functionality describes an organization structure that promotes the concept of internal marketing. An organization's multiple operations and the employees' different competences should be shared so the outcome can be created, shaped and delivered with influence from the organization as a whole. Cross-functionality requires that the management and the employees support the idea that every employee should be aware of ongoing projects and involved in the delivery of the product or service that the organization produces.

To achieve the desirable outcomes that internal marketing aims to produce, Maxwell and Knox (2009) suggests that the organization needs to work with the management of employees. In order to manage the employees successfully, the management must find out and understand how the organization's employees' values and behaviors can be aligned with the brand values. Hence, requiring the marketing management and HR management working together to deliver a unified brand both internally and externally, through traditional marketing as well as through the employees, a process defined as employer branding. The concept of a strong employer brand addresses the organization to attract, retain and motivate employees who add value to the brand and are able to deliver in line with the organization's brand promise and values. To acquire this concept, an organization must create and deliver values, attributes and perspectives within the employer brand that inspires and motivates the employees to work towards common vision and goals.

5.2 Brand platform

A brand is a complex combination of expectations and associations evoked from the experience of a company or product. People often tend to think of a brand as a name or logo, a description which in this case study is not suitable. Instead a brand can be described as how an organization's customers, members, employees, shareholders etc. experience the organization's operation (Davis 2002).

To build a brand that communicates the experience that the organization aims to present, it is according to Mårtenson (2013, s. 106) fundamental to developed a brand platform. An organization's brand platform is based on vision, business concept and core values. These factors are central in the brand building process. The vision gives the organization and its employees a distinct reason to why it exists on the market. The business concept pictures the strategic goals that the organization aims to achieve and how to reach them. To enhance why the organization exists and to guide the employees and the brand's behavior on the market, it is important to properly express and be clear with the organization's core values.

A well-developed brand platform creates comprehension and clarifies the brand within the organization. The brand platform will simplify the employees' daily tasks and create a clear line of argument through all the different departments within the organization (Mårtenson 2013, s. 106).

Chapelo (2013) writes that to be able to build a sustainable and strong brand, it is necessary for an organization to focus on creating both internal and external activities. To make the creation of internal and external activities work practical, a particular work plan needs to be formulated in line with the brand platform. The formulated plan is known as the brand infrastructure. One key element when creating a brand infrastructure is leadership. The function of a leader is to clarify and mediate the organization and its brand promises and to take them into action. The purpose of creating a brand infrastructure is to create a shared understanding of the brand's core values. The reason why leadership is one of the key elements when creating a strong brand infrastructure is because leadership motivates and inspires employees to work in a specific direction or towards a common goal.

A well-established brand platform empowers the developmental process of internal marketing as it indicates how the organization should communicate both externally and internally (Mårtenson 2013, s. 111). Through empowered leadership and identifiable core values, the employees will be able to agree upon what the brand platform consists of (Chapelo 2013).

5.3 Brand Identification

In order to make use of a well-established brand platform, it is crucial for the employees to identify with the brand. Brand identification implements the employees' willingness and desire to put in an extra effort in the interest of reaching the organization's goals. It is significant for the employees within an organization to feel belongingness to the organization's brand in order to identify with it (Helm et al. 2016). As employees identify themselves with the brand, they will behave according to the brand's core values and support

the brand through their behavior. By doing so the employees' daily performance will be enhanced. The lack of a clear brand identity obstructs the employees' abilities to deliver the brand's core values to the members of the organization (Punjaisri et al. 2009). Furthermore, the distinctiveness of the brand identity is fundamental to the organization as the identity clarifies the organizational culture as well as the organization's guidelines (Mårtenson 2013, s. 262).

In order for the employees to identify with the brand, employees need to have an emotional attachment with the brand, as well as define him- or herself by the same attributes that define the brand (Helm et al. 2016). The attributes that compose the brand's identity are based on the organization's vision of how the brand should be perceived both internally and externally. The brand identity needs to have a clear sense of purpose and vision, as well as being supported and understood by the employees (Mårtenson 2013, s. 262).

The employees' identification with the brand's core values creates a positive relationship to employees' brand commitment, which in turn has positive impact on the employees' brand loyalty. The internal effort to establish a powerful brand identity as well as brand platform aims to induce the employees to support and deliver the brand promise and the brand's core values. The internal efforts should attempt to enhance the employees' brand performance both internally and externally (Punjaisri et al. 2009).

A well implemented brand platform and good internal communication are key factors in order to reduce confusion about the brand's identity and enhance the employees' abilities to understand and live the brand (Chapelo 2013). The concept "live the brand" as a part of brand identification, refers to the employees' strive to adhere to the brand, as well as advocating and behaving according to the brand's values and vision. Employees that "live the brand" will serve as role models for the organization and by interacting with people outside the organization, spread the brand's identity (Helm et al. 2016).

Encouraging the employees to "live the brand" and act in ways that reflect the brand identity, results in a more cross-functional approach to the daily operations within the organization. A powerful brand identification will make the employees view the organization as a whole and therefore be able to work more cross-functional (Maxwell & Knox 2009).

6. Empirical findings & analysis

In the following chapter we present our findings and analysis based on the results of the empirical and theoretical material in order to fulfill the purpose to explore and illustrate the role of brand identity, brand platform as well as vision and goals and their relation within internal marketing. Along with the findings and analysis we feature a few selected citations in order display and connect our findings to the analysis, as well as give the reader a general feeling of the interviews.

6.1 The reoccurring areas of the study

Throughout the course of this study, attention has been brought to a relationship between three key areas within internal marketing. Brand identity, brand platform as well as vision and goals are important areas that are reoccurring in previous research as three separated areas within the field of internal marketing. Chapelo (2013), Punjaisri et al. (2009) and Mårtenson (2013) all state the significance of the three different areas, a stance that corresponds with the results of a series of interviews conducted with the employees of the Swedish yacht club SA. The reoccurring mentions of the three areas, both in the literature presented in the study as well as during the interviews, have shown a possible relationship between the areas from a different point of view as well as highlighted the need for an investigation of how the areas are dependent on each other. The study also detected two common elements within the three areas; leadership and cross-functionality. The two elements influence the areas in different ways, depending on contexts and situations, and are essential to the relationships between the brand identity, the brand platform and the vision and goals.

Table 1

Overview of the study's reoccurring areas within the concept of internal marketing

Key areas	Explanatory statement
Brand identity	Internal marketing through identification with the brand. Empowers the employees and unifies them with the organization.
Brand Platform	Internal marketing through the platform's ability to provide a stable and clear line of argument throughout the organization.
Vision and goals	Internal marketing through the unified purpose and directions of the organization provided by the vision and goals.

6.2 Brand identity and the occurrence of identity crisis

When employees of an organization identifies with a common brand, it can create a unified organization and feelings of commitment towards the organization, other employees and the brand (Helm et al. 2016; Punjaisri et al. 2009; Mårtenson 2013, s. 262). Whether the brand is identifiable and consistent with the employees' convictions or not, is decisive if the employees will identify with the brand. Based on the previously mentioned literature, we argue that the brand attributes through brand identification will become a part of the employees. In turn, the feelings of pride and correspondence will make the employees feel the need to market the brand internally and so promote internal marketing.

The results of the conducted interviews showed that the organization in some cases lack a clear vision and mutual perception of the brand identity. In order for the employees to execute their daily tasks in line with the organization's brand identity, the vision and goals work as a guideline of what to strive for. Results from the interviews showed that the employees in the organization have different views of what the organization's vision and goals consist of, which in turn may result in different views of the brand identity. In the past the organization has had a dictated idea from the leadership of what the vision and goals are composed of. However, due to frequent changes in leadership, the organization has lacked a clear focus on the vision and goals, and even changed them at times to correspond with the new leadership.

"It has a lot to do with the director or the president of the chancery, ergo a leadership that engages so that everyone knows what their tasks are."
-Employee J

The stated citation brings attention to how the employees value the importance of a clear leadership regarding the focus of the vision and goals, as well as the employees' tasks. We believe that the responsibility of steering the development of vision and goals to a well-balanced level lies in management and leadership, which also corresponds with Chapelo's (2013) ideas of how empowered leadership will result in the employees agreeing on a common ground for the organization's vision and goal. Operative actions will empathize and involve the employees to work as hard as needed with the daily work towards common and strategic vision and goals. Although it is important to let the employees be a part of the development of the brand identity in the organization, the guidelines of what the brand identity represents need to be decided first. The leadership in the organization needs to communicate a solid foundation for the brand before the remaining organization takes part in the development progress. If everyone in the organization is involved in the development of the brand from the beginning, there is a risk that the employees will aim for a brand identity that favor their own interest, resulting in inconsistencies in the brand identity. Further consequences might be an unclear vision as well as diversity in the goal orientation and a major identity crisis if the potential problem is not addressed.

"[…] however, I do believe that there is an identity crisis in the organization."
-Employee G

"There is no identity crisis, I wouldn't call it that, but there is always something going on in a big organization like SA."
-Employee J

The interviews also brought attention to a discrepancy regarding what the organization's brand identity stands for, as well as whether an identity crisis exists in the organization or not. The ongoing activities in the organization identify with different aspect of the brand, resulting in different parts of the organization pulling in different directions, rather than agreeing on a common aim. As the brand in the past has displayed an ancient, royal organization with a great history, it is now unclear whether the brand should remain exclusive and segregating, or aim to display more contemporary principles. As evident in the interviews, the discussions regarding in what direction the brand identity should operate create feelings of uncertainty for the future and how members of the organization would react to a stated change in the core identity of the brand. However, the stated identity crisis is not a situation that all employees agree on. A few of the employees perceive the discrepancies regarding the brand identity to be non-existent or minimal. The differing opinions regarding the significance of the unclear brand identity raises an inquiry whether or not the reluctance of realizing that the brand identity is unclear might have problematic consequences. Possibly obstructing the development of the organization and the agreement on a common brand identity.

Furthermore, the interviews showed that the employees focus a great deal on how the brand is perceived externally, therefore losing the notion of how the brand is perceived internally. In accordance with Punjaisri et al. (2009) we believe that to be able to communicate the brand identity externally in a proper way, there can be no confusion in the internal perspective of the brand. Even though each employee has some idea of what the brand identity represents, the lack of a unified perspective results in difficulties when relating to the brand and the ability to communicate the brand externally without giving the receivers different ideas.

With the exception of a few employees, there is a mutual opinion among the employees that there is a lack of a continuous maintenance of the brand and its identity. As evident by discussing the brand with the employees, the brand identity is unclear and mismanaged, resulting in some employees' inability to feel pride as well as a resistance to relate to and identify with the brand. Instead there is a conviction of the organization's incapacity to deliver on the brand identity and ignorance of what it takes to maintain a brand, a statement in line with Punjaisri et al. (2009) conclusion on how the lack of a clear brand identity obstructs the employees' ability to deliver the brand's core values.

The conducted study along with research about brand identity by Bansal et al. (2001), Chapelo (2013) and Mårtenson (2013) show that a clear brand identity within an organization will result in the daily tasks being executed in line with the brand, a unification of the organization and the ability for the employees to identify with the brand. As the employees identify with the brand and the brand becomes a part of their personality, the employees will start to "live the brand", an ability that according to Chapelo (2013) is enhanced by the

reduction of confusion. By living the brand, the employees will develop a willingness to being involved in the brand and its development, as the brand is a part of themselves and their work identity. However, when analyzing the statement, a contradictive argument may be that an involved in the brand and its development, as the brand is a part of themselves and their work identity. However, when analyzing the statement, a contradictive argument may be that an employee who possibly feels excessively committed to the brand, can obstruct the organization's development. The exaggerated sense of ownership and commitment to the brand identity may in itself result in resistance towards change within the organization and development regarding the brand identity.

6.3 Without a brand identity the brand platform seems hard to identify and vice versa?

Without a well-formulated brand identity, it seems hard to state what should be included within the organization's brand platform. Vice versa, the brand identity also seems to become comprehensible thanks to a well-structured brand platform. As previously mentioned, we detected a relationship between a consistent brand platform and the empowerment of internal marketing. The relationship is in accordance with Mårtenson's (2013) ideas of what the brand platform consists of, as vision, business concept and core values are essential parts in the implementation of internal marketing and in the creation of a line of argument through the organization.

The two following statements show the confusion among the employees regarding what the organization's brand identity represents and what the brand platform includes:

"[…] it represents sailing, the brand stands for the best sailors in Sweden and some of the best sailors in the world. For me, that is what the brand represents."
- Employee B

"[…] SA as a brand is like a regular club brand like either you are SA or BK Häcken. I think it represents a community. A society where you share the same interests..."
- Employee C

The view of the brand identification differs widely among the employees, depending on several different aspects such as the employees' time within the organization and their relationship to sailing. The brand identification is in many cases obstructed by the organization's incapability of stating a clear brand platform and identity. The citations show that the lack of a clear and consistent brand identity will result in confusion about how the brand should be identified and marketed, both internally and externally. A consequence of the previously stated confusion could possibly result in uncertainties regarding what aspects are included in the brand platform. The employees within the organization display different and perhaps contradicting aspects of the brand identity, resulting in ambiguity and the inability to market the brand internally. One talks about the brand as a brand representing the elite sailors

in Sweden, while another states that the brand represents fellowship and a group shaped by shared interests. Presumably, too many diverse brand contents within the organization may result in the employees striving for different goals and identifies the brand in different ways. As Mårtenson (2013) mentions, a well-established brand platform lays the foundation for what the brand consists of and clearly states to the employees what the brand identity represents and therefore how it should be applied within the internal marketing. Although Mårtenson (2013) states that the brand platform can generate a clear brand identity that in most cases promotes internal marketing, we argue that the effects of a too powerful brand identification could possibly have the opposite effect on internal marketing. Consider the outcome that the employees identify with the brand in a destructive manner, resulting in a too similar way of thinking and closing the organization to the outside world. In this scenario the development progress that the internal marketing is created to promote might stagnate due to the employees' tendency to think too similarly and accept the aspects that the brand identity represents without challenging them. The aspects that internal marketing is encouraging may also be too integrated in the group of employees and obstructing the ability to communicate the organization's ideas externally. Hence, the employees will lose the connection to the outside world.

Further on, we argue that a brand platform and brand identity that are far too governing in an organization might lead to destructive consequences. By not letting internal or external aspects influence the brand platform and identity, they will remain as they always have been without further development. It is crucial that the employees still possess the power to affect the development of the brand platform and brand identity in order for the brand to remain current.

6.4 What to strive for? Vision and goals!

Another important aspect of internal marketing, alongside the brand identity and the brand platform, is the unified perception of what the organization aims to strive for. Our study has shown that the aim is rooted in clearly stated vision and goals. However, the general perception of the vision and goals in the organization is more in line with the following citation.

"[...]I believe that the organization still misses, the whole work of visions regarding the operational goals, where we are going, in what direction and so on..."
-Employee G

As the leadership has changed, the perception of who is responsible of establishing the vision and goals has become unclear. It is evident from interviews with the employees that some regard the development of clear vision and goals as a mission carried out by an external agency, rather than an internal discussion within the organization. Since the development process is not in the employees' job description, a few of the employees do not see the need to reflect over the vision and goals other than those stated in the organization's by-laws.

When questioning the employees within the organization if they are working actively with open minds and discussions regarding vision, goals and guidelines the answers were in line with the following citation:

"[...] a work of vision has been going on for a while, that is formulated in a power point presentation. And what that has really done, regarding the development within the operations is for me quite fuzzy. And it is not a management control measure that we connect with the operations on a daily basis. It is more like everyone has their personal motive forces. As I have when I always include an aspect of quality in everything I do, that it should result in the best possible outcome, given the conditions... That can be a good vision and ambition. But that is actually only stipulated by myself... It has not been formulated and delivered to me as a clear and united vision for the whole organization."
- Employee H

According to the employees, a "reason-for-being" has not been executed in the organization for a long time, even though the vision and goals at the employees' disposal are regarded as out-of-date and inadequate. For those employees who regard the development of the vision and goals as a substantial mission in order for the organization to be able to function at its best capability, there is a mutual wish for the vision and goals to be more clear. However, the employees also believe that the development of the vision and goals has stagnated and is not communicated properly to the employees.

It seems like the employees within the investigated organization share the opinion that a strong and engaged leadership in combination with common and clearly stated core values and strategies engage the employees to a higher level of outcome. A perception that corresponds with Chapelo's (2013) statements concerning leadership as a key element when fortifying a brand infrastructure. With clear vision, goals and a distinct "reason-for-being", the employees seem to experience a stronger identification to the organization's brand and its core values. Vice versa, we believe that a unified view of both the employees' personal and mutual brand identification would enhance the strive to fulfill the organization's common vision and goals. During the study the employees within the organization could tell what vision the organization was aiming to implement, but the statements about what the vision entailed differed from employee to employee. The employees' unclear view of the vision seems to result in inefficiency regarding the daily operational work. Results of our case study show that the management and the employees need to communicate more frequently, openly and between all departments to be able to become united in the brand identification as well as the view of visions and operational goals. A united view of visions and operational goals might result in more engaged employees. To establish this, our contention is that every employee's opinions need to be heard so that they all feel that their voice counts regardless what department they are responsible of.

As Chapelo (2013) describes, the leadership is of great importance when it comes to mediate why the organization exists through vision and goals, and what they strive to deliver to its

members and further on to the external context. This may spread a high level of sentience within the organization that both create a deliverable brand and a sense of "reason-for-being". However, to be able to become united and follow one leader, an organization needs to settle down in what kind of leadership that suits the organization and its operative actions, as

Furthermore, discussions during the interviews show that the employees believe that when an organization seems to have succeeded in their work towards common vision and goals, the success boosts the employees and the feeling of empowerment seems to be enhanced. However, it is possible to presume that when an organization does not accomplish what they strive for, the employees feel shame and do not have the commitment to turn the failure into a strive to do better.

Although there is a lack of a mutual perception of what the vision and goals are within the studied organization, a few employees take the matter into their own hands and create their own goals in order to execute their tasks. While effective for the individual employee, concerns whether separated goals might result in different strives in task fulfillment exist in the organization. As the employees create individual goals for different parts of the organization, the ability to answer the question why the organization exists gets more difficult. It is our contention that the organization has to know in what direction they are working and why they are doing it. The clear directives will create understanding for what needs to be done in each field within the organization.

6.5 Cross-functionality – motivational or confusing?

"When working like that, everything gets really good, you can tell every time when we are doing it. But there is no operating control that is saying that you should, or have to do it. Earlier, everyone was told to focus only on their own territory of work"
- Employee H

The citation above is one of the employees' answer to the question if the employees are working in a cross-functional manner over the department borders to generate higher levels of outcomes. As previously stated, the employees' ability to identify with the brand is crucial for the employees' accomplishments and successful organizational outcomes. The interviews showed that the perception of the brand identity differs within the organization depending on the employees' positions, as there is a reoccurring opinion among some of the employees that reflecting over brand identity is not a part of their tasks. The fact that the importance of the brand identity is indifferent to some of the employees, connects to opinion that the idea of executing daily tasks with the brand in mind doesn't apply to all employees as it should. Thereof the responsibility of enforcing the brand in all parts of the organization lands solely on a few employees. Due to this, cross-functionality seems to be a concept worthy to discuss in this case.

As a common brand identity is indistinct within the organization, the employees form their

own identity towards the brand, resulting in several different brand identities in the organization. Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) point out that the importance of seeing the organization as a whole is an essential part of internal marketing, as well as working cross-functional within the organization. The statement verifies the concern that some of the employees expressed regarding multiple brand identities. As there is a possibility that the employees will put too much focus into their respective identities and the goals that are connected to them, rather than serving the organization's identity as a whole. Individual identities and goals also support some employees' opinions that the organization's different departments' daily work is segregated, as well as the belief that some employees are resistant to crossing department borders and do not realize the potential benefits of working in a more cross-functional manner.

"However, if I don't know what the others are doing, it's given that I can't have any relevant opinions about what is possible to improve or develop."
-Employee J

The citation along with Ahmed & Rafiq's (2003) description of cross-functionality as a concept that requires shared knowledge of the operational work within an organization, make it possible to state that there is an absence of cross-functionality within the organization. Furthermore, the citation contributes to the perception that the employees lack knowledge of their co-worker's work tasks. The ignorance of the fellow employees' tasks will in turn make it harder to work cross-functional, as working over department boarders' prerequisite prior knowledge of the assignments in the organization.

"[…] now, we sometimes experience that we are understaffed just because we are not co-operating."
- Employee I

The citation above expresses that the need for the cross-functionality that internal marketing promotes, is significant within the organization as the employees at times feel inadequate and that the organization is understaffed. Some employees believe that the feeling of inadequacy is a result of not working in a cross-functional manner, as working more cross-functional would encourage collaboration between departments resulting in a more efficient way of executing the daily tasks. The outcome of the occasions during which the employees have implemented cross-functional methods have shown positive results, motivating the employees to implement internal marketing further in the organization.

When considering Mårtenson's (2013) view of the creation of a brand platform, as well as Ahmed and Rafiq's (2003) view of working more cross-functional, it is our contention that a common vision and goals can be the beginning of the creation process of a platform for a more cross-functional way of working within the organization. If all employees can feel that they know in what direction the organization aims to work, they should hopefully understand what needs to be done to get there. The understanding is important as in that insight, the

organization will hopefully come to an agreement on what is expected from every employee and it will become easier to work more cross-functional towards common projects and operational goals. Without the insight of what is expected from each employee, the risk of inefficiency increases in combination with weak attitudes regarding vision and goals. Employees may expect someone else within the organization to accomplish their work tasks. With a more cross-functional way of working the organization may achieve a higher level of efficiency.

The implementation of internal marketing in an organization unfamiliar with the concept can prove to be a challenging task. Working cross-functionally as promoted by internal marketing can result in increased cooperation between the employees, a deeper understanding for how the organization works and working more efficiently. However, if cross-functionality is received poorly by the employees, the consequences are more likely to obstruct the development of the organization. In contrast to successful cross-functionality, a failed attempt might result in confusion regarding division of labor and tasks executed poorly due to unclear task assignments. Consequences like the ones stated above might be more common if the implementation of internal marketing is forced, in contrast to letting internal marketing develop within the organization in a more natural way.

6.6 The lack of internal marketing

As Bansal et al. (2001) state, internal marketing is a concept that includes several fields within the organization, such as marketing, human resource management and operating control. In this case study, a great deal of the employees have worked in the organization for an extended period of time, resulting in the creation of routines and predefined operational methods, leaving little room for the organization to develop. The areas that are included in internal marketing aim to continuously motivate and manage the organization in order to avoid stagnation.

We became aware of the importance of the ability of change within an organization, as well as the strength and power the employees experience when a change results in advantages for the employees. The possibility of positive outcomes shows the importance of an open mind-set, high level of energy and persistence in order to take changes in to actions. Organizations that make multiple attempts to change and that seem to fall through may encounter difficulties in motivating the employees to change yet again. In accordance with Chapelo (2013), Punjaisri et al. (2009) and Mårtenson (2013) we suggest that brand identification and the brand platform together with a clearly stated vision and common goals, have the ability to influence each other and create strength within the organization. Vague brand identification may come from the employees' incomprehension of the organization's brand platforms as well as vision and goals. With a unified apprehension of the brand platform as well as vision and goals, the employees' thoughts, willingness and visions may possibly be more corresponding, which in turn may lead to a more unified internal brand. During the interviews, some of the employees recognized the need for the implementation of internal

marketing in the organization, as the lack of internal marketing cause friction
and quarrels among the employees.

"I am not working with marketing as a part of my daily work session. [...] so I don't think it is of that much importance for me."
- *Employee D*

Although some of the employees realize the need for internal marketing, some employees honestly say that knowledge of what sort of marketing the vision and goals represent is not essential for the execution of their daily tasks, since it is not part of their respective department. On a practical and operational level, the ignorance of the vision and goals may be working. However, by reviewing the results from the conducted interviews, we argue that it would be more beneficial if all the employees within an organization, regardless of what department they work within, are aware of the organization's vision and goals as well as the brand identity and platform.

It was evident from the interviews that some of the employees did not grasp the meaning of the internal marketing concept and its potential benefits within an organization. However, some of the employees did not recognize the lack of internal marketing as a problem, despite the fact that some of the issues within the organization that the employees brought attention to, can be connected to the lack of internal marketing. The resistance to implementing internal marketing is related to the previously stated issue regarding some employees' habits of working in the same way as they always have. The employees also expressed that a high motivation to work proactive in a long-term perspective exists within the organization. However, the desire to work in a proactive manner is often obstructed by a reoccurring need to amend unexpected tasks in ongoing projects.

Furthermore, the lack of internal marketing connects back to some of the employees' belief that marketing is set apart from their daily tasks, promoting the need for cross-functionality in order to involve additional employees in the marketing tasks. Several employees also brought attention to the conviction that cross-functionality would simplify the organization's strive to work as a whole towards a common vision and mutual goals, as well as reduce the tendency to assume a defensive position.

6.7 A possible trinity within the field of internal marketing

One thrilling idea is to investigate if it is the brand identification and brand platform that lead to clear vision and goals or if it is clear vision and goals that bring unified a brand identification and a clear brand platform. By analyzing the three areas as well as surrounding aspects, we suggest there is a relationship between the brand identity, the brand platform and the vision and goals. By reviewing research by Chapelo (2013), Punjaisri et al. (2009) and Mårtenson (2013) regarding brand identity, brand platform and vision and goals, we suggest that the three areas are connected by a relationship that seems to consist of several factors

depending on each other. Further on, we argue that the relationship can be illustrated by a trinity consistent of the three areas. As stated in the analysis, the literature presented in the study clearly show how each area precedes the other or vice versa. The trinity reflects how the different areas through empowerment, can construct and enhance each other rather than being separate parts following a step-by-step process. By analyzing Chapelo's (2013), Punjaisri et al. (2009) and Mårtenson's (2013) arguments that each field is essential for a successful usage of internal marketing, it is our contention that the three areas form a powerful core for internal marketing. We argue that the core created by trinity works as a foundation for the implementation and usage of internal marketing.

Illustration 2
The illustration shows the detected relationships between the three areas that are described as the core of internal marketing as well as the surrounding aspects that are reoccurring within each field. The circle as a whole represents the concept of internal marketing.

7. Concluding discussion

In the following chapter we present the conclusion of the conducted study. We illustrate areas essential to the field of internal marketing and how they relate to the field. To conclude the chapter, we express the opportunities for further research.

Our study of the different aspects of internal marketing has revealed, that although brand identification, brand platform as well as vision and goals are three separate areas within internal marketing, they form a trinity that illustrates the relationship between the three key areas. The trinity illustrates that there is no determined stance on how the areas are dependent on each other or what area precedes the other. We find that the trinity makes up an essential core for internal marketing. The core provides organizations with the tools necessary to acquire successful outcomes, both internally and externally. We argue that the trinity creates a line of argument within the organization required for the employees to work in a common direction and in accordance with the organization's brand.

The trinity should exist consistently throughout the entire organization. To make that possible, the presence of the surrounding elements; leadership as well as cross-functionality are substantial. A clear leadership guides the organization by clarifying the direction of work when using the brand identity, the brand platform and the vision and goals as operational tools. Hence, it is feasible to conclude that separate relationships exist between the leadership and each key area. By clear leadership the separate relationships unify and connect each key area, which in turn make them co-create the trinity. With the lack of a clear leadership, ideas of how the separate areas develop into the trinity are undermined and therefor obstruct the creation of the trinity. The significance of cross-functionality functions the same way as the clear leadership does. The organization's ability to work unified and over department boarders is a fundamental condition when describing the framing of the trinity.

On one hand, our study shows the individual importance of each area within internal marketing which agrees with previous research literature such as Bansal, Mendelson and Sharma (2001); Ahmed & Rafiq (2003); Lee et al. (2015); Lings (2004); Mårtenson (2013); Maxwell and Knox (2009); Punjaisri et al. (2009); Chapelo (2013). On the other hand, our study illustrates the trinity that suggests a description of how each area by empowering the others creates a wider and more powerful way to operate the concept of internal marketing. The suggested trinity lays the foundation for a new segment within the internal marketing research. By viewing the concept as a dynamic process, the core areas of internal marketing flourish and create a substantial base to presuppose from ahead of viewing them as separated actions and areas carried out, step by step, in a more linear-shaped process.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize the importance of the detected trinity by regarding it as the "Holy Trinity" of internal marketing, as it represents the core and seems to be decisive in the implementation and operationalization. The addition of the suggested trinity

concept to internal marketing may lead to a new line of thoughts, ideas and approaches which in turn can create opportunities for further research within the field of internal marketing, with regard to a more assembled and enhancing stance as a take of point. By referring to the core of internal marketing as a "Holy trinity", we would like to emphasize the significance of brand identity, brand platform as wells vision and goals as a whole. Much like the "real" Holy Trinity works as a core for some religious beliefs.

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