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Corporate values: empty words or a crucial part of an organisation

A case study analysing the challenges of establishing and
implementing corporate values

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Abstract

Background: The role of values in organisations is continuously discussed, whether they actually exist and how they can have an impact on business activities. As many companies are facing an expansion internationally, corporate values are believed to be important for a cohesive internationalisation.

Purpose: Contribute with knowledge and understanding regarding what possible challenges that comes with creating and implementing shared values. Also by adding an international perspective to see what effects an expansion may have on the creation and implementation.

Research questions: What potential challenges can companies encounter when creating and implementing shared corporate values throughout an organisation?

Sub questions: How can corporate values be implemented within an organisation? What effects can an international expansion of an organisation have on the implementation and interpretation of corporate values?

Theoretical framework: Relevant theories are presented to give a comprehensive review of the concept of values, and furthermore why values are regarded as important for companies and how to implement them. Also, an international perspective of values is discussed, followed by what challenges that might come with the creation and implementation. Further on are theories around communication in regards to values also presented.

Method: Data was collected through qualitative interviews at the Swedish shirt manufacturer Eton. The method of analysis has been deductive.

Conclusion: Companies needs to be aware of what the concept of values means to distinguish it from corporate culture, and from there create and implement values that are applicable across an international organisation.

Keywords: Values, corporate values, communication

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1. Introduction

The initial chapter serves as an introduction to the topic to outline the framework of the thesis. The first chapter starts with a background description to give an overview of the subject and the relevant theory field. This follows by a problem orientation and the purpose of the thesis to further explain the chosen research questions. An explanation of the case is compiled to shed light and give an understanding of the groundwork parts this thesis has based its investigation on, and additionally, the delimitations refrained from.

1.1 Background description

“Most values statements are bland, toothless, or just plain dishonest. And far from being harmless, as some executives assume, they’re often highly destructive. Empty values statements create cynical and dispirited employees, alienate customers, and undermine managerial credibility” (Lencioni, 2002, p.113).

Some profound critic the least to say presented by Lencioni (2002) towards many companies’ insincerity when attempting to attain common shared corporate values throughout an organisation. Nevertheless, corporate values have become a great matter of interest for many companies in different industries (Thomsen, 2004). Collins and Porras’ (1994) research suggests that organisations with shared, deeply held core values outperforms the competition on the general stock market as well as demonstrated the ability to cope with change and overcome setbacks. Their research implied that visionary companies which succeed for decades are all guided by core ideologies, including a sense of purpose beyond making money (Williams, 2013). This suggests that companies need to be aware of their vision and mission in order to define a core ideology to be followed. Although being very critical of many companies approach towards corporate values, Lencioni (2002) still argues for great opportunities from attaining strong, shared values within an organisation. This gives way to clarify the corporate identity and set the company apart from competitors, as well as providing a rallying point for employees. It is therefore interesting to investigate how this process of formulating and implementing corporate values throughout an organisation generally acts out. Do statements from theories like Lencioni (2002) holds any truth or not? That most companies’ values are nothing else than just empty words, not integrated into the day-to-day work as well as an organisation's vision and mission. In this perspective, it is

interesting to further examine the reasons why actually organisations still pursue into implementing common corporate values. Furthermore, when closer examining this process, trying to define the potential obstacles and challenges that might hinder some companies to obtain a unified corporate platform of shared, believed and held values.

Today, business leaders are challenged like never before due to a globalised activity, as well as constant political, technological and economical changes (Thornbury, 2003). Due to an intensified globalisation of the world economy, the need for a further global adoption of international business ethics (Asgary and Mitschow, 2002) and international business codes (Kaptein, 2004) have arisen. The increased need for working across natural cultural boundaries can many times be a common matter why companies start to engage in corporate values (Thornbury, 2003). Values can provide companies with cohesion and common understanding in an increasingly networked world (Humble et al., 1994). Thornbury (2003) argues that if colleagues across the world, in other departments or divisions, are convinced that everyone within the organisation operates after the same basic principles, it will lead to a harmonisation within the organisation and streamline the working relationships.

This thesis derives from the interest on how and why companies tend to formulate and implement corporate values, and furthermore what potential challenges which might be awaiting during this process. To examining the subject in an international perspective, proceeding from previous studies, additional focus has been emphasised on deepening the investigation into the effects an expansion of the organisation can have on the practice of communication and implementation. Furthermore, what the potential effects an internationalisation might hold over the constant process of implementation and integration of a company's corporate values.

1.2 Problem discussion

Existing theories discuss the meaning of values and how this can be applied in a corporate perspective (Agle and Caldwell, 1999; Rokeach, 1973). Many times, an attempt of differentiating and categorise corporate values are made (Agle and Caldwell, 1999), trying to distinguish the means behind why companies work towards establishing common values and what implications this might have on the organisation (Humble et al., 1994; Posner and Schmidt, 1993). Also, a lot of the research is emphasised on the gains that can come out of

successfully implementing a unified corporate culture throughout the organisation (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327, 345; Peters and Waterman, 1982), discussing an appropriate way of establishing, implement and fully recognise corporate values within all units of an organisation (Thomsen, 2004; Malbašić and Brčić, 2012; Humble et al., 1994). How can this framework be applied in a specific case?

The strive towards common corporate values to be shared and believed in, affecting the daily behaviour at work, and to be integrated into all decisions, processes and the business strategy, are something many companies aims to achieve. It is argued that values can contribute as a foundation for companies, something to support the entire business on (Mackay, 2017). Values can also enable a clarification of the corporate culture, another hot topic among companies today (Andersen, 2017). However, some assertions do exist which claims that several companies fail to give meaning to their values, resulting in them not becoming integrated throughout the organisation (Lencioni, 2002). There are theories discussing the possible challenges of establishing and implementing common corporate values (Humble et al., 1994; Thomsen, 2004). Challenges such as cases of organisations failing to give their pronounced corporate values authenticity (Lencioni, 2002; Williams, 2013). However, to the best of knowledge, based upon a literature review within the research field, existing research do not discuss the possible connections between potential challenges of communicating and implementing corporate values, and the phase of organisations expanding internationally. Meaning, what potential effects an international expansion of the organisation might have on the processes of implementing and integrating corporate values throughout the organisation. Companies may argue for having a well-functioning business and corporate culture according to the prevailing circumstances in which they operate. However, if not being able to clearly define the organisational values and what the company stands for could cause problems when changes in context occur through expansion, primarily through internationalisation, and could hurt the company in the long term. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to former studies within the research field, such as theories conducted by Humble et al. (1994) and Thomsen (2004), to provide a deeper understanding of possible obstacles and challenges organisations might run across when working towards a common platform of values, taking in the effects of how an expansion of an organisation might affect this process.

The question is how an expansion of a company might affect the implementation of corporate values throughout the organisation? How might this influence the interpretation of a common

value platform between different units within an organisation? Further on, it is interesting to view upon the phenomena in an international perspective. Whether the organisation grow nationally or internationally, will this have a meaning for the possible effects on an organisation's strive towards common corporate values? Or do organisations simply fail in the whole process of internally implement the intended message? Making their formulated corporate values no more than just empty words.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the thesis is to contribute to knowledge and understanding regarding what possible challenges that might lie ahead of companies pursuing to implement and integrate common, shared corporate values throughout an entire organisation. Furthermore, add an international perspective by examining the potential effects an expansion internationally of the organisation might have on the implementation and integration processes.

1.4 Research question

Based on the problem discussion, the following research question was defined to clarify the purpose of the thesis:

- What potential challenges can companies encounter when establishing and implementing shared corporate values throughout an organisation?

To further elaborate on potential challenges, these additional questions were formulated to showcase the processes involved when establishing corporate values:

- How can corporate values be implemented within an organisation?
- What effects can an international expansion of an organisation have on the implementation and interpretation of corporate values?

Additionally, to examine whether organisational location structure influences the implementation of corporate values, an investigation has been made on various units within a particular organisation located in different parts of the world.

1.5 Case

This thesis examines the process of formulating and implementing corporate values within an organisation, and what possible challenges that companies might be faced with during their operations. This involves establishing shared values as well as reassuring the corporate values to be integrated into all business activities, from day-to-day work to business strategies and decision making. To acquire a deeper understanding within the research field and enable comparisons between relevant theories and present companies, a specific case firm has been studied. A study was conducted of an organisation with a long history and a strong corporate culture. This corporate heritage is one aspect to consider when investigating how the processes have been carried out and what challenges was met, from implementation to the ongoing integration and further communication within the organisation.

Thornbury (2004) argues the internationalisation of an organisation will increase the commitment towards shared corporate values. Thomsen (2004), however, argues there are challenges for organisations in adopting the value system along with a changing environment. Internationalisation could be argued as one aspect prompting for such change. With this theory in mind, describing the complexity of creating shared values throughout an entire organisation, whether it is across national borders or cultural boundaries, extra focus within this thesis is emphasised on what potential effects an organisational expansion might have on the implementation of shared values. In order to add an international perspective for this research, an expanding, internationalised company are therefore examined. The thesis studies a case of a firm which has undergone a substantial international expansion in recent years and is still an ongoing process. According to theories like Thornbury (2004) and Thomsen (2004), this phase will put demands on an organisation like the one examined in this case. Both in regards of how the processes of implementation of corporate values, as well as how the communicated message is interpreted throughout the organisation.

1.6 Delimitations

In accordance with the purpose of this thesis, the research field has been limited to corporate values or organisational values, two denominations used interchangeably. Corporate culture is in several theories related to an organisation's corporate values, and values are often described to be a part of culture (Schein, 1985). However, we have chosen to bring focus

specifically on organisational values and the processes directly linked to this concept, which involves how values might affect a corporate culture. This delimits though from the relatedness and possible effects a corporate culture can have towards values.

This thesis is mainly focused on how corporate values can affect an organisation internally, meaning how corporate values can influence business activities and organisational performance. Therefore, the research delimits from how held values of an organisation can affect the perceived image an organisation externally.

2. Theoretical framework

The second chapter intends to introduce a theoretical framework which this thesis will originate from. This introduces the concepts and theories regarding values and communication, and further on review the literature within the research field on why and how companies engage with corporate values, describing this process and the known challenges that might come with. Finally, a summary of the understandings drawn from the literature review is presented followed by a description of the analytical framework mainly adopted in the analytical discussion.

2.1 Theoretical concepts

This thesis is based on the theoretical concept of values. The following chapter serves to provide an understanding of the concept and definitions of values founded from previous studies within this subject. To further elaborate around the processes of implementing and integrating values into an organisation, an attempt to define the concept of communication has been made.

2.1.1 Values

Values as a general concept is a well-known term but have numerous explanations when attempting to define the concept.

“A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (Rokeach, 1973, p.5).

Hofstede’s (1980, p.19) definition of a value is “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over other”. Hofstede (1998), in a later published article, further tries to distinguish a difference between values and attitudes. Attitudes include components of job satisfaction and are relatively easy to translate into practical conclusion. Whereas values are more basic interests and do not have to lead to an immediate practical conclusion.

In a corporate perspective, values within organisations are defined in several ways such as corporate values, core values and organisational values. Corporate values is a common term which has been investigated by numerous researchers listed by Agle and Caldwell (1999). Corporate values are a way of expressing how a company will operate. However, there are different ways of expressing and categorise values. Williams (2011) denominates the concept as work values, which are applied to explain the effect values have on individuals and organisations.

Thornbury (2003) uses Schein’s (1993) levels of culture to illustrate a model (figure 1), which distinguishing values from culture. Core values are the values of deep roots in the organisation which have been present for a long time, representing the heart of an organisation. Thornbury (2003) further argues that espoused values, on the contrary of core values, are such values that are applied to fit the company’s business model. Schein (2004) describes, in his third edition of organisational culture and leadership, espoused values as important but leaves important information about behaviour aside. To really understand an organisation, the basic underlying assumptions, defined as core values in the second edition, must be understood. Basic underlying assumptions is the product of the human need of cognitive stability and is immensely taken for granted, which means it has been given no room for variation. With that said, basic underlying assumptions, or core values, are by Schein (2004) considered static. A difficult situation since the corporate culture must change when implementing new or different values, and therefore must be considered very challenging to achieve.

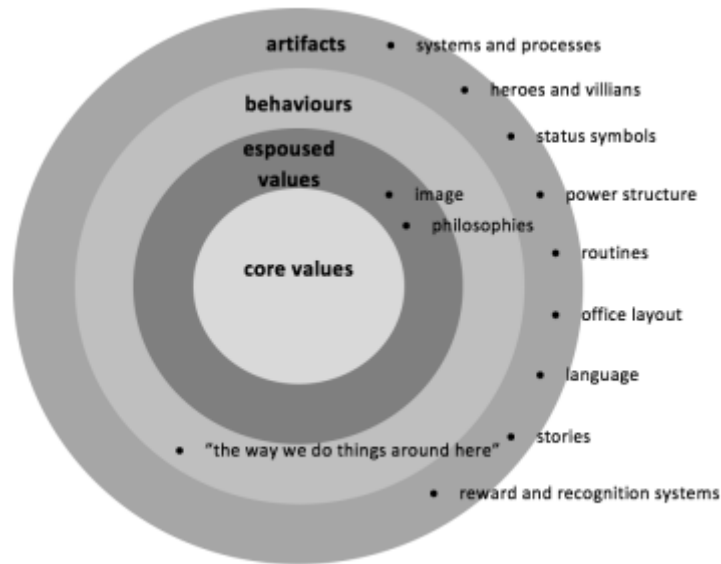


Figure 1: Separating values from culture (Thornbury, 2003, p.70).

Schein (2004, p. 36) states that since “the essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and once one understands those, one can easily understand the other more surface levels and deal appropriately with them.” The outer layers of Thornbury’s model consist of behaviours and artifacts. Behaviours are presented by Thornbury (2003) as the “way we do things around here” and are less visible from an external perspective than artifacts. Thornbury (2003) further states that values are easier to understand if behaviours are identified. Concerning the layer farthest from core values are artifacts the easiest characteristics of an organisation to spot. Nevertheless, by only studying artifacts this will produce a quite shallow investigation identifying things we can see and feel at a workplace.

On the contrary to the framework of Thornbury (2003), Hofstede (1998) offers a theory involving practices as the central role of organisational culture. Hofstede (1998) argues that information regarding corporate values used in management literature are usually drawn from management, from which corporate values derives from. Employees should follow a company’s practices, designed according to the corporate values, but they do not have to confess to the established values. Which means that leader's values become the employee's practices. Corporate culture is further argued to be in all members of an organisation, and therefore, practices are instead seen as the core of organisational culture (Hofstede, 1998)

Malbašić and Brčić (2012, p.105) defines organisational values as “a stable and constant construct”, referring to the work of Collins and Porras (1996). Malbašić and Brčić (2012, p.105) further suggests that while business practices, corporate goals and strategies may be adapted to the circumstances of an organisation, “core organisational values should not depend on situational factors”. Organisational values are observable in every act of communication, whether this involves external communication with business associates or internal communication within the organisation (Atkinson, 2003; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak, 2009, referred in Malbašić and Brčić, 2012, p.105). Values are furthermore embedded in the perception of the organisational brand, the vision and mission statements, annual reports, as well as in all organisational decisions.

2.1.2 Communication

There are several various definitions of the concept communication when reviewing the literature within the research field. Oliver (1997, p.64) extensively defines the simplest form of communication as:

"an interchange of ideas, facts and emotions, by two or more persons, with the use of words, letters and symbols based on the technical problem of how accurately the symbols can be transmitted, the semantic problem of how, precisely, the symbols convey the desired meaning, and the effectiveness of how the received meaning affects conduct in the desired way".

Further definitions of the concept tend to vary widely. Perhaps this is because of the role communication usually has in studies, which Tourish and Hargie (2004) argues often are taken as to be self-explanatory. In a corporate perspective, Kalla (2005) argues there is no clear definition for the role of communication within organisations. Although an increasing interest in companies' ability to communicate their strategy, there is still room for further studies to be conducted regarding communication in practice (Forman and Argenti, 2005). Kalla (2005) suggests a paradox within the research fields exists. Even though there is a rise of attention to the importance of communication for organisations, this expertise is rarely taken into practice. Nevertheless, Kalla (2005) further on provides her definition for the concept of internal communication within organisations as all formal and informal communication throughout the entire organisation. Bovée and Thill's (2000, p.7) provides additional

distinction of the concept by defining communication as “the exchange of information and ideas within an organisation”.

In contrast to Kalla (2005) and Bovée and Thill (2000), Fitzpatrick (2013) (referred in Brazaityte, 2014, p.11) differentiate the concept of internal communication as organisational communication, which involves the informal daily communication within an organisation, and communication used as a tool for organisations to communicate their plans, news and the context. Which means most informal communication between colleagues will not be filed under the concept of internal communication. Welch and Jackson (2007) also makes a similar differentiation, studying the concept in a management perspective. Organisational communication is concerned with communication as a phenomenon, covering the entire spectra of communication within an organisation. While internal communication, or corporate communication, is regarded as an instrument of management.

“The internal corporate communication dimension is defined as communication between an organisation’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch and Jackson, 2007, p.186).

Internal stakeholders are defined as all employees, strategic management, day-to-day management, work teams and project teams (Welch and Jackson, 2007, referred in Brazaityte, 2014, p.11). This theory sees internal communication as a strategical process from an organisation’s management throughout the organisation to promote commitment, enhance a sense of belonging, cooperate with organisational change and to give an understanding of the corporate aims.

2.2 Literature review

This introduces a literature review of previous studies within the theory field in how and why organisations engage in establishing corporate values. Furthermore, this review will also shed light on what existing theories presents about potential challenges in the processes, together with what can be found within the subject from an international perspective.

2.2.1 Why are values regarded important for companies?

Values work as determinants, regulators and modifiers of relations between individuals and organisations (Agle and Caldwell, 1999), which why values are argued for companies to be attained. Rokeach (1973) further argues that without values, organisations will fall flat with communication not reaching out. Rokeach (1973, p.5) further explains that:

“Values are determinants of virtually all kinds of behaviour that could be called social behaviour or social action, attitudes and ideology, evaluations, moral judgments and justifications of self and others, comparisons of self with others, presentations of self to others, and attempts to influence others.”

Regarding how values can affect an organisation, Enz and Schwenk (1989) (referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327) discuss prior theories regarding research, focused primarily on whether changes towards shared values can bring the effect of economic return. Previous studies argue that the organisational performance roots in strong shared values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327, 345; Peters and Waterman, 1982), continued by suggesting excellent organisational performance as an outcome of well integrated shared values within an organisation. Therefore, common corporate values are further argued to be of great importance for organisations to implement. In the McKinsey 7-S Framework, Peters and Waterman (1982) further discuss values as the central element of creating success in business. The framework is divided into soft and hard elements. Above the fact that soft values overrule hard elements in number, more important is the position of values as the connective dot in the middle combining all the elements. Therefore, values have, through their framework, been mentioned as a vital part since they can create a house of strong foundations (Woodcock and Francis, 1989).

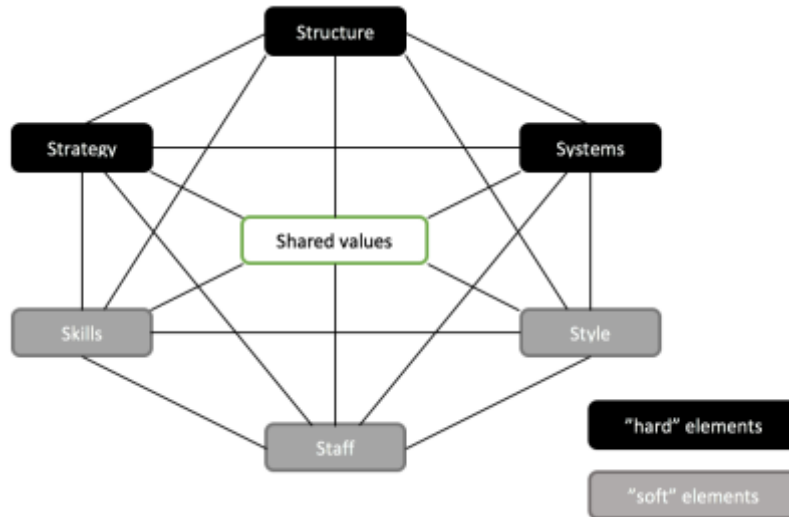


Figure 2: The McKinsey 7-S Framework (Peters and Waterman, 1982. p. 10)

Conformably, Humble et al. (1994), concludes that international business leaders put top priority to implement work values, and considers corporate values as the foundations for effective visions and strategies. Shared values are also argued to be an important determinant for business leaders to develop a base on which they can spread business ethics from (Mumford et al. 2003). Humble et al. (1994) confirms this by further arguing for values as a vital influence when deciding an ethical culture in an international company.

Within an organisation, values are furthermore described to have positive effects in communications between individuals. Posner and Schmidt (1993) argues that when shared corporate values are present, they provide a better understanding and predictability of other's actions, which in turn generate a higher productivity for the organisation.

Humble et al. (1994) concludes that values are a tool which can affect individuals to work in a coherent and committed team. The use of clear and distinct values is a way to create a unified workforce and thereby promote a climate for growth and changes. However, Humble et al. (1994) further argues, it is only when values are updated and widely spread among leaders and role models that values truly can be a strategic contribution. Finally, Humble et al. (1994) claims that fundamental beliefs reflect commitment to high performance at work. What people believe in is what drives them. Accordingly, therefore values are of central importance.

2.2.2 How to establish and implement corporate values

The work of implementing corporate values within an organisation is an abstract work for companies (Peters and Waterman, 1982). However, these processes are further on argued to be of great importance for organisations to accomplish, since shared values are argued to contribute to the organisational performance. Of this reason, several studies have been carried out to identify strategies for implementation and integration of corporate values.

Thomsen (2004) have performed a paper regarding the determinants of corporate values and where these values come from. The paper serves as a track down for the very first step of the implementation; the creation of corporate values. Thomsen (2004) argues that since a company is nothing else than a legal fiction, then its values must derive from the stakeholders. Thomsen (2004) proposes that values are created in a three-stage process.

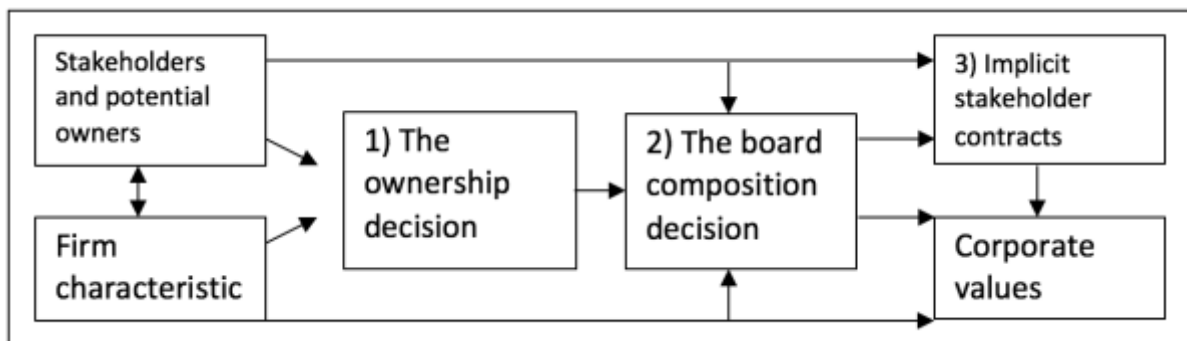


Figure 3: Legal/Institutional/cultural regime (Thomsen, 2004, p.30).

What can be concluded from the conducted framework (figure 3) by Thomsen (2004) is that there are some prominent stakeholders which are given more influence across the process of creating values, while other stakeholders are excluded from this process. Thomsen (2004, p.40) concludes from this framework that “corporate values are determined by corporate governance”. Something which aligns with the theory from Humble et al. (1994, p.40), who states that “Invariably, the values, explicitly documented or not, come from top management”. Specifically for smaller companies, Thomsen (2004, p.40) further argues, “founder-owners often play a pivotal role in shaping corporate value systems that influence companies for years to come”.

A bit contrary to Thomsen (2004) and Humble et al. (1994), Donaldson (1996), instead argues that people's worthy should be acknowledged and protected through transforming human values into business values. Meaning that values should be set in the perspective of the people within the organisation rather than from a business view of perspective.

Humble et al. (1994) further on discuss how corporate values tend to evolve within an organisation. Values are argued to not live on independently, they only contribute in a wider context of an organisation's vision and strategy. Humble et al. (1994, p.40) further concludes that "Successful companies are able to adapt to new circumstances and challenges. Sometimes by retaining their fundamental values but modifying the emphasis and methods of implementation. Sometimes by introducing totally new values." Conformably, Collins and Porras (1996) suggests that organisational values must be in line with the company's core ideology to be of any use, or else they will rather limit the organisation itself.

Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) initiates, as a reflection of Schein's (1993) division of culture, that when values only are espoused, meaning that they are claimed to be held by an organisation or just being temporary, values are implemented very short in mind and are difficult to relate to in long term. Instead, a constant and consistent referring to values from management will over time affect individual's actions and a subjective norm about a certain behaviour will be created. Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) further states that organisational values only become effective if they are activated by individuals, while the internalisation is dependent on enacted values and an effective management, which applies values through different mechanisms.

Thornbury (2003) also makes the distinction between espoused values and corporate values. The theory elaborates around how to change a corporate culture, which is described to be deeply rooted within the organisation. Thornbury (2003) defines espoused values and core values as components of the inner circles of culture (figure 1). This means that some espoused values are easier to change than others. However, the core values of an organisation must be changed with patient. Thornbury's (2003) main argument though is that core values, as well as espoused values, should remain constant when attempting to change a corporate culture.

2.2.2.1 Internal communication of corporate values

The next step of the implementation occurs when corporate values have been decided and these are to be communicated throughout the organisation. In relation to the work of Humble et al. (1994), Malbašić and Brčić (2012) studies the process of communication to different stakeholders. The theory discusses the managerial commitment to organisational values. Leaders that truly understands organisational values and the use of them bears a larger chance of implementing them in the organisation and align the employee's' actions to the overall aim of the organisation. Malbašić and Brčić (2012) lastly states that managers hold the ultimate responsibility of communicating values and that their actions indirectly affect employees to organisational commitment.

Grof (2001) studied the role of communication during the processes of establishing and implementing corporate values. She argues that the most important function of communication is to convey information, and additionally to interpret it. This is demonstrated in the proceedings of analysing the information and values recognised from the context and environment in which an organisation conducts business within, and further on to integrate new values created as a response to this into the corporate attitude. Grof (2001) argues four stages of development in a company's operation exist. She further determines the appropriate corporate communication for value-creating functions for each of these stages. These are:

- when a company joins the market. This involves obtaining and transferring information and values from the environment, absorbed into company strategy and culture communicated both internally and externally.
- when strengthening a company from utilising important information of feedback in order to stabilise the value system of the company.
- the stage of routine operation. The task for corporate communication is to recognise and interpret environmental changes in a way to control the organisations attitude and flexibility towards the values of the environment.
- when organisations seek new ways, meaning the processes of incorporating new values into the value structure preparing for a shift in strategy.

According to Grof (2001), the quality of communicative interaction within these stages determines the effectiveness of a company's business proceedings. Which also, in the end, will affect the corporate culture, either by consolidation or result in changes.

2.2.3 International perspective of values

There are several aspects to consider in order to understand why organisations work towards attain shared values. Internationalisation of a firm is described as one of these aspects to regard. According to Thornbury (2003), the internationalisation of an organisation often drives the need for shared values, since it is argued to provide cohesion. Thornbury (2003) further argues, when employees know that an entire organisation is working with the same principals across the world, it will contribute to a harmonious and effective working climate. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) continues this line of theory by suggesting shared values and a common “view on the world” to be of importance for multinational companies since this can contribute with a higher level of trust as well as thorough implemented knowledge.

Thornbury (2003) continues by further arguing for values as a key factor to create alignment as well as empowering people throughout an organisation, due to diversification and organisational growth. When further examining the process of aligning an organisation’s structure and strategies with well-integrated values, DeGeorge (1993), argues this is something which can formulate an explicit ethical level of conducting business for a global workforce.

Considering corporate values in an international perspective, cultural differences are many times an issue discussed in regards of how the message can be perceived differently. Regarding cultural differences between individuals within and between organisations, Hofstede (1998) offers a theory discussing the cultural differences between individuals within and between organisations, as well as between different countries. Potential cultural differences experienced between individuals from different countries are argued to primarily be a matter of values associated with the country. While cultural differences between different organisations within the same country are instead a matter of practice. This suggests that potential cultural differences experienced between individuals within an organisation is due to different national values instead of how practices can differ between various units within the company (Hofstede, 1998).

2.2.4 Challenges with creating and implementing corporate values

When discussing potential challenges with establishing and implementing corporate values, Humble et al. (1994) argues there are two crucial issues to be dealt with to attain shared and

meaningful values. Firstly, the organisation must confirm that the current corporate values are consistent with the company's vision and strategies. Secondly, since Humble et al. (1994) further believes that actions speak louder than words, especially words from top management, organisations should reassure their corporate values are implemented in practical ways. However, if corporate values and the daily behaviour are inconsistent, cynicism within the organisation will be a consequence from this.

Corporate values can occasionally lag behind changes in the environment for the organisation, according to Thomsen (2004). When the economic environment changes but the corporate values do not adjust accordingly, problems may arise between values and governance mechanisms. This can happen when ownership and board structure reacts too slowly towards these changes, which means that corporate values not always are matched with the present situation and context of doing business within (Hill and Jones, 1992; Roe, 1991, 1994; Hansmann, 1996, referred in Thomsen 2004, p.41).

Turbulent changes for an organisation, internally as well as externally, can upset the processes of integrating corporate values within the organisation (Humble et al. 1994). According to this theory, not adopting the organisation's corporate values along with the evolution of organisational structure and the corporate vision, as well as possible changes in the environment in which the organisation conduct business within, may, in the end, mean decline and eventually the death for the business.

There are theories arguing that many companies do not use the tool of corporate values properly. Lencioni (2002) suggests that corporate values many times not are meaningful, they are instead meaningless. Criticising the work of Collins and Porras (1996), who stated that the best companies complied to a set of core values, Lencioni (2002) instead argues that organisations tend to establish corporate values by the wrong means. The reason why companies put so much work in developing value statements is simply because they think they must. Williams (2013) too are critical in the way organisations tend to handle their values. Suggesting most corporate values in reality not are values at all, but more a compilation of platitudes and slogans. Occasionally, values just prevail the business circumstances instead of being entrenched in fundamental convictions, ethics and morality. According to Williams (2013), corporate values should rather be seen as the constitutional framework for corporate governance, pursued through good as well as bad times. Values

serve as the moral foundation for organisations existence in a society. Finally, Williams (2013) concludes since values drives the people within the business and not the business itself, values must be internalised by people within an organisation to become meaningful and to give a purpose for all employees throughout the organisation.

2.3 Understandings

When reviewing the literature within the research field, a general understanding of the subject has been drawn. Agle and Caldwell (1999) confirms the general experience that a substantial amount research can be found within the subject of organisational values. Some theories present are more general picture while some are examining the subject on a more deeper level, distinguishing the general concept of values from other parts of organisational behaviour. Malbašić and Brčić (2012, p.105) argues for, compiled by theories from Atkinson (2003); Esrock and Leichty (1998); Shockley-Zalabak (2009), for values to be visible in every act of communication internally and externally as well as to present the perception of organisational brand, the vision and mission statements, annual reports, as well as in all organisational decisions. Several theories argue that high organisational performance can be linked to an understanding of shared values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327, 345; Peters and Waterman, 1982) and can have a positive effect on communication between individuals as well (Posner and Schimdt, 1993). Values are also considered to create a unified workforce working together to shape a climate of growth and change (Humble et al., 1994). However, the work towards implementing corporate values are often described as rather abstract (Peters and Waterman, 1982). The different groups of stakeholders are discussed in regards to their role and their potential impact at an early stage when creating and implementing values (Thomsen, 2004; Malbašić and Brčić, 2012). Grof (2001) further discuss how these values should be communicated throughout the organisation, and furthermore how the communication should be adapted to the different stages of a company's life cycle.

Organisational performance, as an outcome contributed by corporate values, are discussed in the perspective of how well organisations can align corporate values with the business activities (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327, 345; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Additional theories describe how the need for alignment and

unification of an entire organisation often are a reaction driven from the internationalisation of an organisation (Humble et al, 1994).

Theories regarding challenges with the creation and implementation of corporate values argue for the importance of meaningfulness of values, as well as a consistency with a company's vision and strategy. Values must be used in a practical way and be adapted to changes, both internally and externally (Humble et al. 1994). Why and how companies tend to create and implement values are criticised by Lencioni (2002), who argues that companies do not actually know why they establish corporate values and therefore have them by the wrong means. The way companies handle corporate values further on criticised by Williams (2013), who suggests that values many times are used by companies only in accordance with the environment and the circumstances in which business are conducted within, portrayed as banal statements in mottos and slogans.

2.3.1 Analytical framework of the thesis

Based on the understandings drawn from a literature review, mainly a theoretical framework is followed and further adopted when analysing the theoretical data. A matter which needs to be addressed is the different definitions of culture and values within this subject. We have chosen to use Thornbury's (2003) model, originating from Schein's (1993) divisions of culture, as a part of the theoretical framework. The model uses four different layers stating that core values and espoused values are the inner two circles with the surrounding behaviours and artifacts. Culture are described as a wider concept, where values are one part of it. Core values are considered to be consistent over a long period of time and not dependent on the current business climate. Core values should be identifiable within an organisation through good times as well as bad times. Espoused values work to reduce uncertainty in the workplace and can be transformed into shared assumptions if they are shared by enough people. Schein's (2004) argument that espoused values are not enough to understand an organisation and that basic underlying assumption, or core values, are important to understand the outer layers of Thornbury's (2003) model. Schein's (2004) statement of little room for variation due to that basic assumptions are taken for granted will also be a benchmark for this thesis. The reason to follow this model is firstly that it makes the distinction between culture and values since values have been chosen as the main subject delimiting culture, as well as a second distinction between core values and espoused values.

The last distinction enables to further elaborate whether values should be static or changeable over time. While behaviours and artifacts are considered to represent the outer layers of culture will not these be further elaborated or used in this thesis.

Humble's et al. (1994) suggestion of fundamental beliefs as a reflection of high work performance highlights a crucial matter of why corporate values can be regarded as important for many companies. What people believes in is what drives them, and can furthermore influence their actions. An important understanding to bear in mind when analysing how corporate values can affect the people within an organisation.

This thesis follows the framework of Thomsen (2004) regarding the creation of corporate values and where values tend to be drawn from. This model offers the additional perspective of including external stakeholders as an influence on an organisation's creation of corporate values. As instead of just analysing the subject from within an organisation, delimiting the perspective of the company and its customers. Which therefore offers additional depth for an analysing framework.

Theories suggesting corporate values are derived and determined by top management indicates the influences the administration have on the value system (Thomsen, 2004; Humble et al., 1994). An important recognition to consider when studying how corporate values are set up and where they potentially might derive from. Malbašić and Brčić (2012) further argues the responsibility towards the processes of communicating the message of corporate values are conclusively held by managers. Which contributes to the theory of managers having the ultimate position and responsibility of how corporate values are implemented and what message to communicate throughout an organisation. Values are further distinguished as communicated externally and internally and to present the perception of the brand, vision and mission statements, annual reports and business decisions (Atkinson, 2003; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak, 2009, referred in Malbašić and Brčić, 2012, p.105).

This analytical framework is believed to introduce a theoretical basis which can present similarities between the investigated case, but also show the potential differences between the literature and the case study. This will reveal and illustrate what potential challenges

companies might encounter when trying to establish and implement shared corporate values, having an international expansion in mind.

3. Method

This chapter describes how the investigation process has been performed and further gives an understanding of why it turns out as it does. Techniques of the methodology are both presented and discussed. This section starts with an explanation of primary and secondary data and afterwards comes a description of data gathered from Eton.

3.1 Research design

There are three different elements of how science in business and management studies should be executed. Reliability, replicability and validity. Reliability intends to measure whether data have been collected in a trustworthy way. Meaning, if the results from data collection can be repeated with the same results or if they are affected by random or temporary implications (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Replicability is the possibility being able to conduct the same process once again and thereby be dependent on the description of methodology in detail. Replicability is however very unusual in qualitative studies since replicas are not as highly regarded as new, creative studies within new research fields and will therefore not be evaluated further in this thesis. More importantly, validity intends to measure the relevance of data collection for this specific study and thereby the level of conformability between studied data from interviews and the theoretical framework (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In order, to the best of knowledge, consider the thesis factors of reliability and validity, which often are disregarded or toned away in qualitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011), the procedure of methodology of this thesis will be described below.

To investigate the area of values in an international company, a case study has been performed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). To enable the respondent of conducted interviews to respond in an honest way and give answers that correspond with feelings and perceived actions around the subject of values, a qualitative research method was chosen. By using a qualitative collecting of data, the risk of misunderstandings between the interviewer and the respondent is minimised and provides the thesis with behaviour around the subject through

information from past events (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2011). The respondent can with their own words answer questions with room for an elaboration of own thoughts (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

A case study is a phenomenon within social science where theories can be applied in a specific case to increase understanding of the studied area (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since values is a very subjective area applied differently at nearly all organisations, a specific case study can help researchers to understand a context (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A case study can be either in-depth of one case or comparable between two or several cases. This thesis has focused on one specific company to compare previous research in-depth with corporate values at the shirt manufacturer Eton. By only using one company it was possible to investigate with depth, compared to if several companies were to be interviewed and included in the study. The span of this thesis would not allow a thorough and deep investigation of such a process. According to Yin (2007), a study of only one specific case can be relevant when critically comparing it to a theory why this choice is defensible. The fact that several units with different geographical locations of the studied case have been interviewed, this provides the study of scientific diversity.

The choice of Eton as the specific case study for this thesis was due to their expansion abroad and thereby satisfy the demand of having a company where corporate values could be investigated both within and across national borders. Eton is also a company with a large growth and so far, successful expansion of shirts that operates in a sector of constant interest and discussion that comes along with the textile industry. As Eton is a company from Gånghester outside Borås its proximity to Gothenburg, where the writing process took place, also contributed to why they were contacted.

In line with Bryman and Bell's (2011) discussion regarding the order of the main steps in a qualitative research, all six steps have been followed. This thesis process started with a general research question within the area of corporate values, followed in the second step by the choice of relevant research case and people to investigate. Focus fell on Eton due to their ongoing globally growing organisation, which provided the investigation with an international perspective and additional depth. During the third step, first previous studies were compiled through a literature review and secondly interviews were performed at Eton. The collected literature was interpreted and relevant theories were summarised under the

headline 2.3 Understandings. Based on the understandings of the theoretical framework, an analytical framework was further conducted to mainly be adopted and compared within the analytical discussion, to interpret data and compare results from interviews with prior research of values. This forms the fourth step of Bryman and Bell's (2011) six-step model. However, theories that have been left out from the analytical framework have in some cases been used as a complement for analysing the empirical data. As a further analysis, in accordance with Patel and Davidsson's (1991) advice to continuously revisit information from the interviews, this was followed along the analysing process. During the fifth step, the process continued with an intelligible and theoretical work of specifying research question and collecting of additional data, before the thesis was summed up in the sixth step by a conclusion of the results and analysis.

The research question has along the process been slightly modified as it needed a clear direction towards what was most interesting to investigate around the concept of values. At the very beginning, the question ultimately focused on how the process of creating and implementing values without highlighting the challenges and possibilities of creating and implementing values. Challenges and possibilities were added to gradate the question and focus on the possible consequences of not having shared values or having ineffective values. One aspect that also was included from the beginning was the area of CSR and whether it characterised the implementation and integration corporate values. However, this aspect was removed during the interviewing process since it was considered to not add depth to the chosen course of this thesis. It was believed that this area rather would make this thesis to lose direction in a sprawling way. Nonetheless, the discussion presented by Lencioni (2002), that values are not created for the right purpose, have been an interesting and guiding view during the entire writing process.

The methodology of this thesis has been a deductive reasoning (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994). Deductive approach originates from previous studies that are applied on reality. This method can be compared to the inductive approach of which is based on forming a theory from the empirical data. The approach of this thesis, to start collecting previous research within the subject of values and communication of values and then apply a specific case study, therefore implied a deductive approach. The reason for choosing a qualitative method was based on the fact that individual's perception of values was studied. An area of which demands high personal reflection level and room for interpretation of the answers.

3.2 Primary and secondary data

Primary data comes from conducted interviews with 10 candidates working at different positions across Eton at their office in Gånghester as well as Atlanta, London and Stockholm. After the interviews have email correspondence been applied to complement data from the interviews. Secondary sources have been used in order to develop an above presented theoretical framework to show research within the subject from prominent researchers. Previous work has been presented with inspiration from scientific articles and books defining values, why values are important and various challenges with different aspects of internationalisation and communication. Additionally, have annual reports and web page of Eton been used to understand the broader context in which the company operates.

3.3 Empirical data

3.3.1 Qualitative data

When executing qualitative interviews, Blumberg et al. (2011) make a distinction between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The difference follows a pattern from strict to loose. Structured interviews are therefore built up by identical, written down questions asked in the same order to all respondents. In a semi-structured interview are questions written down on a paper but are only used as a guide to follow a specific theme (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interviewer may ask a question along the interview that seems suitable to give a larger understanding of a certain topic. An unstructured interview is disposed of as a conversation of a subject without any structure.

The aim of this thesis to investigate the field within corporate values and the challenges of creating and implementing values throughout an organisation across different units and national borders. This is regarded as qualitative data. Even if qualitative data can be accomplished in numerous ways, such as focus groups and ethnographic observations (Bryman and Bell, 2011) qualitative interviews was chosen. Structured interviews were considered to leave out valuable information since its strict form of questions would eliminate feelings and perceptions of values. Instead, semi-constructed interviews were chosen which gives room for an elaboration of questions and to not miss out important information from the respondent. An informal session gave also the place to follow-up questions and examples which are important to distinguish apprehension of values. Gillham

(2008) considers semi-structured interviews as the best way of reducing risk to miss important information. To receive an honest perception of how values are recognised at Eton was the interview question guide not sent out beforehand.

Ten respondents were interviewed between the 18th of April and 4th of May 2017, and each session endured between 30 minutes and an hour. Five out of the six interviews executed with respondents at the office in Gånghester, Borås were made through face-to-face meetings at Eton’s headquarter. One interview from an employee in Gånghester as well as all the interviews with respondents in Atlanta, London and Stockholm were performed through Skype and telephone. The respondents are referred to as respondent 1-10 (figure 4) as an agreement of anonymity was agreed. A detailed table of respondents can be found in Appendix 1. The respondents were selected in a dialogue with an employee at the office in Gånghester. The respondents held the position as directors at top layer positions as well as manager and coordinator level. In accordance with Blumberg’s et al. (2011) advice to record the interviews for a thoroughgoing interview with a high attention to the subject were all interviews recorded with the permission of the respondents. Recorded interviews have been transcribed word by word and have also been of great use afterwards for the writing of empirical data and analysis. The number of transcribed pages were 72 and will not be published in appendices due to an agreement of not handing them out without an approval from Eton. To keep the interviews as deep-going as possible, they were held in Swedish with representatives from Sweden and English with the respondents in Atlanta and London. Quotes further down in the thesis from interviews with Swedish correspondents are therefore translated to English and remaining quotations from Atlanta and London remain unchanged.

Appellation	Office
Respondent 1	Gånghester
Respondent 2	Gånghester
Respondent 3	Gånghester
Respondent 4	Atlanta
Respondent 5	Atlanta
Respondent 6	Gånghester
Respondent 7	London
Respondent 8	Gånghester
Respondent 9	Gånghester
Respondent 10	Stockholm

Figure 4: A compilation of the respondents interviewed at Eton.

3.3.2 Ethical considerations

The ethical perspective of the interviews has been considered in the form of directives from Bryman and Bell (2011). They put light on questions such as integrity, confidentiality, voluntariness and anonymity which all have been considered carefully. Employees were asked to participate without any pressure and the chosen interviewees have been informed of integrity, anonymity and confidentiality either at the interview session or by mail. This to make sure of everyone's' awareness of the conditions this essay will be distributed and used. Because the thesis will be published will information of the respondents be limited to the number of years working at Eton, their office location and whether they are members of the management team or not.

3.4 Methodological limitations

Bryman and Bell (2011) states that scientist sees drawbacks with both qualitative and quantitative research. However, some methodological paths may be discussed of this thesis' procedure. This is also a matter of the reliability and validity of this thesis which raises question due to its one case study. Bryman and Bell (2011) continuous by enlightening the fact that a one case study cannot represent the entire and a generalizable picture applicable in other cases. Instead, should a qualitative case study focus on developing and in-depth understand its complexity (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Apart from the above-mentioned procedure of the thesis confirming the plan of considering aspects of reliability and validity, below follows critique on using chosen method.

The total number of interviewees were only ten which may be a too small number to draw conclusions considering corporate values of a medium-sized company with 200 employees. Nevertheless, empirical data with similar answers from different units of the company indicates for empirical saturation from the interviews. There is a risk of as above mentioned concluding results based on a generalised picture of a scenario viewed from only a few people's mindset and feelings (Yin, 2007). However, to make a fully generalised picture of the challenges and possibilities of shared corporate values should as well a deep-going study of several companies be executed. Furthermore, the people at the chosen case held a position as directors, managers and coordinators which only captures the higher layer of staff giving a perspective going from top-down. This is one of Hofstede's (1998) main argument why values are not the core of an organisation but rather the practices. On the other hand, it can be

argued that the sample is trustworthy for this type of investigation. The positions of the interviewees are strategic for creating and implementing shared corporate values. Another issue distinguished by Hofstede (1998) is whether the researcher's mind can distinguish between attitudes and values. The close relation between the two concepts can cause diffusion of what is a corporate value and just attitudes of a workplace. Hofstede (1998) makes a distinction between how questions are asked. "How satisfied" gives an answer of attitudes and "how important" provides an answer of values. This critique towards the interviewing process could affect the thesis in which way values are distinguished from surface cultural behaviour.

The long distance between different units where the interviewees hold position forced some of the interviews to take place via Skype or telephone that arguably can limit discussion and interaction between the interviewer and respondent compared to a face to face meeting. Further interviewing limitations was the depth of question which might be more directly asked towards values at a deeper level. The semi-structured interviews gave large room for elaboration. The respondents were from the start being given a quick definition of values, to further continue the interview with interpreting the concept values by their own. To collect more empirical data could the interviews start out by giving a thorough definition of what values means with information from previous research.

Another factor that may affect the result is the different sizes of compared offices which cannot be compared linear. However, this is an important factor of the investigation to see whether corporate values are implemented over the entire organisation no matter the number of employees at one office compared to another.

The collected empirical data may have been affected since interviews may have been looking for different data along the way. If interviews were changed, this can be seen as a weakness since important information could be left out. It would, therefore, be recommended to complement the first interviews with questions that arise along the way. As a final topic to discuss is qualitative data open for interpretations and the coding of interviews could, therefore, be affected by the author's mindset and perceptions. Nonetheless, individual interpretation is an important factor for new areas of findings in this thesis.

4. Empirical data

The following chapter serves to present the primary data raised from interviews at Eton, as well as secondary data gathered from Eton's web page and annual reports. The empirical data will be used for comparisons with a theoretical framework and further analysed in an analytical discussion. This chapter follows a similar structure as presented in the literature review. Each segment describes the data most relevant for examining this thesis' field of research.

4.1 Business description

Eton AB is a well-known Swedish shirt manufacturer with headquarters in Gånghester, Borås. Eton has offices and showrooms all over the world, in Atlanta, USA, London, München, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, Italy and Stockholm (respondent 1; respondent 9). Eton AB produces high-quality shirts and accessories in their own stores and on export to 49 different markets in Europe and North America (Eton AB, 2015; Eton, 2017).

Eton AB is a fully owned subsidiary of Eton Group since May 2012. In January 2016 was Eton Group bought from a private equity firm to another, Litorina IV L.P to EQT II. EQT is now the major shareholder of 90% of the shares in the company leaving out 10% for Eton Innovation, people of the executive group and board of directors (Eton Group, 2015). The presence of private equity firms in Eton AB is highly visible, which is why company structure is important to enlighten (respondent 9).

Eton was founded in 1928 in the very same village as the headquarter is located today in Gånghester. Their first sign of internationalisation came in 1956 with a small try-out in Britain were the real internationalisation were to begin in 1992 at the well-known warehouse Harrods (Eton, 2017.). For the past 10 years, the company has presented strong results with constant growth in turnover around 10-20% per year. Even during the financial crisis in 2008, Eton managed to attain a positive result while several other competitors showed a negative result (respondent 2; Eton AB, 2015).

The offices around the world vary in size and tasks performed. Most units are sales support and showrooms in order to provide the best service for their customers. The conducted

interviews have been performed with employees at the headquarter in Gånghester, as well as the offices in Atlanta, London and Stockholm which are considered to be the largest units besides of Gånghester with a distribution centre and sales support in Atlanta and sales support in London. Stockholm is the unit apart from the headquarter with the most diversified workforce of sales, PR, visual merchandiser, product manager, business controller and a design team (respondent 9).

With its deep roots in Gånghester, strong corporate culture has evolved based on a familial ground. From being fully owned by the original family who started Eton in 1928, until it was bought in 2012 by Litorina, Eton was a solid familial base built which still today impregnates the company.

4.2 Eton's corporate values

It is obvious that the idea of values at Eton is viewed upon differently according to the respondents. Some argue that Eton has written down a value statement which is to be followed within the organisation. These values are vaguely described in the sense of actual meaning and how they are utilised in the business activities of Eton. Examples of written down values are a code of ethics, as well as a list of value-based words. However, these were not mentioned by any other of the respondents and more importantly, the interviews from management answers that no written down values exist. Other interviewees explained goals and behaviour as part of the values and that they had experienced a change in values over the years as they have grown larger into a company with about 200 employees. Furthermore, most employees believe that values should be static but in a way also adaptable as the organisation stands in front of a changeable surrounding.

Several of the respondents describes a phenomenon based on the company's values and culture as the Eton way, meaning how to act and behave at work as well as outside of work. When employees are to describe values at Eton they put light on the company as a family in everything they do. The way they write and speak to each other and really care about more than job assignments. Foreign units experience a caring feeling for the employees, where they, for instance, experience health insurance compared to equivalent companies. They also appreciate the company's active work of including all units at get together making them feel as a part of the Eton family. Several respondents describe a pleasant place for work. A

possible explanation for the low turnover of personnel, which further contributes to the sense of a family (respondent 2). Respondent 10 describes this is an effect from all employees striving for what is best for the company.

Employees in Gånghester elaborates around their values as “in the walls” with a building of a long history renovated to express quality with its nice interior design. This is also something that employees at Gånghester want to propagate to visitors. According to employees in Atlanta and Stockholm, they confirm that the feeling when walking out of the doors from the headquarter represent the quality, history and the family orientation. These values are meant to be held on to and implemented at all units for a shared view of the company’s business and expansion. Nevertheless, neither of the respondents from the other offices than Gånghester explicitly describes Eton’s values as being “in the walls”. All the respondents’ experience Eton as a company taking good care of their employees, reinforcing the feeling of being a part of the Eton family. However, the abstract values from the office in Gånghester mentioned as “in the walls” are not experienced in the other units. Respondent 9, operating in Gånghester, confirms this idea and further believes that this abstract feeling only is partly recognised in other offices than Gånghester.

Four definitions were explicitly pointed out by respondent 9 as held values of Eton; prestigeless, faith to the workforce, a balance between work and leisure, do not leave anything forward half-finished. However, these terms are not expressed officially and are only talked about in an informal matter. These four values are told to be a legacy brought forward from the CEO and his history as well as personal values but also a product of strategies that have been built up for many decades. As their ninetieth anniversary is around the corner one can notice that Eton carries a lot of history visualised and brought forward through the CEO, who is the grandson of the founders. Even though the company is owned by a private equity firm, the experience that the company carries family oriented values is highly present according to the respondents.

Departments work closely together and besides a clear organisational structure of hierarchy is Eton describes as a flat organisation with high interaction and two-way communication between different levels of hierarchy. The purpose of having a flat organisation is said to enhance faith of the workforce in order to give the chance of personal development and encourage ideas of the employees leading to further innovation. This is explained by several

respondents who have been encouraged to continue their development within Eton at new positions and locations.

The spirit among the workers of doing what is best for the company is shown through ambiguous personal whom are working long hours to provide the best result. By giving employees trust is honesty expected in return. They are encouraged to try new things and ideas but also to confess when something goes wrong. The company is due to recently mentioned factors said to be prestigeless and down to earth. Furthermore, they have a can-do spirit to never quit until it will work out as expected.

The balance between work life and private life is highly visible in the company mentioned by most of the respondents as one of the most important factors of why most people works for Eton for many years. It is okay to say no to an excessive workload to make sure that you have time for leisure as well. This data is well represented in nearly all units interviewed.

Nevertheless, quality is the corporate value at Eton that is most thoroughgoing in the entire company, based on the conducted interviews. All the respondents mention quality as an important concept when describing the company's corporate values. It is further argued by several the respondents that quality as a value pervading in every single aspect of the company's business activities. Eton has also from its start in 1928 been very focused on creating a high-quality shirt, which in later years also has influenced the company's approach for customer service, business relations etcetera. Respondent 10 describes a motto from one of the two founders of Eton, "never hand over a product until you are completely satisfied with it", as one major influence on the company's vision upon the concept of quality. Something which is confirmed by respondent 9 within the management team, as well as another respondent active in Gånghester. Respondent 3 further elaborates on the concept of quality, stating that: "Quality is visible in everything from product, quality of life, a balance between work and free time and quality of how we meet each other. I would say quality is, without a doubt, our strongest corporate value".

4.3 Why are values considered important at Eton?

Several of the respondents argues for Eton's corporate values working as a guidance in the daily work as well as in corporate decisions. Simply to be aware of the desired behaviour

from the company in different situations. Something to turn towards when faced with uncertain situations. A member of the management team (respondent 9) describes Eton as a value based company. He further elaborates why values are considered important at Eton.

“We are careful with facts, of course, but we go back to our values when we make our business decisions. It is important that they are there so we do not lose them along the way”.

To be aware of, and further to understand Eton’s corporate values, are regarded as important for the company, otherwise decisions may be taken that can be contradictory towards the business (respondent 9).

Eton has undergone a major expansion of employment in recent years, and are planning to further proceed with this for the next couple of years as well. Something which has put a lot of focus on the recruitment processes. In this field too, corporate values are seen as important for Eton. Both externally to attract new employees, but also as somewhat of a framework in the recruitment process. To match the company’s held corporate values with potential employees are believed to be of importance in order to make sure new employees fit in within the organisation as well as possible. Especially since Eton, in general, has a low turnover in staff who tends to stay within the company for a longer period (respondent 2).

Eton’s values are further on explained to contribute as a safety for the organisation, to clarify what the company stands for (respondent 9). One of the respondents (respondent 10) argues for the importance of a unified understanding of the company’s values, since “we cannot have a lot of different employees bring about different messages of what Eton is and what we want to convey”. This is also something discussed in relation to the ongoing expansion of employees Eton is experiencing. To communicate a consistent, clear message of Eton’s corporate culture throughout every unit within the organisation.

4.4 How are values implemented at Eton?

There are several aspects mentioned as forms of how the experienced corporate values of Eton are implemented and integrated throughout the organisation. The CEO of the company are several times mentioned as an important figure for communicating out the message of

what Eton stands for in terms of cultural history. The current CEO has been at the company for over 25 years and is as well the grandson of the founders of Eton. Something which has reinforced the perception of Eton as a family oriented company. With 25 years in the company, a personal stamp can be recognised, according to one of the members of the management team (respondent 2). Respondent 9 further argues the four definitions described as Eton's corporate values, derives from the company's history and from the CEO who is a part of their heritage. Thereby, respondent 9 further argues, a structure within the company has been created during many years which has contributed to what Eton stands for today.

The management are identified as an important factor for communicating out the message of the company's values, describing how their philosophies are influenced in the leadership (respondent 2). However, neither of the two respondents from the management team suggests they expressly communicates Eton's held values (respondent 2; respondent 9)

The recruitment process is another aspect mentioned as a tool of implementing Eton's corporate values already at an early stage. Using the company's considered values as a framework when recruiting new employees simplifies the process of finding people who are considered to fit in within the company, according to respondents. Simply, making sure new employees' basic values match the ones held by Eton. According to respondent 2, employees at Eton tends to stay for a long period of time within the company, which several of the respondents' experience is an example of. Therefore, she further argues, it is of even greater importance to find people who fit in within the organisations today, as well as in 5 and 10 years of time.

To further emphasise and introduce for employees the values in which Eton's business are told to be based on, programs of leadership are held for all workers. This to give a common understanding of what grounds the company are led by. The intention is to give this programme to all new employees. To further integrate all the different units of the company, a conference is held in Gånghester at least once a year, to experience what Eton is all about as well as to be introduced to co-workers from different units or locations of the company. Almost the entire company arrives for this yearly conference, although a few from units abroad will not attend (respondent 9). Shared values are said to be set from the employee's perspective and the existing culture at the company. The influence from external stakeholders is introduced in the process of shared values in a later perspective.

Developed technology has eased the ways for daily communication within an organisation. Several respondents describe the communication among different units within Eton as very frequent. Additionally, respondents from the offices in London and Atlanta mentions several visits each year from the management team and employees from Gånghester. Something which facilitates inclusion (respondent 5; respondent 7).

The respondents describe an important part of the introduction and implementation of the corporates values as learning by doing, meaning a lot of what Eton stands for, in regards to the company's corporate values, and how this is portrayed in the daily work are absorbed from other people within the company. Especially back in time when communication between the different offices was not as frequent as of today. Several of the respondents discuss the Eton way, which is described as of how to act and behave towards each other as well external stakeholders. As earlier mentioned, neither of the two respondents from the management team explicitly communicates some kind of shared values (respondent 2; respondent 9). Instead, both two respondents discuss the importance of how you act and what you create out of that, more than just talking about it. This is further confirmed by several of the respondents, for example describing the concept of quality as pervaded in all the company's business activities. One management team member (respondent 2) further describes it as "live Eton", and further discuss how the meaning of these values are communicated. "I guess since I am the Eton person too, that allows you to further spread this. [...] But now I am just myself".

Regarding the vision of having values are no goal set for what the company want to achieve with having shared values. Nevertheless, respondent 9 states that values are necessary in order to impregnate decisions, recruitments and goals.

4.5 Eton as an international company in regards of their values

As Eton showed their first sign of internationalisation in 1952 one might think they have a well-integrated international organisation (Eton, 2017.). And it is true since 80% of their turnover is through export. (Eton AB, 2015) However, most employees are in Gånghester and until recently was most international functions related to sales support in order to provide customer service. Their first real step abroad was in 1992 when Harrods in London started

selling their shirts. Nowadays day Eton has their products in 49 different markets (Eton, 2017).

The company nowadays have a rather large international workforce. The management team consists of 7 people in which 3 of them are foreign. The global sales director is American and has affected the company with his mindset differing from the passive Swedish attitude (respondent 2). Furthermore, the units abroad have expanded with plenty of foreign workers which has contributed to the international feeling of the company. Along with an international workforce have also the English language spread across the organisation with English denominations on products, studios and titles. Certain teams within the organisation use full written correspondence in English. The large diversity of nationalities has also meant cultural differences which have put light on behaviour towards each other. It has been experienced that Americans are a bit more forward and direct but also in larger need for respect of hierarchy compared to Swedes. Respondent 10 further argues that parallel to an expansion the company needs to state its values which may, however, need to be modified to some extent. Respondent 10 suggests that maybe the company needs to apply values that are to some extent a bit more corporate than the family values

Eton's corporate values are international in some aspects and different opinions have raised. Two out of the foreign respondents indicates that consistency between decisions taken and the company's corporate values are lacking. Respondent 5 concludes that: "I think the values are international and global, but sometimes some of the final decisions can feel very restricted to just Sweden". Respondent 6 continues by suggesting that "...very often I may have to ask Sweden about how they deal with things so we can deal with it the same way. It may not always work the same way, but we will try and do it". The employees in Atlanta could also feel a little bit disconnected due to different time zones. Respondent 5 states however that the followed values are the same and that disconnection is due to distance. The view of Eton as an international company are described differently between the respondents. Those working towards an international market tends to, in a higher degree, view the company as internationally adopted, than respondents serving a national market.

4.6 Challenges of implementing corporate values for Eton

When creating and implementing corporate values, companies might encounter certain difficulties throughout these processes. The respondents discuss different challenges they experience regarding the integration of Eton's held values. The interaction between units within the organisation are by some respondents experienced as a difficulty from time to time. A challenge for Eton since working together is one of the most important aspects in order to share values at, learning by doing. Respondent 3 discuss how these differences can be portrayed. "Of course, you can see gaps. This is how we do, this is how they do because this is how it is here and that being how it is done over there. But that is something we need to improve. To work together on a daily basis." Some of the respondents in Atlanta and London sometimes felt that decisions were taken in a Swedish context. Consequently, these decisions were not always suited for an American or British context.

Eton is a growing company and their number of employees continuously increases. The larger an organisation becomes the harder it becomes to spread values to all the employees. Respondent 9 proposes the possibility of subcultures emerging if not a shared value system is perceived and held by alike throughout the company. The values and the corporate culture, which are argued to have brought Eton to where they are today, should be preserved and also followed by in a future.

Another challenge according to some of the respondents, is the fact that the management at Eton is a relatively young team where three out of seven are quite recent recruits, and therefore not completely involved in endured company values built up over several years. In a company with such a high rate of recruitment as Eton have, there are many new employees. However, the number of value carriers are still the same in number. A recognised problem is that these people no longer reach out to the entire organisation as they used to before. It does not have to be the management team, leaders in the organisation can also carry the experienced values at Eton.

4.7 Summary of empirical data

To follow the purpose of the thesis and research question, data have been presented within areas of the business description, what values that are perceived at Eton, why values are considered important, how values are implemented, international perspectives of values and

noted challenges of values. From the research conducted, no official values expressed were to be found. Although, the observed values of family and quality were several times mentioned by the respondents and are told to affect business decisions and behaviour to a large extent at Eton. However, there is no active work of spreading a shared platform of values currently at Eton. How these findings can be compared with the literature within the research field will further be discussed in an analytical discussion.

5. Analysis

The following analytical discussion features comparisons between the empirical data gathered from the conducted case study, and mainly the analytical framework compiled from the literature review. Other theories are also partly discussed in the analysis in order to complement the analytical framework. The analysis pursues the outline of the theoretical background in order to present an analytical basis and give answers to the research questions and the purpose of this thesis.

5.1 What are corporate values?

The perception of what values are tend to vary between the respondents at Eton. Using Thornbury's (2003) model of dividing culture into different layers (figure 1), it is experienced that the respondents at Eton are not completely confident of what is separating values from culture. The mix-up between values and culture was not a surprise, but one could see that Eton as a company rather talks about creating the right culture than corporate values. Following Rokeach's (1973, p.5) definition of what values are is described as a "...specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence..." that is personally or socially preferable. This quote concludes that it goes deeper in a person than just day to day perceptions of something. Schein (1993) comply this perception of values by stating that core values, which have been in an organisation for a long time, composes the heart of an organisation. Eton will be elaborated from Thornbury's (2003) perspective concerning the ability to distinguish values from culture. The respondents at Eton partly felt rather unsure during the interviews of what the concept of values means. The general opinion of the shared values at Eton are the one regarding the company as being family orientated, as well as quality pervading the business activities. Both are regarded as deeply rooted within the organisation. The distinction

between values and culture is visible in the next stage of interviewing when the respondents were asked to explain how these values are visible in Eton's operations. Respondents easily switched to talk about culture when values were to be described. Obviously, it is easier to talk about actions, language and power structure rather than philosophies representing the company at a deeper level. It is considerable whether Hofstede's (1998) argument of what values means, is implemented at Eton and what it is in their context that affects them. Schein (2004) continues this argument from Hofstede (1998) by stating that first the own underlying assumptions be understood in order to understand the culture.

The fact that there are different opinions of whether Eton's values are written down show signs of friction within the company of how values are perceived and weaknesses in knowledge regarding values. Both examples of a written document fall under the chosen definition as behaviour and artifacts as the outer layers of culture and should therefore not be seen as written documents of values.

Another reason why it is experienced that the respondents at Eton do not fully know what values means is the vagueness of whether values should be static or changeable. On the contrary, is this also seen as a spot-on comparison with the difference between core values and espoused values (Thornbury, 2003). Most respondents made a distinction between values that should be constant and values that should be changeable, dependent on external factors affecting business activities. Just like Schein (2004) states that core values are deeply rooted in an organisation for many years and given no room for variation, Thornbury (2003) further argues that espoused values are temporarily held to coincide with its business activities. Most respondents furthermore oppose to Humble et al.'s (1994) theory of continuously updated values and realise that some of the values need to be static, confirming the theory of Thornbury (2003).

Eton's strong beliefs in family values and quality could be seen as core values since these concepts are deeply rooted in the organisation and have also a long historical anchoring via their long sitting CEO, whom also is related to the founders. Schein (2004) also confirms values sitting "in the walls" are values that are deeply held in an organisation which is also described by employees as "The Eton way". The interesting difference within the company is between units. Bringing focus on Eton as a family, it is obvious that every unit interviewed experience Eton as a family driven company. This is implemented in every aspect of how the

people within the organisation acts towards each other's, through email, phone and in person. By introducing new employees to this kind of behaviour it has over time turned into one of the strongest values representing Eton. These values are also easy to spread across the organisation since it is visible in the behaviour. All forms of communication at Eton are a way to further implementing these beliefs. Thereby, maintaining values that have been within the organisation for centuries.

Even though that family orientation is highly visible in all units, using that element in the aspect of "in the walls", this is only noticed in Gånghester. This is nothing that can be traced from the interviews in the other offices in Atlanta, London and Stockholm. Regardless if employees in Gånghester tries to spread this as the experience of Eton, these are not seen in their other offices in the same way. By this, you may see evidence of what history can do to a company. For example, even if stores and showrooms use the same interior design, together with employees relocate to different offices within the company, Eton's cultural heritage and values are in the end still connected to the office in Gånghester.

Despite that family orientation is widely spread across the organisation and to be one of the shared corporate values at Eton, its role as a value is discussable. Its close relation of being visible in behaviour and represented by the "way we do things around here" presented by Thornbury (2003) makes an adjoining connection to behaviour in the division of culture. Values are argued to be visible through the perception of the brand, vision and mission statements and decisions etcetera (Atkinson, 2003; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak, 2009, referred in Malbašić and Brčić, 2012, p.105). A statement questioning family as one of Eton's values. The distinction is arguable whether family values should be considered as a shared value or not since it, however, is told to be a part of organisational decisions. What is interesting when comparing to Thornbury's (2003) model of four layers is that the pronounced family values within Eton has a very long history, and are told to be deeply integrated into business activities. Nevertheless, even if family values are highly visible within Eton, core values are argued to impregnate the entire business, internally and externally (Atkinson, 2003; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak, 2009, referred in Malbašić and Brčić, 2012, p.105). It is difficult to determine whether Eton's pronounced value as a company being family oriented is shown in all business activities. Is this perception actually experienced by customers, wholesalers and suppliers too? Not just by the employees within Eton. Whether family values are articulated externally or not, it appears

difficult to build a brand image of a family oriented business. Moreover, the discussion interferes with values as static. The fearfulness of losing family values when the company is growing larger conflicts with the perception of a value that will characterise the company in all situations, no matter good or bad times. Imagine the day the strongest current value carrier of family, the CEO, resigns at Eton and the company continues to grow. Will family values still be promoted? Therefore, it is difficult to categorise family values as core or espoused values, since its meaning could fall under the both categories, as well as under behaviour.

Regarding quality as the other experienced value at Eton. It has a strong affiliation with both the product, design, behaviour and customer service. In line with the expression of a value as perception of organisational brand, vision and mission statements, annual reports and organisational decisions (Atkinson, 2003; Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak, 2009, referred in Malbašić and Brčić, 2012, p.105), then quality could arguably be a distinct shared core value at Eton. Considering Eton as a brand, then quality is something that the company wants to display internally as well as externally. Quality is described as integrated at a deeper level in the business since the entire idea of an Eton shirt is to wear a qualitative garment. From the very beginning of Eton's history, quality has been a part of the company's aim to fabricate a shirt with the best fitting, pattern drawing and fibres. The perception of quality is therefore constantly communicated within the company and externally by producing and distributing a product of high quality, continuously contributing in implementing the shared value. Furthermore, the long history and deep integration correlate with Thornbury's (2003) model distinguishing quality as a definite core value.

The most substantial description of Eton's held values was coming from respondent 9, which included four terms that were considered as held values at Eton but not specifically mediated. These were prestigeless, faith to the workforce, a balance between work and leisure and do not leave anything forward half-finished. By strictly categorising these terms into Thornbury's (2003) model, these are considered as a part of the outer layers, behaviour and artifacts. On the other hand, they are strong representatives for both family and quality. Prestigeless, faith to the workforce and balance between work and leisure are all elements related to communicating a family oriented view on values. Further on, as will be discussed of how to create and implement values, is the motto of never leave anything forward half-finished. This demonstrates quality within Eton. Interesting in this particular case is whether the fact that these terms come from management, suggesting that management is not fully

aware of the difference between values and culture. According to Thornbury's (2003) model, the four pronounced values within Eton can arguably be categorised under behaviour and artifacts. With other word being a part of the company's culture. However, since values are the core of a company's culture, this suggests that these held norms are instead the outcome of Eton's actual values, quality and partly family.

5.2 Why are corporate values regarded important for companies?

Humble et al. (1994) describes values in an organisational perspective as a tool to form a unified workforce based on cohesion and commitment. Defining a crucial reason why corporate values are regarded as important for many companies. Similarly, the respondents at Eton describes the values at the company as important since this can provide guidance in business decisions as well as in their daily work. A member of the team management within Eton presents the company as a value based organisation regarding their values in business decisions (respondent 9). Therefore, he further argues, it is necessary to beware of and understands Eton's values in order to prevent taking contradictory decisions towards the business. Humble et al. (1994) also discuss this potential issue, further arguing for distrust as a potential outcome if a company's values and the daily behaviour are inconsistent.

Eton has in recent years experienced a large expansion of the organisations workforce, nationally as well as internationally. Something which is planned to further continue henceforth. This highlights another important aspect of the company's corporate values, to facilitate a unified understanding of what the company stands for and how this are meant to influence every unit within the organisation, even though the company may experience substantial changes in regards of their workforce. Contributing as a safety for the company, to be able to clarify what the company stands for. As earlier mentioned, Humble et al. (1994) describes clear values as a mechanism to establish a unified workforce. Something which Humble et al. (1994) suggest can support an organisation to better undertake organisational changes due to a growing workforce. Additionally, Schmidt and Posner (1993) discuss that present values provide a better understanding and predictability of others' actions within an organisation. Something Thornbury (2003) further argues eventually can lead to harmonisation within an organisation and consolidate the working relationships between employees and different units. Accordingly, corporate values can be an important tool for companies such as Eton, to tackle constant changes of which can be experienced due to

organisational growth, along with creating a consolidated organisation where values work as guidance alike in every unit. From this, preventing contradictory decisions to be taken, which in a various way could result in hurting the business.

To prevent previously described issues regarding organisational expansion, Eton has emphasised a lot effort into their recruitment process. By using the pronounced corporate values as a framework, this enhances the opportunity for Eton to recruit new employees who will fit in within the organisation, today as well as in 10 years (respondent 2). Rokeach (1973) suggests all kinds of behaviour are determined by values. Based on this idea, values can be explained as an important factor in the recruitment process for Eton since it allows the company to pick individuals believed to act in a certain way desired by Eton. If new employees already hold similar basic values as the company, which are suggested to determine all kinds of behaviour within an organisation, it is arguable that less work is necessary to be conducted in order to introduce Eton's values. Something which can indicate another aspect of why corporate values are regarded as important by some companies.

5.3 How to establish and implement corporate values

The management, and especially the CEO at Eton, are by several respondents described as highly influential for the evolvement of the company's values and the meaning perceived by employees (respondent 9). This also reflects how this message are communicated throughout the organisation. The CEO are portrayed as a part of the company's cultural heritage, leaving a personal mark on how Eton's value system has evolved and are being presented and perceived today (respondent 2). This confirms both Thomsen's (2004) and Humble's et al. (1994) suggestion of the top management as the major source of influence on a company's value system. However, this suggestion does not cover the process of creating corporate values. Therefore, Thomsen (2004) and Humble et al. (1994) suggests that corporate values also derives from top management, referring towards the processes of establishing corporate values within an organisation. In regards to the creation of a value system within Eton, respondent 9 suggests the corporate values followed today are something which has evolved over time, shaped by the company's long history and organisational structure. Quality is, as earlier mentioned, a recurring concept mentioned by the respondents, which are told to pervade all kinds of business activities within Eton. The company's perception of this concept appears from a motto from one of the founders, "never hand over a product until you

are completely satisfied with it” (respondent 10). Which reinforces the suggestion that companies’ values do derive from the top management, although being shaped over time. Thomsen (2004) proposes that values are more influenced by some prominent stakeholders than others during the process of creating values. In the case of Eton, the founder’s mark on the company since the beginning is explicitly something still seen in all business activities within the organisation. Confirming the theory of Thomsen (2004) regarding smaller companies, that the founders play a vital role in how corporate values are created and further shaped over time.

In regards to communicating the meaning and the message of the corporate values, it is not as obvious in how this process are carried out within Eton, even though both management and the CEO still are described as an important factor for communicating out the company’s corporate values. Michailova and Minbaeva (2012), suggests that a constant and consistent referring to values from management over time affect individuals’ actions and create a subjective norm regarding behaviour. According to Welch and Jackson (2007), this type of communication, as an instrument of management, should be defined as internal communication. Neither of the two respondents from the management team though intends they specifically communicate the message of Eton’s values since they argue their actions speak louder than words in this regard. According to Michailova and Minbaeva (2012), this will require by management to reassure their actions are alike each other, and consistent with the corporate values and how the company wants to be portrayed. Humble et al. (1994) confirms the belief of individuals’ actions as more important than their words, specifically from top management. Corporate values should, therefore, be implemented in practical ways. However, if corporate values and the daily behaviour are inconsistent, as Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) also discuss, it will consequently cause cynicism within the organisation (Humble et al., 1994). This points out a challenge for the management, crucial to overcoming. To share an alike perception of what the corporate values stand for, and further on constantly communicate this message throughout the organisation in a consistent way.

Learning by doing is furthermore something which pervades the whole organisation of Eton, not only from a management perspective. This again confirms Humble’s et al. (1994) belief of practical actions as the most important tool to implement corporate values. Although this puts a lot more demand on reassuring the message communicated out to employees always are consistent with the company’s values. To facilitate and support this process, Eton has

emphasised the recruitment as an important tool for presenting and implementing the corporate values in new employees already in an early stage. Simply to match new employees with what Eton stands for. This is also further reinforced through different management programs and yearly conferences at the headquarter in Gånghester. However, since the recruitment proceeds throughout different units within the organisation, it again affirms the importance of unified values to be followed, and the message to be perceived alike throughout the organisation (Humble et al., 1994). Also, if manager programs and conferences are to be an effective tool for implementing corporate values, it is vital for a company, as in the case of Eton, to keep up with a constant growing workforce. If not all employees undergo an intended procedure to be introduced to the company, chances increase of employees perceive the meaning of what the company stands for differently. A growing workforce will most likely change the circumstances for companies to do business within. This, however, is something organisations must overcome, according to Humble et al. (1994), in order to become successful. For instance, by retaining fundamental values but modifying the emphasis and methods of implementation.

To use corporate values as a framework for behaviour within the company are further discussed by Hofstede (1998), who argues employees within an organisation should follow practices designed in accordance with the corporate values. However, employees are not obliged to confess to the established values. Therefore, according to Humble et al. (1994), it is highly important for companies to achieve commitment from employees towards organisational values since their belief is what drives their performance at work.

5.4 International perspective of corporate values

Eton's history as an international company is shown within most departments of the company. Its wide range of operations abroad makes them continuously revisit decision and action built up from Swedish values. To handle differences between different cultures, Eton has an international diversified management empowering a smooth transition with knowledge applicable to international markets. The current discussion is about how to combine international values with the existing values of quality and family orientation. In line with the current expansion internationally, a shared platform of values must be spread across the organisation. Thornbury (2003) states that an alignment of international values is of importance to create a harmonious work climate. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) points out a

higher level of trust and knowledge sharing when international shared values are present. The diversified management could, therefore, be of great importance when implementing shared international values. This is an important aspect, as a company grows larger the worry of losing its values is severe. It surely is one of the most difficult things to maintain parallel to an expansion. By implementing trust across the organisation, then that can work as a complement of family oriented values, minimising the clash of either having or not having the Eton family as a value or not. One might argue that quality is a stronger value that is applicable in the broader international context since it is not dependent on size in the same ways as family is. Arising the essence from this case, it can be seen that either value can be shared throughout an international organisation. The important part is to actually attain shared values since this can prevent uncertainty and thereby contribute with knowledge implementation and harmonious work climate.

As the office in Atlanta sometimes experiences a breach in the values as rather Swedish, this confirms Hofstede's (1998) theory that cultural differences within the same organisation but across national borders is dependent on values of different countries rather than practices. Geographical distance is a factor that both demonstrates cultural differences and is partly eliminated by technology. Improved technology enables the company to frequently communicate between different units, which is of great importance when spreading values. Welch and Jackson (2007) argues for internal communication as an instrument of management and thereby a part of a strategic process. Accordingly, it is considered wisely from Eton to apply a diversified management. The fact that the management team carries a spread of number of years of working at Eton is also a benefit when implementing international shared values. By combining knowledge and different apprehensions of a specific company compared to its outer factors can a shared platform of international values be created. In line with an expansion abroad may even values of a more corporate character suggested by respondent 10 be upcoming. However, in a broader context, the creation of new values may also signify a conflict between current values and new ones. Thereby how the values are present in certain situations giving a diffuse situation of how to treat a specific matter. The creation of values should also consider advice or requests from the owners (Thomsen, 2004) to create a unified strategy towards values.

5.5 Challenges with creating and implementing corporate values

Challenges experienced at Eton are obviously something expressed individually for this case, not representing the general picture for other companies. However, these challenges highlight some issues further described in different theories. The way of communicating the Eton's held values to the rest of the organisation is said to be harder as the expansion continues. As the number of employees increases, while individuals serving as value carriers are unchanged, the process of communicating the corporate values throughout the entire organisation are threatened (respondent 9). This indicates the importance of adapting an appropriate method of communication in regards to organisational changes, according to Grof (2001). Welch and Jackson's (2007) definition of internal communication suggests the concept may be used as a strategic tool in order to, among other things, cooperate with organisational change. Internal communication is within this theory regarded as an instrument of management. Accordingly, this potential issue previously described is something to further be dealt with by the management. Which confirms the theory presented by Malbašić and Brčić (2012), arguing that managers ultimately hold the responsibility of communicating values.

Respondent 9's concern of the potential creation of subcultures within Eton should be seen as a challenge to avoid since values could be understood differently and thereby cause confusion. Positive effects of values could as well be missed out (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, referred in Agle and Caldwell, 1999, p.327, 345; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Subcultures with own sets of values could also harm communication since in this particular case, for example, family orientated values could be abandoned and therefore the way people treat each other. As the company grows larger some may think values need to be more applicable for a corporate surrounding causing a shift from a family oriented business. Such arguments must be dealt with and decided how to act upon them in order to follow Humble's et al. (1994) statement that values set successful strategies and visions as well as a platform to implement successful business ethics (Mumford et al. 2003).

5.6 Summary of the analytical discussion

For a consistent comparison between the literature review and empirical data have each area of what corporate values are, why they are important, how they are established, the international perspectives of them and challenges of creating and implementing values been

analysed separately. It is noticeable that values exist to some extent, but there is a gap between perceived values and what the concept values mean. The management's role is also discussed and its importance to for communicating values throughout the organisation over national borders. These understandings are further discussed and compiled conclusion, summarising the main findings from this thesis.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion will present an overview of the findings drawn from the results based on the conducted research. To fulfil the purpose of the thesis, conclusions from the analytical discussion together with relevant theories are presented. Finally, the implications of the study are discussed, followed by the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for further studies within the subject.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the challenges of establishing and implementing shared corporate values in an international context of an expanding organisation. To examine what obstacles that may lie ahead of such a process. In order to provide answers for this purpose, a research question was formulated; What potential challenges can companies encounter when creating and implementing shared corporate values throughout an organisation? To find answers to this question, two additional sub-questions were further formulated. Firstly, how can corporate values be implemented within an organisation? Secondly, what effects can an international expansion of an organisation have on the implementation and interpretation of corporate values? Starting with, the first sub-question is discussed followed by a section answering both the main research question as well as the second sub-question incorporated.

6.1 How can corporate values be implemented within an organisation?

From the case study conducted, the role of management was shown to be of importance in regards to establishing and implementing corporate values. This corresponds with previous studies, arguing values derives from top management. The cultural heritage of a company is undeniably important for what becomes the norms and values held and followed by the people within the organisation. However, managers are noted to constantly influence the process of implementing values, leaving a personal mark on how the company represent

itself. This reinforces the suggestion of top management as a crucial aspect of influence when companies intend to establish and implement corporate values.

How values furthermore are integrated within the organisation, visible in the brand, vision and mission statements, annual reports, business decisions and the daily work, can be accomplished through different types of methods. Values can, for instance, be used as a framework to align practices along with, during the recruitment processes etcetera. To further reinforce and spread the meaning of corporate values, different forms of communication can be practised. The importance of implementing values through practical ways are argued as a crucial part of communicating corporate values. Especially when organisations experience a state of change in regards of a growing workforce or internationalisation of the business. To learn from others' actions are considered as more effective than centralising the communication solely from the management. However, a change in the context of doing business within requires adaption for how values are implemented and integrated into an organisation. Still, this adaptation must be implemented alike throughout the organisation and in accordance with the values. To further provide practising as consequence from corporate values, the most fundamental aspect for companies is to attain belief and trustworthiness towards these values from the people within the organisation.

6.2 Potential challenges from implementing shared corporate values

This section intends to declare the found challenges of an internationally expanding company. Along the analysis, two major areas were identified as the main challenges when creating and implementing shared corporate values. These two areas will then evolve in other challenges that are considered a following up effect.

6.2.1 Do organisations know what the concept value means?

The respondents showed a large inconsistency from the concepts of values and what it means, and its separation from culture seemed widely unknown. The point is, if the concept is not thoroughly defined then it will be extremely difficult to decide what values an organisation should create and implement. Empowers values to become empty words without meaning and attachment in what the company actually stands for. The earlier mentioned importance of communication of values from management will obviously be very difficult if the management itself is not aware of what a value is, unaware of what considers as their

corporate values are and what can be regarded as corporate culture. Even though there is a well-functioning culture within the company, it is concluded that in order to understand culture fully the underlying assumptions must be understood. It should also be concluded the importance of having values that are both static and changeable, something that is confirmed by both empirical data and the literature. It is the perception of values that are articulated, which also will affect the message of values, that will be communicated throughout the organisation. Without a unified frame can different views and perceptions emerge of what the company stands for and how this affects all business activities, and hence, opening up the risk for subcultures within the organisation. It is also stated that values should be applicable in all business situations, both internal and external. Without values that are suitable in all business situations, then the people within the organisation can lose faith to the values and thereby lose the cohesion that a shared platform of suitable values can provide.

6.2.2 Potential effects from international expansion - threatening the values?

International expansion presents several potential effects on implementation and integration of corporate values. The phenomenon, in general, is identified as another challenge during the process of implementation and integration, particularly through an internationalisation, since it is believed this could affect the perception of the corporate values within an organisation. Several challenges have been described, mainly driven from understanding the definition of values. An international expansion furthermore aggravates and affects these challenges when introducing further aspects such as cultural differences and communicational issues, influencing the perception and belief in values among the workforce which can cause uncertainty, incoherence and threaten the values in the long run. By having values that are strongly correlated to corporate culture, displayed in behaviour and artifacts, these outer layer aspects of culture must be well integrated and further adapted towards organisational changes. A cultural heritage must be regarded, but also adopted in a way to use all markets of operation in the most effective way. Since cohesion can be created by identifying its core values and reinforcing them on an international perspective, this should be of high priority for companies. With strong implemented values across the entire organisation internationally, values can to a larger extent overcome cultural differences to create a corporate culture that is effective and identifiable in every part of the company.

6.3 Theoretical implications

When applying Thornbury's (2003) model in an international perspective one must be aware of that values may be perceived differently. In a large organisation operating over national borders, the concept values may differ depending on how well the values have been implemented from the beginning. Leaving room for this interpretation regarding of how changes in an international expansion could affect corporate values it is believed that this thesis highlights the importance of concretising values in a changing international perspective.

6.4 Implications for practitioners

The presented conclusion of values shows the importance of including the process of having clear, defined values within the company when faced with an internationalised organisation. The understandings from this thesis can contribute as a groundwork for companies with intentions of concretising its values, having the perspective of organisational expansion in mind.

6.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

This thesis is a one case study, which limits the possibilities to apply the conclusions from the conducted research on a general perspective. It is important to remember that by applying a theoretical framework to a specific case study regarding values, it is not for sure that previous theories always are applicable. Values are a complex matter, very individual for each organisation. By adding additional companies to the investigation, with the equal procedure of an in-depth study, the result could easier be applied to paint a complete picture of the subject. So, the first recommendation would be to make a comparable investigation between two or several companies. With several organisations, then aspects such as age and size of the organisation and its significance for the creation and integration of values will be regarded. During the process of analysing, signs of contradictory values were identified which would be an interesting aspect of the studied subject to further examine. To see whether it is possible to have values that are conflicting in behaviour but still beneficial for the organisation as a whole.

7. References

This chapter acknowledges all references used when writing this thesis. All the references are categorised in alphabetical order.

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8. Appendices

The following chapter presents additional information around the respondents from the interviews, as well as an interview guide followed by.

8.1 Appendix 1

This appendix describes the respondents of the conducted interviews with employees at Eton. It shows, the respondent's location of office, the number of years working at Eton and if the respondent is a member of the management team.

Appellation	Office	Years at Eton	
Respondent 1	Gånghester	11 years	
Respondent 2	Gånghester	11 years	Member of the management team.
Respondent 3	Gånghester	1 year	
Respondent 4	Atlanta	14 years	
Respondent 5	Atlanta	1 year	
Respondent 6	Gånghester	5 years	
Respondent 7	London	16 years	
Respondent 8	Gånghester	13 years	
Respondent 9	Gånghester	10 years	Member of the management team.
Respondent 10	Stockholm	4 years	

8.2 Appendix 2

In this appendix is a copy of the interview guide detached for the performed interviews with respondents working at Eton. Since there were semi-structured interviews is not all questions included, it is only the guide that was followed by. There is one version with Swedish and one for English with the same theme but may differ slightly.

Swedish interview guide

- Är det okej om intervjun spelas in?
- Den här kandidatuppsatsen kommer att bli publicerad så om du nämner saker som du inte vill ska publiceras så får du gärna säga till om det.

- Hur länge har du arbetat på Eton?
- Ni har en växande organisation med ca 200 anställda, vad är din roll i relation till andra positioner på Eton och vad är dina ansvarsområden?
- Vad gjorde du innan?
- Vad är Etons värdegrund enligt dig?
- Finns den uttalad/nedskriven?
- Hur många tror du har koll på Etons värdegrund? (%)
- Anser du att delade företagsvärderingar är något som behövs och i så fall varför?
- Hur introducerades du till Etons företagsvärderingar?
- Vad är dina erfarenheter av att kommunicera värdegrunder? Hur sprider du företagsvärderingar personligen?
- Om en affärsmöjlighet, strategi osv, som skulle kunna gynna företaget uppstår, hur ställer sig Eton till detta ifall det skulle strida mot dess värdegrund?
 - Hur ställer du dig personligen till detta?
- Rent generellt, hur kommuniceras företagsvärderingar ut i företaget?
- Märker du av att en värdegrund kommuniceras från ledningen? Tycker du det är viktig eller ska den komma från de anställda?
- Vilka utmaningar upplever du med att skapa och implementera en gemensam värdegrund för Eton? Vad är det som gör det enkelt resp. svårt?
- Hur anser du att denna värdegrund är implementerad? Exempel?
- Hur upplever du att värderingar har implementerats i den dagliga verksamheten? Ge gärna ett konkret exempel på en implementering.

- Tycker du att värderingar ska vara statiska eller föränderliga? Upplever du att värderingarna varit desamma?
- Vad är du mest stolt över med att jobba på Eton?
- När man jobbar på Eton, upplever man att det är ett internationellt företag? Tas beslut utifrån ett internationellt perspektiv?
- I vilken grad påverkas du av Etons andra kontor?
- Upplever du kommunikationsproblem på grund av olika företagsvärderingar mellan olika kontor?
- Upplever du Eton som ett centraliserat bolag?
- På vilket sätt påverkar Etons värderingar hur internationaliseringen ser ut? Var ni etablerar er etc.?

English interview guide

- Is it okay if the interview is recorded?
- The thesis will be published. Things you do not want to be published, you will have to let us know about.
- For how long have you been working at Eton?
- Eton has a growing organisation with approximately 200 employees, what is your role in relation to your colleagues at Eton and what are your work responsibilities
- How many are working at the office?
- What are shared corporate values according to you?
- What would you say are Eton's shared corporate values according to you?
- How were you introduced to the company's values?
- How do you spread these values to new employees at the office?
- What are your experiences of communicating corporate values?
- In general, how are corporate values communicated throughout the company?
- How many do you think are aware of Eton's corporate values? (%)
- Do you experience corporate values being important for the company in whole, and the management specifically?
- How are the company's values integrated throughout the company? Do the corporate values affect your work in general, and the company in whole? (strategy, business decisions and so on)
- Do you think that shared corporate values are important and why?

- If a short-sighted as well as long-term business opportunity or strategy that possibly could benefit the company arises. How would Eton reason if this opportunity would conflict with your share values? How are you personally thinking about this situation?
- How well would you say that Eton's corporate values are implemented? Can you give an example?
- What possible challenges do you see of succeeding with implementing shared values throughout the company?
- If there were to be created a shared platform of values, what challenges do you see with creating and implementing them across the organisation?
- Can you identify any held values in Atlanta that you would say differ from values in Sweden?
- Do you ever experience a problem with communication due to different shared values?
- Which reason makes you most proud over of working at Eton?
- Do you experience Eton as an international company? Are decisions taken from an international perspective?
- Would you say Eton has adopted a global mindset regarding establishing and implementing common values throughout the organisation?
- How do you feel decisions are taken?
- Do you experience Eton as a centralised company?
- Do you frequently have visitors from the Swedish department in Gånghester?
- Have you been going to Gånghester and the Swedish office? How often?
- What would you say are the main benefits of having an office in Atlanta?