Internal Branding:

An Empirical Study within the Swedish Bank Industry, an Employees Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The service sector’s constant growth is followed by an increasing competition among service companies. Followed by this, the process of internal branding has become essential within the service brand building process, i.e. aligning the service company’s brand promise with employees’ behavior. Hence, customer-facing employees within the service organization have become a valuable and competitive asset as they manage to deliver the brand promise. A literature review showed that understanding the brand promise and brand commitment are two essential drivers of internal branding. An implicit and positive relationship between those two issues was presented. Absence of empirical studies regarding this relationship was revealed.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand and their brand commitment. The purpose motivated a hypothesis; employees understanding of the brand promise are positively associated with their brand commitment. The results are based on a quantitative survey conducted among customer-facing employees within the Swedish bank industry. The analysis is both founded in the discussion of the conceptual literature and the similar completed empirical study that was found within the research area.

The findings of this research supported this thesis’ hypothesis. The relationship between bank customer-facing employees’ understanding of the brand promise and their brand commitment is shown to be positive and fairly strong. Almost two fifths of brand commitment can be explained by the understanding issue. However, it shows a need for further research in identifying more factors influencing employees’ commitment towards the brand.

Key words: Internal Branding, Brand Promise Understanding, Brand Commitment, Customer-Facing Employees
Acknowledgements

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Caroline Ahlberg   Emelie Carlson   Johanna Karlström
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1. Introduction

In this chapter a short introduction of the research field is presented, followed by a problem discussion ending into an identified lack within the research area, pursued by the purpose of this thesis. The chapter also contains delimitations and outline of thesis.

1.1 Background

The rise of adding an emotional meaning to a product or service in order to enhance the value to customers and stakeholders (Bergström et al, 2002) has raised awareness of the branding concept, when companies attempt to differentiate themselves in today’s crowded and competitive markets (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Devasagayam et al, 2010; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Traditional branding has primarily focused on adding an emotional meaning to tangible goods and functional attributes in order to satisfy customers’ needs and wants (Thomson et al, 1999). But as the service sector has increased during the last decade (Rajshekhar et al, 2011), branding associated with service brands has attracted more attention (Wallström et al, 2008; Punjaisri et al, 2009a). Today, traditional marketing activities within the service industry have become insufficient to build a strong and competitive service brand. Powerful service brands have to be formed by adding employee activities during each service encounter (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).

Service providers have had a significant impact on the process of building service brands since they interact with the customers and are responsible for how the service becomes delivered (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Punjaisri et al, 2009a). As employees have become central in the service brand building process, internal branding has recently been introduced in branding literature (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). De Chernatony & Segal-Horn (2001) outline internal brand building as the process of aligning the brand promise with employee’s behavior.
Service employees have to deliver the brand promise by their words and action (Henkel et al, 2007; Punjaisri et al, 2008), i.e. the company's vision and corporate espoused values in a consistent manner to fulfill customers’ expectations (Chong, 2007). The internal branding literature discusses the importance of understanding the brand promise and brand commitment as two important issues of internal branding (Thomson et al, 1999; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). Understanding is explained as the foundation to be brand committed and to enhance a brand supporting behavior (Vallster & De Chernatony, 2005).

1.2 Research Problem

The service industry has grown annually over the past decade and is estimated to accounts for two third of the world’s total production (Rajshekhar et al, 2011). Statistiska Centralbyråns constituted in 2009 that the service industry was 75-80% of the European production. As in Europe, the Swedish service industry has a great importance since nearly 42% of the working hours are related to the service business (Regeringskansliet, 2009). The progress within the service industry has contributed to a risk that services will become commodities, i.e. standardized. This has stemmed into the importance for service companies to build a strong and competitive service brand (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).

Service companies have started realizing how crucial employees are to build a powerful service brand (Machtiger, 2004). Customer-facing employees within a service company have a crucial role since their vital function is to deliver brand promise and fulfilling the customers’ expectations (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). They become the face of the brand since they meet and assist the customers of the service company (Gummesson, 1990). Employees' attitude and behavior during the service encounter influence the customers and other stakeholders' perception about the brand and the delivery of service quality (Benoy, 1996; Punjaisri et al, 2009a). They function as prime time marketers, since they have the potential to promote a consistent brand image (Gummesson, 1990). Employees who master this in a talented way can become one of the company's competitive advantages,
since their talents become hard to match by competitors (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

A literature review within the research field of internal branding shows that the main issues to align employee’s behavior with the company’s brand promises is to understand it (De Chernatony & Cottam, 2006). And vice versa, knowledge about the brand is only valuable combined with the desire to take action (Thomson et al, 1999). Understanding is not enough they also have to be committed towards the brand (Chong, 2007). An understanding of the company’s vision and values is essential for the employees’ to be committed and to make the brand come alive through their professional behavior (Thomson et al, 1999; Dunn & Davis, 2003).

During the last decade, research has shown that many employees do not understand or believe in their company’s brand promise (Ind, 2003; King & Grace, 2008). In 2002 a study among Swedish companies was done regarding their employees’ insight in the company’s vision and values. It was found that 31% did not believe in the vision and values (Ind, 2003). In addition a Gallup study from the third quarter of 2011 shows an average percentage of American employee’s engagement, it demonstrates that 52% was not engaged and 19% was actively disengaged (Gallup, 2011).

The outcome of a literature review showed the importance of employees’ understanding and brand commitment to an internal branding process (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Dunn & Davis, 2003). There is a wide range of conceptual articles discussing the relation between the two concepts mentioned above (Bergström et al, 2002; Ind, 2003; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Foster et al, 2010). Besides it is also showed that there is limited empirical research providing employees understanding of the company’s brand promise associated to brand commitment. There was found one suitable empirical investigation made by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) describing brand promise and brand commitment in a way that this thesis does. The investigation shows that the relationship between employees understanding of the brand promise and how committed they are is insufficient. It assigns researcher to do further investigations within the research area.
The proposed relationship between employees' brand promise understanding and brand commitment still requires empirical evidence. This because of two main factors. First, just one suitable empirical study was found, which also was discovered to be insufficient. Second, major parts of the literature are conceptual and argue for a positive relation between the two factors. There is a need for further empirical investigation, which explains whether employees understanding of the brand promise influence their brand commitment or not. This thesis aims to gain more knowledge about this proposed relationship.

1.3 Purpose of Thesis

Following to the problem discussion and the revealed research gap concerning the absence of empirical investigation in the area, the purpose of this thesis is:

To investigate the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand and their brand commitment.

1.4 Delimitations

This study is to solely investigate service companies. Literature explains internal branding as more important to service companies where the employees are a critical factor for brand influence on the customers (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Khan, 2009). By the same reason it was decided only to look at customer-facing employees when designing and executing the collection of data. Customer-facing employees are the ones that interact with the customers and should be able to live up the company's brand promise (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Khan, 2009; Grönroos, 2007).

Literature found in the research area of internal branding, in many cases, presents three elements where the first two, understanding brand promise and brand commitment, leads to the third element, brand behavior. This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between the first two since they are proposed to be
essential to live the brand which is the intention of internal branding. It is also between the first two elements, the research gap is notified.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

This first chapter has discussed the background and problem in the area of internal branding. In the following chapter the concept is broken down and developed further. This in terms of a literature review where different author’s opinions within the subject are highlighted. The review is followed by a research discussion and hypothesis, where the intension to this investigation is founded. In the fourth chapter there is a detailed description of the methodology and how the forthcoming investigation is executed. In the fifth chapter the collection of empirical data is presented and analyzed. The last chapter presents a conclusion and discussion of the investigation and thesis as a whole. It also contains theoretical and managerial implications, limitation and suggestions for future research. The whole thesis ends with a reference list presenting sources used to get information about the research area and methodology approach. Lastly, four appendixes are attached to receive information that was redundant.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a basis for the chosen research area of interest. It is concluded by some conceptual literature research that there is a relationship between employees understanding of brand promise and their brand commitment. The empirical investigation within this research area is shown to be limited and insufficient. Due to that cause, this thesis purpose is to investigate the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand and their brand commitment.
2. Literature Review

In this chapter existing literature will be reviewed regarding the concept of internal branding and the various elements that are compound by this. The concept is outlined and discussed in a funneled manner. At the end of this chapter the research gap within the research field will be discussed.

Structure of the Theory Chapter

The theory chapter is starting broadly with a discussion of the concept of internal branding, followed by an insight within the concept of brand promise and its importance of a consistent delivery. Customer-facing employees are then discussed as a valuable asset for the creation of a strong service brand. In this context understanding brand promise and brand commitment is described within the literature as the two main factors for creating a consistent employee brand behavior. The chapter ends in a research gap, bridging over to the next chapter. Figure 1 is a visual description of the outline of the theory chapter.

Figure 1: Structure of the Theory Chapter.
2.1 The Concept of Internal Branding

The brand concept has today moved towards being a customer experience concept. The ability of employees to deliver that experience has become increasingly important and the role of employees within service brands is particular important (Foster et al, 2010). Recent brand efforts have sought to focus on the internal stakeholders, the employees. Functional difference between brands is difficult to sustain and brands has become more emotional based. This is rooted in employees' interacting with customers (Thomson et al, 1999).

Emotional brand building has become crucial for building competitive service brands internally and externally (Khan, 2009), since such brands rely on employees' attitude and behavior (Punjasri et al, 2009a). The attitudinal and behavioral aspect becomes central to the delivery of brand promise and to customers' brand perception. Because of this, it is important to ensure that employees' behavior is harmonized with the brand promise, at each service encounter (Punjasri et al, 2009a). Internal branding has come to be an enabler of an organization to transform the espoused brand values into reality. The concept has emerged as an effective tool to create strong and competitive service brands, promoting the brand consistency from the inside out (Aurand et al, 2005; Punjasri et al, 2009a; Burmann et al, 2009).

Internal branding is explained as the set of strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the brand promise in a consistent manner (Punjasri & Wilson, 2007). It will succeed when the management aligns the organization around the service brand. Focus has to be to make the brand promise clear in order to express a pure direction for the whole organization (Tosti & Stoltz, 2001). Mahnert and Torres (2007, p. 56) defined internal branding as;

“...the concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional internal communications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand. Internal branding attempts to achieve consistency with the external brand and encourage brand commitment and the propensity for brand championship among employees. To this end, internal branding is
the reflection of the values and the realization of the promise of the brand internally and externally”.

Bergström et al (2002) summarizes the concept into three essentials; first communicating the brand and its essence effectively to the employees, second convincing them about the brand and its meaning and finally implement it into their daily work activities. The purpose is to operationalize the brand and integrate it within the whole business, in order to get the employees to be more productive based on the brand essence (Bergström et al, 2002).

2.2 The Concept of Brand Promise

To be able to develop a strong brand it is important to convince the customers a promise of value and then ensuring that the promise is kept (Ward et al, 1999). A promise builds up an expectation of some kind in any context and that is also the case in the business industry. Therefore, it is important to meet customers’ expectations which are founded in the brand promise (Chong, 2007).

In the literature there are various ways of describing brand promise as well as the interpretations of the concept of a brand. The interpretation of brand as a promise has been adopted of several writers (Ambler & Styles, 1996; Punjaisri et al, 2008). This promise can be bundles of attributes that someone buys and that provides satisfaction. The attributes may be real or illusory, rational or emotional, tangible or intangible (Ambler & Styles, 1996). Deighton (1992) are viewing the brand as a promise for future performance and has to be reached if the company wants the brand to be trusted by the customers in the future.

According to De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) brand promise is explained as how functional and emotional values should be combined to position the brand and grow its personality. While Chong (2007) defines the concept as a company’s set of corporate core values, i.e. the espoused and internalized values. These values declare who the company is and what it stands for. In addition Ind (2003) explains brand promise as an ideology aspect that may lead companies to be value based organizations. The ideology states a purpose and an organizational direction. It
works as a philosophy for the employees' to engage with. How the ideology is formulated and named is not relevant. The important is to make it clear and truthful to the whole organization in order to realize business objectives. The ideology will provide a framework for how to communicate and behave internally and externally within the company (Ind, 2003).

Summary of Different Definitions of the Concept of Brand Promise

Interpreted definitions mentioned above are compiled into Table 1 below. Different authors are shown to the left and each of their definitions is viewed to the right. The table aims to create an overview of the concept of brand promise found in the literature.

Table 1: Summary of Different Definitions of the Concept of Brand Promise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Brand Promise</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambler &amp; Styles, (1996) Bundles of attributes (illusory, rational or emotional) that provides satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deighton, (1992) Promise for further performance. Promise must be kept to get future customers to trust the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Chernatony &amp; Segal- Horn, (2003) How functional and emotional values should be combined to position the brand and grow its personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chong, (2007) Company’s set of corporate core values. Espoused and internalized values that declare who the company is and what it stands for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind, (2003) An ideology aspect that leads companies to be value based organization. It states a purpose and an organizational direction and provides a framework for how to communicate and behave.</td>
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</table>

2.2.1 Brand Promise Delivery

Almost all companies communicate promises to its actual and potential customers through external marketing as well as the interaction between the brand and the customers. To make the company differentiate themselves from its competitors it is crucial to give a delivery on that promise (Ward et al, 1999) and try to find a balance between the internal and external perspectives (Kimpakorn & Toqcuer, 2010).
Some literature claims that customers perceive the brand as a promise of receiving a certain level of value. Hence, marketing activities will fall short after the launches, if promises are given without some kind of foundation (Ward et al, 1999). Giving promises is easy but transforming the promise into reality is difficult. It is challenging to meet and realize the advertising driven expectations. The brand will suffer if the brand promise made in the external marketing communication is not being realized internal (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Khan, 2009). Therefore, if the company does not manage to deliver their brand promise with help from its employees, all their external advertising is wasted (Khan, 2009).

It has great importance to deliver brand promise coherent. Once an organization has established a favorable brand, the main task is to ensure consistency through the whole organization. Since customers collect all interactions they perceive with the company and create a brand image (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003) a consistent delivery of the brand promise is essential to promote a consistent brand image (Henkel et al, 2007; Punjaisri et al, 2009a).

### 2.3 Customer- Facing Employees: A Valuable Asset

All employees within the service organization are important to ensure a consistent delivering of the brand promise (Foster et al, 2010). Customer- facing employees are the personnel who interact with the customer through the service delivery process by using their words and actions. They are the service providers who become the interface between the company and customers. It gives them a great impact to ensure that customers have a personal and memorable experience of the brand promise. Hence, they have a great influence on the creation of customer’s perception of the brand, i.e. brand image (Benoy, 1996; De Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; Henkel et al, 2007; Chong, 2007).

Employees have become an intangible asset, which service companies can use as a competitive advantage. They have a crucial impact on the service brand building process (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Khan, 2009). What matters is how well the customer- facing employees perform and manage to fulfill and deliver the company’s brand
promise. Their responsibility is to transform the espoused brand promise into brand reality, i.e. meet customer's expectations and deliver the service in a consistent manner (Berry, 2000; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Thus, employees' attitude and behavior has a crucial impact in the case of contact with the customer (Henkel et al, 2007; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Kimpakorn & Toqcuer, 2010). These two can positively and negatively affect the customer's perception of the service encounter and brand promise delivery (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Berry, 2000). A friendliness and skilled behavior has to be present but balanced with a consistent behavior (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Such behavior relies in understanding the brand promise and brand commitment (Ind, 2003; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Below, these concepts will be discussed from various researchers and academics ways of considering them.

2.3.1 The Understanding of Brand Promise

Much of the literature regarding internal branding discusses the importance of understanding the brand promise (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). If customer-facing employees are not aware of what the brand stands for, how will they be able to communicate and convince the outside of the company? (Khan, 2009; Machtiger, 2004; Henkel et al, 2007) Informed employees’ are insufficient if they do not understand the meaning of the brand promise. The employees' need to be familiar with the company's culture and understand what the brand promise represents and includes (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005).

The understanding has to be clear and consistent (De Chernatony & Cottam, 2006) in order to incorporate the brand into the daily work and enact the brand values to fulfill brand promise (Ind, 2003; Burmann & Zeplin, 2009). Knowing the brand promise facilitates the decision making and the day to day work (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Some academics argue that understanding and implementing the brand promise cannot be imposed or forced. There has to be a freedom to absorb and realizing it (Ind, 2003; Khan, 2009).

The real challenge of understanding the brand promise is to ensure an internal understanding within the service organization (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Shared
understanding is crucial to behave in line with the brand promise in a consistent way (Punjaisri et al., 2009b).

### 2.3.2 Brand Commitment: A Key Driver to Live the Brand

When customer-facing employees have been familiar with the brand and understand the brand promise, they might be able to establish a brand commitment (Thomson et al., 1999; Khan, 2009; Mitchell, 2002; Dunn & Davis, 2003).

Brand commitment is defined in many ways but the most common and clear one is employees’ emotional attachment to the brand and its value. The psychological bond influence and drive them to put extra effort to reach the brand goals (Thomson et al., 1999). The literature discusses brand commitment with internal branding and is its origin in the attitude. Brand commitment describes throughout the literature as a branch of a customer-facing employees’ attitude and how the level of brand commitment results in the quality of brand promise delivery (Sager & Johnston, 1989; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Khan, 2009). Whereas another part discusses the concept as a behavioral construct (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al., 2009) and different authors show investigations of measuring brand commitment associated with internal branding (Thomson et al., 1999; Punjaisri et al., 2009a; 2009b; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).

According to Sager and Johnston (1989) De Chernatony (2002) and Ind (2003) brand commitment is a key driver to get the customer-facing employees to live the brand throughout the delivery of brand promise. When the employees feel passion and commitment towards the brand, they will perform according to the brand promise (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Research shows that companies that were reflected by high-committed employees outperformed those companies who were low-committed (Ind, 2003). The extent to which the employees’ are committed to the brand results in differentiation. It is likely to behave in line with the brand by just understand the brand promise, but brand commitment is vital to get a genuine and trustworthy delivery of it (Thomson et al., 1999; Ind, 2003).
Punjaisri et al (2009a) have made an empirical investigation regarding the relationship between brand commitment and brand performance, i.e. the brand promise delivery. The investigation measured the brand commitment among customer-facing employees. The literature empathize brand commitment as an attitudinal dimension. It is understood as a mediator between communicating the brand internally and the brand performance, i.e. how well the service encounter meets the brand expectations. As well as a mediator between training the brand internally and brand performance (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; 2011).

A couple of academics explain brand commitment as a behavioral construct. They attempt to present a holistic and conceptual model for internal brand management, where brand commitment has an essential role (Burmann et al, 2009). Brand commitment is explained as a psychological process, which forces employees into the behavior of living the brand. A study according to the conceptual model based on an empirical investigation shows that brand commitment is a one-dimensional construct. The one-dimensional construct is characterized by two accumulated factors, identification and internalization (Burmann et al, 2009). Identification with the brand measures employees’ perception of their constituent of the brand and company, which infer the extent to which the employees’ perceive a relationship and association towards the brand and its success and failures. Whereas, internalization measures how well the brand and its values have been incorporated into the self-concept, i.e. it refers to what extent the employees have absorbed and accept the brand and its value into their thinking and behavior (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al, 2009). The same empirical investigation shows that brand commitment has a positive effect on customer-facing employees’ potential to live the brand (Burmann et al, 2009).

According to Vallaster & De Chenatony (2006) employees need to have a particular feeling of belonging to the brand. There must be a moral and emotional relationship that goes beyond a “normal” relationship to cause a strong emotionally desire to fulfill the brand promises. Employees incorporate the brand values into their own value system and are therefore more likely to work towards
the brand success. It is easier to work towards something that is incorporate in the own values.

Ambler and Barrow (1996) have another view of commitment and claim that employee’ brand commitment varies by type of industry, such as hotel groups, financial institutions and airlines.

**Summary of Different Definitions of the Concept of Brand Commitment**

Interpreted definitions mentioned above are compiled in Table 2 below. Different authors are shown to the left and each of their definitions is viewed to the right. The table aims to create an overview of the concept of employees brand commitment found in the literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Brand Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomson <em>et al</em>, (1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjaisri &amp; Wilson, (2007); Punjaisri <em>et al</em>, (2009a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmann &amp; Zeplin, (2005); Burmann <em>et al</em>, (2009);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallaster &amp; De Chernatony, (2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.3.3 Employee Behavior: Outcome of Understanding and Brand Commitment**

When employees have a shared understanding of the brand promise and established a brand commitment, then they are able to behave harmonized with the brand. At that point, they will represent the brand through their words and actions and deliver the brand promise in a consistent manner (Ind, 2003; Gapp & Merrilees, 2006). Living the brand or be the brand is now possible (De Chernatony, 2002; Khan, 2009).
Some academics have constructed the meaning of living the brand as brand citizenship behavior. After an empirical investigation they have found three dimensions within the framework of brand citizenship behavior; helping behavior, brand enthusiasm and self-development (Burmann et al, 2009). Helping behavior refer to the employees’ willingness to help customers and taking their initiative in situations that are not really in their area of responsibility. It also brings up their friendliness and positive attitudes in the interaction with customers. Showing an extra effort and initiative within service encounter situations is reflected in the brand enthusiasm. While self-development refers to the advancement an individual employee wants to do in order improve the brand related skills (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al, 2009).

2.4 Research Gap

Both conceptual and empirical literature showed that in common for the internal branding discussion is the relation between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment. Overall, the conceptual literature, like for instance Bergström et al (2002), Ind (2003), Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Mahnert and Torres (2007) and Foster et al (2010) highlight employees’ understanding as a basis for brand commitment and argues that these two factors become the actual foundation for internal branding.

The outcome of this review showed a positive relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment. The relation is in general discussed as if it is approved without having an own empirical investigation to back the argument up. The understanding issue is perceived in the conceptual literature as an implicit factor influencing employees’ brand commitment. Enclosed, there could be recognized that empirical research investigating employees understanding of their brand promise associated with brand commitment was limit. Existing empirical studies which touching the research field of internal branding, such as Thomson et al (1999), King and Grace (2008) and Punjaisri et al (2009b), have not the type of investigation associated to the research problem found within the literature review.
Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) are the ones found, that have completed an empirical investigation similar to this thesis, regarding the relationship between employees understanding of the brand promise and their brand commitment. They have done an empirical study within the hotel industry in Thailand and investigated four independent variables, where employees’ brand understanding was one of them, studied to explain the level of employees brand commitment. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) revealed that there is a positive but weak relationship between those two factors. They claim that understanding the brand promise is important but not crucial, employees can be committed anyway. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) stress that there is need for further research since they were not convinced of their result.

The conceptual literature's implicit view about the relationship between employees’ understanding of brand promise and brand commitment together with limited empirical literature regarding the relationship leaves a research gap within the research field.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented a literature review where the concepts of internal branding, employees understanding of brand promise, brand commitment and employees brand behavior are deeper discussed. The chapter ends in a discussion about the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment as a foundation of the process of internal branding. The major part of the conceptual literature claims that there is a positive relation between these two factors, whereas empirical investigation in this research area is found insufficient. One empirical study completed by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) determines that the relation is not definite.
3. Research Discussion and Research Hypothesis

This chapter begins with a summary of the research problem. Then it will justify and provide a discussion about the need for further research within the research problem area. At the end of the chapter the research discussion results in a hypothesis aimed to be tested, together with an illustration of the underlying proposed research model.

3.1 Research Discussion

As the major part of the conceptual literature discusses the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment in an implicit and positive way, it makes it interesting to perform an empirical research within this relation. This, along with only one found empirical investigation showing that the relationship is insufficient. It leaves a research gap within the research field and causes a need for further investigation.

This thesis aims to gain more knowledge about the relationship between employees understanding of their company's brand promise and their brand commitment. There is an absence of empirical investigation studying the relation between those two factors, which necessitates more empirical evidence for how they relate. This thesis intends to contribute to reduce the research gap and examine this proposed relationship in another nation and industry. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) have completed similar investigation within the hotel industry in Thailand. This makes it interesting to investigate the proposed relationship in another context, since it might be a chance that an investigation of the two variables in another industry and nation will show a very different result. Therefore, the intension is to investigate the Swedish bank industry and examine if the alignment between the bank brand promise and employees understanding of it, gives an impact on their brand commitment.
3.2 Research Hypothesis

The various definitions of brand promise and brand commitment in the literature review chapter were compiled in two tables (see Table 1 p. 15 and Table 2 p. 20). The interpreted definition by Chong (2007) in Table 1 was perceived to be the one that incorporate all of the other definitions in the most general and appropriate way. Likewise in Table 2 Thomson et al (1999) were perceived as the more general one where the other definitions can be embedded. Followed by the literature review and the research discussion regarding the need for further investigation of the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand promise and brand commitment the following hypothesis was constructed;

\[ H_1 (+): \text{Employees understanding of the brand promise is positively associated with their brand commitment.} \]

Below Figure 2 illustrates the hypothesis above with the underlying proposed research model of the relationship between the need for employees to understand the company's brand promise to be brand committed.

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**Figure 2: The Proposed Research Model.**

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**Chapter Summary**

Chapter three has brought up a research discussion about the intension to contribute to reduce the research gap. This, by conducting an empirical research regarding the relation between employees understanding of the brand promise and their brand commitment, which is stated in a hypothesis.
4. Research Methodology

This chapter presents a detailed report of the research methodology of this thesis. It starts with research approach, research design, data sources, research strategy, followed by data collection methods- and instruments, survey design, sampling collection and data analysis method. Finally, the end of this chapter includes quality criteria were the validity and reliability issues will be discussed.

4.1 Research Approach

Early in the research phase, one faces the task of select an appropriate research approach (Blumberg et al, 2008). It will refer in which way the research is chosen to approach a research problem and there are several distinctive types to choose from (Amaratunga et al, 2002). First step is to decide whether to use a deductive or inductive approach to the research. Second, it is also needed to decide if a qualitative or quantitative research, or a mix of the two, are the most appropriate to use when collecting data for the thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Below the concepts are described and the choices made for this thesis justified.

4.1.1 Deductive vs. Inductive Research

Broadly speaking deductive research is when an existing hypothesis is tested in reality and empirically examined (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Informally it is sometimes called top-down approach (Sachdeva, 2009). To describe deductive research Figure 3 below might be helpful, it is constructed after Bryman and Bell’s (2011) description of the concept. First, starting with theory and stating a hypothesis based on what other scientists have come up with. The hypothesis stating is followed by collecting data about the chosen research area. This is done in order to analyze the data and come up with a result. Based on the outcome, one can then reject or confirm the hypothesis, which in the end might contribute with valuable knowledge to revise the existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994).
Inductive research on the other hand approaches reality first and based on observations and results, one can draw generalizable conclusion leading to theory. Inductive research is more exploratory and open-ended, it requires a skilled scientist (Sachdeva, 2009). Deduction is narrower in nature and often the more common way for academics to approach a research problem (Sachdeva, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

After the literature review made in this thesis a research gap was found within the research area. This research gap made it possible and necessary to construct a hypothesis. A hypothesis aimed to be tested by collecting and analyzing empirical data. Due to the fact that a certain theory is aimed to be tested in reality this thesis has a deductive research approach. Deductive research approach was also used by other authors, which articles the literature review in this thesis is built upon.

4.1.2 Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

There are two different research approaches; qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research approach implies that several variables are measured deeply on few respondents while quantitative research approach implies that few variables are measured on many respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The quantitative research approach does not obtain the depth and more complete understanding of the investigated problem as the qualitative research approach generates. But it is advantageous when the study wants to say something about a large population and the recourses and time only is enough to study a limited sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When using a quantitative research approach the researcher is able to make generalizations based on the result of the investigation (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
It is formalized, structured and controlled and the result can be measured in numbers and statistics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher puts the trust in numbers, which will represent opinions and concepts (Amaratunga et al, 2002).

Due to the construction of this thesis with a few variables and sizable scale of entities the quantitative approach is preferred. Also the literature review showed that empirical investigation within the research field of internal branding as Thomson et al (2009) and similar research regarding to the research problem, like Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) applied quantitative research approach to collect data. On account of this and the time and resources limitations quantitative research approach was the most appropriate for this thesis.

4.2 Research Design

Research design becomes the guidance of the investigation to obtain answers to research questions or hypothesis (Blumberg et al, 2008; Bryman & Bell 2011). It will express both the structure and plan to be followed to realize the research aim and resolve the research problem. The structure outlines the research problem, while the plan becomes the framework to obtain the empirical evidence related to the research problem (Blumberg et al, 2008). Thus, research design includes an outline for the collection and analysis of data. There are a number of different research designs to use and selecting one of them early in the research process becomes important since it will reflect every research activity. Mainly three different design approaches have to be considered in the research study (Tull & Hawkins, 1993; Blumberg et al, 2008; Bryman & Bell 2011)

- Exploratory research design
- Descriptive research design
- Causal research design

Exploratory research design refers to the research of fact finding when the researcher lacks knowledge about a certain research problem. It will provide the researcher to gain an insight of the research problem (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002;
The purpose is to come up with new hypotheses (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994).

Descriptive research design studies are concerned with answering who, what, when, where and how questions (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). The intention is to describe one condition or phenomenon in relation to the question (Blumberg et al, 2008) and will focus on the account of the variables within the particular problem model (Tull & Hawkins, 1993).

Casual research design studies on the other hand will answer the why question (Blumberg et al, 2008). These studies investigate the relationship among variables and how and whether one variable give change or causes value of another (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1994; Blumberg et al, 2008; Bryman & Bell 2011).

Exploratory and causal designs were not suitable for this thesis since the goal is neither to come up with a new hypothesis nor to answer a why question and find underlying factors. In this thesis, descriptive research design was accomplished. It provided a suitable plan and structure to answer and resolve the research problem since the purpose and the hypothesis are formulated based on a how question, i.e. how understanding the brand promise and brand commitment is related to each other.

Selecting a specific research design have to be determined in relation to a few factors such as; available resources, extent to previous research, amount of control of variables relating to the study and structure of research problem and objectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All of them make sense to the research design choice. The time dimension is another crucial factor to take into account associated to the descriptive and casual design approach such as (Blumberg et al, 2008);

- Cross- sectional design
- Longitudinal design

Both will become frameworks to gain empirical evidence related to the research problem. The cross- section design refers to examine one phenomenon at one point in time, i.e. the investigation takes place once but collects data from more
than one case (Blumberg et al, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011). The intension is to quantify collected data in order to find relations and variances and finally compare them. On account of that cause, cross-sectional studies are common in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Longitudinal design studies are repeated and look at one occurrence over an extended period. It shows changes over time and causal relationships among variables since they become tested at once and other time (Blumberg et al, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Both qualitative and quantitative research is possible for the cross-sectional- and longitudinal studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Associated to the descriptive choice, cross-sectional design was chosen because of its suitability for quantitative studies and time constraints. In light of the research problem and the hypothesis this approach will be appropriate in the way of collecting and quantifying relations and variances of data. In terms of time, a longitudinal study would be time consuming. The time to complete the study is limited which makes it suitable to adopt a cross-sectional study. Figure 4 tries to show with marked type which one of the research designs that was suitable and selected for this thesis; descriptive design associated with cross-sectional design.

![Figure 4: This Thesis Complete Research Design.](image)

### 4.3 Data Sources

Empirical data can be of two sorts, primary and secondary. Primary data is information collected specifically for the purpose for a certain investigation
(Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002; Eliasson, 2010). There are a number of important advantages, why to use primary data in a research study. The design of the investigation is first of all tailor-made to be able to answer a specific research question and the information, is when collected, very up-to-date (Sachdeva, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Secondary data on the other hand have been collected in another purpose than contributing to solve the specific research question (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002; Eliasson, 2010). Secondary data can for instance be information collected by institutions working with national statistics, government agencies or associations (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). It can be used as a complement to primary data, but in some cases research might be conducted only using secondary data. Using secondary data can alert researcher to problems or difficulties, but it can also provide a solution to the problem being investigated and validate the result (Sachdeva, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

This thesis became based on primary data only, since there according to the research gap was an absence of investigations made in the area and specifically in the industry chosen. Thereby relevant and sufficient secondary data might be hard or impossible to obtain and primary data was chosen to be a better option.

**4.4 Research Strategy**

Research strategy is designed to provide the researcher with a guidance of how to answer the research question or hypothesis. It will help the researcher to know how the collection of data should be made. Important to consider when it comes to selecting research strategy is to identify the type of research question that is being asked or what question the hypothesis is based on (Yin, 2007). Yin (2007) presents different categories of research questions; “who”, “what”, “where”, “why” and “how”. Those become the basis for which research strategy that is most appropriate to apply when collecting data.
Table 3: Relevant Situations for Using Different Research Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Strategy</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioral events</th>
<th>Focuses on contemporary events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, Why</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis</td>
<td>Who, What, How many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, Why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>How, Why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Yin, 2007, p. 22)

Above Table 3 is describing three qualifications and how they relate to five research strategies. This thesis hypothesis is based in a “how” question and seeks to investigate how employees’ understanding of brand promise and their brand commitment towards the brand relate to each other. The research does not control behavioral events which means the level of control and access the researcher have when it comes to a concrete situations where a behavior is showed (Yin, 2007). The investigation is also focusing on contemporary events. None of the empirical literature found within the area of internal branding used specific case studies (Punjaisri et al, 2009b; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Thomson et al, 1999; King & Grace, 2008). Therefore it was decided not to use case study in this thesis either. Based on the table and explanations, survey and archival analysis is appropriate for this study. Since the investigation of this thesis is built on new collected data and not archival material survey was used in this investigation as research strategy.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

Each research strategy has different approaches to collect empirical data (Amaratunga et al, 2002). Thus, several data collection methods are based on research strategy and have to be considered with the light of chosen qualitative or
quantitative research approach. In-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, content analysis (the technique for coding words and phrases that appear frequently in e.g. annual reports, financial data, websites and written correspondence) are commonly used in qualitative research approach (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002; Blumberg *et al.*, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011). While surveys/questionnaires, structured observations and interviews (usually based on a questionnaire design) as well as content analysis are methods practiced within a quantitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Followed by the selection of a quantitative research approach and survey as the most appropriate research strategy, this thesis conducted a questionnaire to collect data. A questionnaire became appropriate since it is a low-cost method and makes it feasible to collect a large amount of data from a sizable population (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008). Another reason of its suitable was given to previous investigations within the research field. In common for data collection methods associated with internal branding, questionnaires are frequently used. They are applied when the research aims to measure relations and variances among variables (Burmann & Zeplin, 2009; Punjaisri *et al.*, 2009b; Thomson *et al.*, 2009). Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) who have done a similar investigation regarding the research problem have conducted questionnaire as a data collection method too.

**4.6 Data Collection Instruments**

In this subchapter it is explained how the statements for the questionnaire was designed through an operationalization. It is also shown how the questionnaire itself was developed and designed. Before sending the completed questionnaire out it was pre-tested on a small appropriate audience, which is further described in this chapter. Figure 5 below presents a visualized description of the process.
4.6.1 Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

The justification for the chosen definitions of brand promise and brand commitment chosen for this thesis are Chong (2007) and Thomson et al (1999) and can be read in chapter three in this thesis. The definitions itself can be found in Table 1 and Table 2 in chapter two. These definitions were used as a basis for the conceptual definitions in the operationalization below on page 36 and 37.

In order to measure a concept the meaning of the concept has to be defined. There are two approaches to define what is meant by a certain concept; conceptual definition and operational definition. The conceptual definition usually states abstract theoretical ideas, while the operational definition will reflect the major characteristics of the conceptual one and make it more observable (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Thus, an operational definition will explain how the concept will be measured (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). The closer a conceptual concept is to reality the more operational it is (Arnbör & Bjerke, 1994). The process of altering conceptual definitions into operational ones is called operationalization (Eliasson, 2010).

Operationalization is to find concepts from a particular theory useful for the own investigation and break these concepts down into measurable terms. It is important to figure out which concepts are really important in the context and describe these clearly. It shall also be consistent with the literature and as far as possible also with the authors own interpretation of the concept (Eliasson, 2010). One is then more likely to avoid misunderstandings and the content of the concept can be understood in the same way by several people to a greater extent (Arnbör &
Bjerke, 1994). From there on it is possible to ask questions in an interview or questionnaire (Eliasson, 2010).

From the articles used in the literature review, it was hard to define how the operationalization was conducted. It was not clearly described how the authors came up with measurable questions. Though, it could be concluded a pattern among the questions and statements used by other authors in previous investigations. Punjaisri et al (2009b) explained that some of their questions were removed to get an acceptable discriminated validity and correlation. The statements used as measurements in this thesis were inspired by other authors, explicitly Kimpakorn & Tocquer, (2009) who the research gap is based on to some extent. Thomson et al (1999) has completed an investigation concerning how employees’ brand understanding and commitment can enhance business performance. Punjaisri et al (2009b) has conducted an investigation in the research area of internal branding. Finally, King and Grace (2008) were also used for inspiration even if their questions were conducted in a qualitative manner, using in depth interviews. None of the mentioned above has explicitly made an investigation in the banking industry, though it was still possible to use the authors as inspiration. The statements were rewritten to fit this study's industry, the questions were changed from hotels to banks.

As mentioned, this thesis aims to measure the level of understanding of brand promise in relation to brand commitment. In this context it was brand promise that was needed to be broken down into measurable terms rather than the actual understanding of it. Below follows two tables, the first with an operationalization about brand promise and the other one with an operationalization about brand commitment. The first column states the name of the concept, second column presents a conceptual definition, which is found in the literature of previous chapter. The third column shows an operational definition i.e. an interpreted understanding of the conceptual definition, trying to explain the concept in a more concrete and observable way. In the fourth column some statements are presented. These are statements that are previous used and tested by the authors mentioned above to measure the concepts of brand promise and commitment. It
was chosen in order to be able to base the statements of this thesis on what other authors already have done. This because the statements are tested and it is shown that it resulted in some valuable output. The approach of the operationalization is visualized in Table 4 and 5 below to easy give an overview over the process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
<th>Measured by previous authors</th>
<th>Measured in this thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Promise</td>
<td>Company’s set of corporate core values. Espoused and internalized values that declare who the company is and what it stands for (Chong, 2007).</td>
<td>What the companies promise to its customers through the brand. I.e. how the brand wishes to be seen and what it wants to be associated with among the customers.</td>
<td>I have a clear sense of my organization’s vision and direction for the future (Thomson et al, 1999).</td>
<td>I understand what has been promised and advertised to the customers in relation to the service I provide (King &amp; Grace, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent do you feel it is important for you as an employee to understand what has been promised/advertised in relation to the service you provide? (King &amp; Grace, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
<td>I know what my company’s brand stands for (King &amp; Grace, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What does your organization’s brand stands for (King &amp; Grace, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
<td>I know clearly the goals and policies of this bank (Kimpakorn &amp; Tocquer, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know clearly the goals and policies of this hotel (Kimpakorn &amp; Tocquer, 2009).</td>
<td></td>
<td>I know the customers’ expectations of this bank’s performance (Kimpakorn &amp; Tocquer, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know the customers’ expectations when they stay at this hotel (Kimpakorn &amp; Tocquer, 2009).</td>
<td></td>
<td>I know the meaning of this bank brand perceived by customers (Kimpakorn &amp; Tocquer, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel that my understanding for what the brand stands for facilitates my customer contact (King &amp; Grace, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
<td>I understand what I need to do in my own job to support the company’s aims and goals (Thomson et al, 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Conceptual definition</td>
<td>Operational definition</td>
<td>Measuring by previous authors</td>
<td>Measuring in this thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Brand Commitment   | Employees’ emotional attachment to the brand. The psychological bond influence and drives them to put extra effort to reach the brand goals. (Thomson et al. 1999). | Feelings connected to employees’ perception of the brand they work for which reflects in their way of acting in the daily work. | My commitment to deliver the brand increases along with my knowledge of the brand (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I am very committed to delivering brand promise to our hotel guests (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I do not feel emotional attached to this hotel (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I am committed to giving my best to help my organization succeed (Thomson et al. 2009).  
I am proud to tell other that I am a part of this hotel (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).  
I really care about this bank (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). | My commitment to deliver the brand increases along with my knowledge of the brand (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I am committed to delivering brand promise to our bank customers (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I feel emotional attached to this bank brand (Punjaisri et al. 2009).  
I am committed to giving my best to help my brand succeed (Thomson et al. 2009).  
I am proud to tell other that I am a part of this bank (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).  
I really care about this bank (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).  
It would take very much to cause me to leave the brand I work for (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).  
I believe in my bank’s vision for the future (Thomson et al. 2006).  
I feel that my level of commitment to the bank affect how I carry out my daily work (King & Grace, 2007). |
4.6.2 Questionnaire Design

Content of Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed based on frame of reference. It was designed with input from previous studies that have measured similar conditions related to the brand understanding and the level of employees brand commitment (Thomson et al, 1999; King and Grace, 2008; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Punjaisri et al, 2009b). An online questionnaire was suitable due to its ability to conduct quick and a large-scale data collection as well as it is timesaving and less costly (Couper, 2000; Brace, 2008). The questionnaire began with a description of its purpose and contents, followed by instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore it explained that the respondents were anonymous in their responses, which might encourage them to participate (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Contact information was also presented. See Appendix 1 for further insight in the questionnaire. The introduction was followed by four factual and personal questions regarding the respondents’ age, gender, education and which of the bank offices they belonged to. The questions were all ordered into nominal scales (Trost, 2007; Brace, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Sixteen statements were inspired from former studies were then presented in a logical way. The vocabulary was simply designed and adapted for adult respondents to get as many employees as possible to understand the contents (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Seven statements were aimed to measure employees’ understanding of their banks brand promise, while the remaining nine were intended to measure employees’ commitment to the bank brand. All sixteen statements were ranged into ordinal scales.

A contact person at each bank was contacted before the questionnaire was sent to the respondents. The contact person at one of the banks posted a notice at the banks internal Intranet regarding the questionnaire and its purpose. This announcement is presented in Appendix 2. The contacts persons at the two other banks chose to post the information and the questionnaire via email.
Measurement Technique: Five – Point Likert Scale

A five- point Likert scale (see Appendix 1) was adopted as the most appropriate measurement scale since it is frequently used for electronic questionnaires designed with statements (Trost, 2007; Brace, 2008), and commonly conducted to measure emotions (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Moreover, it is an easy scale to construct and analyze (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). A five- point Likert scale is constructed in a manner to provide the respondent to agree to different degrees (Albaum, 1997; Tull & Hawkins, 1993; Trost, 2007). The five- point scale with answers of agree and disagree was selected to be most suitable for this thesis in order to analyze responses. The degree of scale was also inspired by previous studies with similar purpose of investigation. Thomson et al. (1999) and Punjaisri et al. (2009b) have measured brand commitment. They used a three or a five- point scale.

4.6.3 Pre- testing

When a questionnaire has been designed, it is advisable to test it before the final questionnaire will be conducted (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). A pre- test will ensure a questionnaire to be valid and reliable, i.e. make sure that what is supposed to be measured actually becomes measured in a trustworthy way (Brace, 2008). A pre- test makes it possible to discover and extinguish weaknesses. It is appropriate to let people from both the prospected population and others who are more familiar with the research topic to review and give their opinions about the questionnaire layout and constructed statements. They will for instance provide comments whether the questionnaire is understandable in the view of language, its size and structure (Eliasson, 2010). A pre- test makes it possible to increase the quality of the final questionnaire (Brace, 2008; Eliasson, 2010). For this thesis it has been conducted a pre- test with help from experts within the research field and from potential respondents.
4.7 Sampling

A survey which investigates all elements within the group of interest is called a census survey (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Investigating the whole target population, i.e. all entities interesting for the investigation, is generally costly and time consuming. Sampling refers to the process of selecting elements from which data will be collected. The primary idea is to draw conclusion from a sample representing the whole population (Trost, 2007; Eliasson, 2010). This is the way of sample survey (Tull & Hawkins, 1993), which this thesis conducted, given to time and resource constraints and its greater accuracy of result.

To make a sample survey it is necessary to define the population. It is essential to determine which population that is of interest for the investigation. This will be done in terms of element, sampling unit, extent and time (Tull & Hawkins, 1993), associated with population parameters of interest (Blumberg et al, 2008). This thesis population was defined according to these terms as “All customer-facing employees within the banking industry in the southern part of Sweden during the three last weeks of March and the three first weeks in April in 2012”. One of the banks was accessible from the beginning. With its high response possibility it was a natural choice to investigate the bank industry for this thesis. The Swedish banking industry is one crucial parameter of interest since it belongs to the service industry representing service brands and customer-facing employees (Samli & Frohlich, 1992).

- Element: all customer-facing employees
- Sampling unit: in the banking industry
- Extent: in the southern part of Sweden
- Time: during the three last weeks of March and in the three first weeks of April in 2012

4.7.1 Sampling Frame

Specify the sampling frame is conducted when the target population has been defined (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Listing the target population from which the
sample will be drawn is crucial to the sampling process in order to reach a sample representing the entire population of interest. A sampling frame may for instance be a telephone book or commercial data providers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is important that the sampling frame is complete and correct since it gives an impact on the conclusions for the entire population (Blumberg et al, 2008; Eliasson, 2010). For this thesis, a contact person at each bank shared only verbal information about departments and employees associated to the target population. The reason for verbal information was because of the confidentiality of such published internal information. This to make it possible to make a sampling frame for this thesis.

### 4.7.2 Selection of Sampling Method

The sampling method is the way of selecting sample units in an appropriate manner (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Traditional sampling selection procedures can be divided into probability and nonprobability, which include subsampling methods. Probability sample refers to a random selection, i.e. each sampling units might be selected by chance, while nonprobability sample concern a non-chance procedure (Tull & Hawkins, 1993; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). A nonprobability sample has to be done in a caution, since it is more difficult to do generalizations when the sample is selected among respondents that are expected to give a valuable input (Blumberg et al, 2008). The nonprobability sampling method was most suitable for this investigation since the sample elements were selected with no randomly approach.

According to Tull and Hawkins (1993) nonprobability sample include three subsampling method such as; *convenience, judgment* and *quota* sample.

- **Convenience sample** refers to sample elements based on usually informal information such as friends, family or class mates. It is the easiest sample method to conduct and less costly but immediately less reliable and representativeness. This, since the sample will be collected wherever the researcher can find it (Blumberg et al, 2008).
- **Judgment sample** or purposive sampling is used when the researcher select the sample elements because of their expected ability to respond to the
research purpose (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). Hence, the sample is handpicked due to its suitability. A judgment sampling is much more convinced than a convenience sample. Good skills are required when the selection will be made; otherwise the sample will be less trustworthy (Blumberg et al, 2008).

- Quota sample refers to the selection of sample elements that represents the target population in a certain mean (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). The sample proportion has to be the same as the population proportion in order to improve the representativeness. This sample method is useful when the time and resources are limited but it is sometimes difficult to assure that the sample will be represented associated to the variables (Blumberg et al, 2008).

The sample for this thesis has been collected from customer-facing employees within one bank placed in the northeast part of Skåne, one in the county of Jönköping and finally one located in the southern part of Småland and parts of Blekinge. All are located in the southern part of Sweden. Judgment sampling was used as the most suitable method to select sample elements. The researchers have hand-picked the sample elements based on knowledge about the sample elements’ ability to serve the research purpose. One bank office wanted their result to be anonymous and therefore all results from the three banks are handled anonymous. The banks are mentioned as B1, B2 and B3 without any particular order.

### 4.7.3 Sample Size

There is no determined rule of a proper sample size since it is complex and depends for instance on the type of sample, time, resources and availability (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). But there are a few methods to consider when determining a sample size (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Unaided judgment is the way of deciding a sample size without any consideration or explanation of its size (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All you can afford is the method where the researcher tries to produce a sample size larger than what probably will be performed (Tull & Hawkins, 1993). Moreover, by examining an average size
sample from previous similar investigations it is possible to determine a proper sample size (Tull & Hawkins, 1993; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Required size per cell calculates an appropriate sample size associated to the numbers of cells within the questionnaire. Finally, statistical methods can be used to determine a sample size. Three factors are crucial when conducting such method, which are the variances within the population, maximum permissible error value and the level of confidence (Tull & Hawkins, 1993).

Average sample size from previous similar studies became the most suitable for this thesis since other approaches within the methodology chapter has mainly been inspired by investigations made by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009). They have done a similar study and collected 280 answers form their questionnaire. For this investigation, approximately 340 questionnaires were sent to potential respondents from the selected population. Due to these settings, this thesis aimed to collect 100-200 responses.

4.8 Data Analysis Method

With a quantitative investigation follows a frame of reference for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis are three appropriate approaches when analyzing quantitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Consequently, these three approaches have been conducted in order to perform an accurate and proper analyze the collected quantitative data.

- **Descriptive Statistics**
  Descriptive statistics is used in order to display a clear summarize about the sample and the measures (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Some descriptive statistics are calculated with help from the initial questions about the respondents, such as gender, age, education and bank. Those will be presented in the empirical data analysis chapter as an appropriate introduction. In fact, the intension with the descriptive statistics is to give exchange to the participating banks by providing them the compiled data and also draw some general conclusion for further investigations. Due to the cause that this is not this thesis main focus the
explaining tables of the descriptive statistics will be presented in Appendix 3 called Descriptive Statistics.

- **Correlation Analysis**
Correlation analysis is a concept that indicates the strength and direction of a relationship between two or more variables. The correlation is expressed in a value between 1 and -1, where 0 represent no relationship, 1 represent a strong positive relationship and -1 represent a strong negative relationship. The correlation should be less than 0.9. Otherwise the variables are measuring almost the same thing (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The correlation for the investigation as a whole is presented in the empirical analysis chapter. It is also made a correlation between the variables within each specific bank, this as an exchange to the participating banks. Since this is not the main focus for this thesis, these results are put into Appendix 4.

- **Regression Analysis**
To test the hypothesis there are two ways. Regression analysis is used to show orders or relationships in the hypothesis while independent t-test sample is used to show differences in the hypothesis. This investigation aims to measure the statistical relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The R-square clarify the amount of variance explained with the dependent variable i.e. the percentage of the dependent variable that is explained with the independent variable. The higher the percentage is, the stronger the relationship is between the variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

There is always a risk for deficiency in the sample. The sample is then not representing the population. Through statistical significance it can be shown how reliable the results are. The significance should be as near as 0.000 as possible. If the significance is 0.000 it means that R-square of the regression is constituting a real relationship of 0.000 (Hair et al, 1998). Acceptable level of significance is no more then 0.05, meaning that the result can be trusted to at least 95% (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
The next step in the regression analysis is to test the hypothesis. By calculating the Beta-value it can be shown how much an increase of one unit in the independent variable affects the dependent variable. If the Beta-value shows +0.5 it means that if the independent variable increases with one unit the dependent variable increases with 50% within that unit. If the result of the Beta is negative, it means that the relationship between the two variables is negative. Further meaning that if the stated hypothesis is positive and the beta shows negative, the hypothesis is rejected. Beta significance shows how trustworthy the Beta-value is (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4.9 Quality Criteria

Research quality has to be considered in every research investigation and may be assessed by different measures of validity and reliability. These two quality standards reflect the trustworthiness on the investigation and its repeatability (Eliasson, 2010). Validity concerns the degree to which a measurement instrument measures what it intends to measure, while the reliability becomes the stability of the measurement instrument (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This subchapter presents what has been done to accomplish reliable results and that the results actually measured what was intended to be measure. For this thesis, three types of validity were conducted.

4.9.1 Content Validity

Content validity refers to how well the components of the measurement actually represent what is intended to be measured. Commonly content validity is assessed by a pre-test (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The questionnaire of this thesis was pre-tested by both experts in the field of quantitative measurements and among the potential respondents. Some valuable opinions came up through the pre-test regarding misspelling and construction of sentences. These were corrected before proceeding with the final questionnaire. Below follows some of the aspects that might have had an effect on the content validity.
The statements used in the questionnaire are translated from the original English inspired by other authors, into Swedish to fit the Swedish bank population were the sample was carried out. This may have affected the validity due to translation issues of the concepts being measured.

In the questionnaire the intent was partly to measure the employee’s commitment towards the brand and not the specific company they were working at. To remind the respondents when answering the questionnaire a pre text with this information was printed on the formula to keep this in mind. This to make sure that the result was as valid as possible.

One statement was “It would take very much to cause me to leave the brand I work for” (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). One can then wonder how much, much is. It is considered that it is irrelevant in this context. What is wished to be measured is measured anyway and the validity is not affected.

4.9.2 Construct Validity

Construct validity describe how well the operationalization measures the concept it is intended to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It can be determined, as the case in this thesis, by the degree to which measures of different concepts varies from each other, the statements should not correlate too highly. The correlation between the statements should not be more then 0.9. It can also be determined, like in this thesis, through the degree to which several different statements attempts to measure the same concept in concurrence. The relationship between the statements should be > 0.6 (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and preferably be >0.7 (Hair et al, 2007) (see also chapter 4.8 Data analysis method).

4.9.3 Criterion Validity

Criterion validity refers to the extent to which an operationalization can expect variables to have an effect in relation to other variables. Statements with better predictive ability can be considered as having higher criterion validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The criterion validity was in this thesis measured by a hypothesis testing (see also chapter 4.8 Data analysis method).
4.9.4 Reliability

The point of measure the same variable with several different statements is to be able to test the reliability of the investigation. This is in order to make sure of the reliability and that the investigation can be repeated at a later point in time if wanted. A reliability test can be carried out by a calculation of the Cronbach alpha. Acceptable number for alpha (α) is >0.6 (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but it should preferably be >0.7 (Hair et al, 2007). The number indicates if the answers gained from the questionnaire follow the same pattern. There may still be differences whether there are high or low scores on the Likert-scale from different respondents. Alpha (α) measures that the statements regarding a specific variable are answered in the same way. If the reliability is >0.6, questions regarding a specific variable can be compiled to one. If one statement has an alpha (α) <0.6, that specific question can be removed to enhance the reliability for the whole questionnaire (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter different methodology approaches have been discussed. Based on this discussion an appropriate methodology for this thesis has been developed. Deductive and quantitative research was selected as suitable research approaches, followed by a justification of descriptive and cross-sectional design. Further, primary data was chosen as data source and a survey as research strategy associated with a questionnaire as data collection. To make conceptual definitions measurable an operationalization was conducted to be able to develop an appropriate questionnaire. A sample survey was represented by judgment sampling. To analyze collected data it was chosen to use descriptive statistics, correlation- and regression analysis. Finally, three types of validity and the reliability was discussed in relation to this thesis. Table 6 below summarizes the main choices made for the methodology of this thesis.
Table 6: Summary of Methodology Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
<th>Deductive research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Descriptive design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-sectional design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
<td>Primary data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Strategy</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection method</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection instruments</td>
<td>Operationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Judgment sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis method</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regression Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Criteria</td>
<td>Content Validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construct Validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criterion Validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Empirical Data Analysis

This chapter presents and analyses empirical data, which has been collected through a quantitative survey. At first a demonstration of the actual response rate of the completed survey is revealed, followed by a presentation of aggregated descriptive data and the reliability. After that the calculation of the correlation between understanding and brand commitment is presented and analyzed, accompanied with a presentation and analysis of hypothesis testing. It is determined whether the hypothesis $H_1 (+)$ for this thesis is proved or rejected.

5.1 Response Rate

The quantitative data was collected for six weeks and was received from 149 respondents, represented three different bank brands. This provides a response rate of 43.8% of the total 340 questionnaires that were distributed. Major part of the response was obtained in the first seven days. The response rate is satisfying since the aim was to conduct between 100 – 200 questionnaires.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

More than half of the respondents (63.8%) were female, while 36.2% were men. The age of the respondents were fairly dispersed, since 17.4% were in the 25-34 age range, 20.1% were in the 35-44 age range and 23.5% were in the 55 or older age-group. The age range between 45-54 was to a certain extent higher with a percentage of 34.2%. Whereas the employees aged 18-24 represented a minor part (4.7%). See Appendix 3 for descriptive tables concerning gender and age statistics.

Most of the respondents had a higher education than elementary school, which was represented by 4%. Nearly half (48.3%) of the respondents had a secondary education, while a total of 47.7% of the employees had a higher or a tertiary education. See Appendix 3 for descriptive tables concerning education statistics.
Finally, the employees’ placements on the various bank brands (B1, B2 and B3) were as follow. Majority of the respondents (65.8%) belonged to B1, while the minor part (8.1%) was represented by B2. The third bank, B3 was constituted of 26.2%. See Appendix 3 for descriptive tables concerning education and bank placement statistics.

5.3 Reliability

To measure the correlation between the variables understanding and commitment, there was first a need to incorporate all the statements measuring understanding into one variable. Likewise with the variable measuring commitment. Two reliability tests were done in this thesis, one for the measurements of understanding and one for the measurements of commitment. Below the results is shown in forms of tables. As can be seen, Table 7 shows an alpha (α) >0.7. Understanding shows an alpha (α) of 0.847 and commitment shows an alpha (α) of 0.897. Acceptable number for alpha (α) is >0.6 (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but it should preferably be >0.7 (Hair et al, 2007). This means that the measurements of understanding versus commitment can be incorporated into one and from there on it is also possible to measure the correlation between the two variables. This also indicates on a pattern among the answers within the questionnaire and how the respondents perceived the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Correlation analysis

To be able to determine the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand promise and their brand commitment a correlation analysis was used. This thesis intended to investigate how employees’ commitment to the brand is influenced by their understanding of the brand promise. Understanding was therefore considered as the independent variable and commitment was determined as the dependent variable.

In Table 8 below it is shown how the two variables correlate with each other. The relationship between understanding the brand promise and be brand committed have a positive correlation of 0.624 (62.4%) it is considered to be a fairly strong relationship. Meaning that the two variables understanding the brand and be committed to it, actually do have a strong relation and that to a great extent explains the relationship that is stated in the hypothesis of this thesis. The correlation between the two variables is trustworthy, since it has a significance lower than 0.01.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.624**</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is earlier stated by the conceptual literature presented in the literature review that there is a relationship between the two variables, which this result supports. To understand the brand promise cannot be forced on the employees. They must be receptive to be able to embrace the meaning of the brand (Ind, 2003; Khan, 2009). Also, according to the literature, an internal understanding of the brand promise should be consistent in order to facilitate decision making and the daily work among service employees (Ind, 2003; Burman & Zeplin, 2009). A free and consistent understanding enables employees to feel emotional attachment to the brand. A passionate bond of this kind makes it possible to perform aligned with the
brand promise and be able to live the brand (Thomson et al., 1999), which is the foundation of internal branding and what many companies aims for (Thomson et al., 1999; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). The correlation result of this thesis (62.4%) strengthens the relationship which is already stated in the literature. It indicates that understanding has a relationship with commitment and what is stated above is true. Of course a higher correlation would have strengthened the hypothesis even more. But for an investigation of this scale the number is satisfying.

5.5 Regression analysis

The R-square was counted to see to what extent understanding is influencing commitment. Table 9 below displays the model summary. The R-square in Table 9 shows 0.390. This means that 39% of commitment can be explained by the variable understanding i.e. the amount of variance in commitment that is influenced by understanding.

Table 9: Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.624a</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>45295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Understanding

Approximately two fifths of the customer-facing employees' commitment is influenced by understanding the bank brand promise. This infers that employees' understanding of the bank brand promise and their brand commitment indicates to have a fairly strong relationship. The need for understanding the brand promise in order to be brand committed is therefore apparent and much reliable, since the ANOVA- test showed a significance lower than 0.01, which can be seen in Table 10 below. To explain the R-square, for instance if R-square would have been 1.0, understanding would have been the only variable explaining commitment. A lower R-square would have shown a less strong relationship between the two variables and a higher R-square would of course have strengthened this thesis hypothesis.
even more. But one third is still a high number when it comes to explaining one single variable such as commitment. Internal branding can by Mahnert and Torres (2009) be interpreted as the importance of aligning external and internal brand promise, in order to be committed. For employees to realize the connection between internal and external they have to understand what the brand stands for. This indicates that understanding is one of the most important factors to be brand committed, which also the R-square of this investigation supports.

Table 10: ANOVA\textsuperscript{b}-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>19,250</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19,250</td>
<td>93,825</td>
<td>.000\textsuperscript{a}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>30,160</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>19,250\textsuperscript{,205}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49,410</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>93,825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Predictors: (Constant), Understanding  
\textsuperscript{b} Dependent Variable: Commitment

In the last step of the regression analysis the hypothesis was tested. The Beta-value shows how much an increase of one unit in the independent variable (understanding) affects the dependent variable (commitment). Table 11 below shows the Beta-value 0.624. This means that when understanding increases with one unit, commitment will increase with 62.4\% within that unit. The same table below shows a significance lower than 0.01 which means that the Beta-value is reliable. As mentioned in the introduction chapter the competition in the service industry has increased in the last decades (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009) and every competitive advantage a company can have is an important benefit. Thereby, to make use of the knowledge about that there is a relationship between the two variables can be used as an advantage (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). To create a stronger understanding for the brand within the company would enhance the commitment among the employees, which is what the Beta-value indicates.
Table 11: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>2.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.765</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>9.5686</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Commitment

The findings of this investigation are almost consistent with the literature associated with internal branding, demonstrating a positive and fairly strong relationship between employees’ understanding of brand promise and brand commitment. This study provides empirical evidence supporting that understanding the brand promise becomes a basis for being committed towards the brand. Due to this positive Beta-value and the statistical significance the pronounced hypothesis H\(_1\) (+) for this thesis is supported, i.e. understanding the brand promise is a critical factor for employees to be brand committed.

Chapter Summary

Chapter five have presented the outcome of the conducted and calculated data, gathered from the investigation. The reliability test showed a Cronbach alpha of 0.847 for understanding and 0.897 for commitment. The correlation between the two variables was 0.624 and finally the regression analysis showed an R-Square of 0.390 and a Beta-value of 0.624. All calculations had a significance lower than 0.01. The analysis was completed by discussing the calculation results and by addressing the results in relation to previously studies. Through the analysis it was found that it is a positive and fairly strong relationship between brand promise understanding and brand commitment among bank employees. Therefore, the result provides support for H\(_1\) (+).
6. Conclusions and implications

In the final chapter, the outcome of the investigation is discussed and also what might have influenced the result. It is also presented what implications this thesis could have both in theory and in reality. Further, what factors that might have limited the investigation is brought up and the chapter ends with recommendations for further investigations.

6.1 Discussions and Conclusions

After having studying literature regarding the internal branding it was found limited empirical research concerning the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment. It ended into a research gap within the research field. This thesis was aimed to contribute to reduce this research gap and gain more knowledge about the relationship.

The outcome of this thesis supports what is previously said within the research area. Both correlation and regression analysis shows numbers that are of satisfaction. The result of the R-square was shown to be 39%. This is a fairly strong number though there are still unexplained factors, which influence the bank employees to be brand committed. The unexplored percent will probably be explained through other factors. Except from what Kimpakorn and Tocquer’s (2009) claims about that understanding is a factor impacting brand commitment they also propose three other possible factors. First, employees perception of customers’ brand image, second the employees perception of employer brand in relation to its competitors and third employees’ experience of the employer brand. These proposed factors are not to be taken for granted as influencing factors of brand commitment. In addition to Kimpakorn and Tocquer’s (2009) factors mentioned above there might still be other factors which can explain the brand commitment. Since it is not investigated how strongly other possible factors would impact brand commitment it is hard to say if understanding is the strongest factor.
influencing brand commitment. Though 39% is considered as a fairly strong number.

This study supports what other literature within the internal branding area have stated. However, it is to keep in mind that the investigations are conducted in complete different industries. For instance Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) and Punjaisri et al (2009b) have completed investigations within the research area of internal branding in the Thailand hotel industry. Another context that has been investigated before is a cross-sectional research conducted in a Great Britain industry, this by Thomson et al (1999). To compare a different industry like for instance the Thailand hotel industry with this thesis investigation conducted in the Swedish bank industry would be out of commission. The result of the different investigations could be influenced by the fact that they are conducted in different industries and the context itself might thereby also be an influencing factor for the result of brand commitment. Ambler and Barrow (1996) confirm that brand commitment might vary among employees within different industries. With this in mind it is to be assumed that understanding the brand promise can probably also differ with the industry.

The intension with quantitative research is to receive as high response rate as possible. Even though the response rate for this thesis was satisfying (43.8%), it can always be improved. For instance if there were more time given for research more respondents could have been approached. The response rate differed for the three participating banks. To be able to fairly compare the result of the different banks, it would be beneficial if the result had been shared between the banks in a better way.

As mentioned previously the hypothesis of this thesis was supported by the result of the empirical investigation, which also strengthens what is earlier stated within literature of the research area. It is interesting to reflect upon if the hypothesis had not been supported and what the consequences of that would have implicated. Most likely it would reflect upon a possible mistake within this investigation but there might also be an indication of that the relationship between the variables are false.
To conclude the findings of this investigation it can be confirmed that the outcome supports the hypothesis $H_1$ (+) for this study. The investigation of the customer-facing employees within the bank industry in Sweden was shown that employees understanding of the bank brand promise have a positive and fairly strong impact on their brand commitment. Thus the result backs up the conceptual literature discussion about the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment. Those positive indications give support to the limited empirical literature and enhance the relationship to what the existing empirical study has demonstrated. With this as a conclusion the attempt to reduce the research gap is thereby fulfilled.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The attempt to reduce the research gap has resulted in that the findings of this research strengthens what other authors previously has proposed within the research field of internal branding. There is a positive relation between understanding brand promise and brand commitment. This thesis has contributed with valuable empirical materiel, which reinforces what conceptual literature, like for instance Bergström et al (2002), Ind (2003), Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Mahnert and Torres (2007) and Foster et al (2010) have discussed as something implicit without sufficient empirical investigation to back that argumentation up.

The result has contributed with more knowledge about the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment in another context. This since the relationship has been tested in another industry and nation, in addition to what for instance Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) have performed. This completed outcome can be used as possible input in forthcoming similar research within the area of internal branding. It leaves space for further research in both depth and breadth, like for instance consider further factors, measured with more question among a larger sample size in different industries. Though, the proved result is a well-founded basis.
6.3 Managerial Implications

Since the service industry has increased it has also become more competitive (Rajshekhar et al, 2011). It is important to develop different competitive advantages to reach the customers within this tough environment. Customer employees have become central in the service brand building process and can be one competitive advantage if it is managed in a proper way (Machtiger, 2004). Thereby internal branding is a process to improve a valuable source, as the employees become more skilled to behave in line with the brand promise.

Since bank employees’ understanding of the brand promise, according to the investigation in this thesis, has a positive and fairly strong relationship to how brand committed they are, the knowledge about this can be seen as a competitive advantage. If it is managed in the right way by executive personnel it can be a valuable key how to strengthen the brand.

A service brand that is understood and acted in the same way by employees, is more likely to be perceived in a uniform way by other stakeholders and can thereby be seen as a strong brand externally (Thomson et al, 1999). Since it is confirmed in this thesis that understanding is an important factor to be committed it is the managers’ responsibility to inform and educate the employees about the brand promise and make sure that they understand it. This to enhance their commitment to deliver the brand promise. It would result in higher brand performance and enhance the chances of creating a strong and successful service brand. As mentioned in the research discussion there are investigations made among Swedish and American employees showing a low brand commitment (Ind, 2003; Gallup, 2011). This indicates that managers of companies have previously failed in this area.

The two factors understanding and brand commitment can be worth considering from a managements perspective when introducing new staff into the company. Thereby it is important to keep in mind that a company’s brand promise not can be forced on employees (Ind, 2003; Khan, 2009). Ensuring that potential employees share the company’s values from the beginning will facilitate them to be brand
committed. Internal communication which can be interpreted as email, interior, dress code and working climate when employees socialize and interact with each other should all be permeate by the companies’ brand promise (Bergström et al, 2002; Mahnert & Torres, 2007). Informing about the brand promise in this way facilitates for the employees to have a consistent understanding and according to Punjaisri et al, 2009b a consistent understanding of brand promise facilitates to behave in line with it. Another consideration for managers when educating both new and existing employees internally about the companies brand promise, is that it should continuously be repeated for the employees’ entire career. Since both the context and the brand itself are dynamic and might change during time.

6.4 Limitations

The main limitation of this thesis was the time constraints. The time factor contributed to do a methodological limitation, i.e. a cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship. The time for this thesis has been constraints which has for instance been a limitation for the data collection process. More time had made it possible to contact more banks that would have willing to participate. Existing policies of the various banks has made it difficult to gain access to the finance industry. The investigation only contains three bank brands but to be able to say something about the entire bank industry in Sweden, more banks have to be part of the investigation. Due to the large population, it was not possible to make a comprehensive survey. A sample consisting of three bank brands was the basis for this investigation. If more units would had been investigated the greater the accuracy of the study could had been. More time would also contribute to a longer time period were the respondents had time to answer the questionnaire. It would also have been possible to send more reminders to the banks and the respondents, which probably had enhance the response rate.

Other limitations related to time and resource constraints were first the perspective. Internal branding is a complex concept that can be seen from many perspectives, such as management, employees and different stakeholders. Due to the time and resources it was chosen to concentrate on one of those perspectives,
namely employees’ perspective. Second, it was not investigated all possible factors influencing brand commitment because they might not be known and would have been incomprehensible. Third, the time impacted the possibilities to explore several different industries, which was not possible for this thesis.

6.5 Future Research

Further research can beneficially use this thesis’ conclusion as a foundation to complete more advanced investigations within the area. Time and resources facilitates to do a more comprehensive research. This thesis has concluded that two fifths of brand commitment can be explained by understanding. Future research with better access to time and recourses has a greater possibility to investigate further among different possible factors influencing employees’ brand commitment, for instance demographic factors.

Future investigation within the research field should positively be done in more industries, since the relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment might vary from business to business. It would be interesting to do a similar investigation and comparing two or more industries to see if the relation between the variables differs significantly.

If conducting further research in the area of internal branding, it would be interesting to consider the different ways of gathering data. Personal interviews and surveys represent the two most distinguish ones. Personal interviews are more resource intensive but a more accurate alternative. Surveys are shallower but more resource effective. The limited scope of this thesis has made survey most feasible. Personal interviews with employees to complete the questionnaires would result in a deeper comprehension of the relationship between understanding and commitment. But this was not possible due to the time and resource conditions.

Finally, when it comes to perspective, this thesis only concentrated on the employees’ point of view. It would be interesting to consider another perspective such as the mangers. There might be a difference in how they perceive the process.
of internal branding and there might also be differences in the relationship of the two investigated variables.

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**Chapter Summary**

In the last chapter of this thesis the conclusion was presented. The study concluded that the hypothesis was supported. The empirical investigation of the customer-facing employees in the Swedish bank industry showed that employees’ understanding of the brand promise have a positive and fairly strong influence on their commitment towards the brand. A discussion of the result and what may have affected it was also discussed. Theoretical and managerial implications were presented and managers were advised to educate their employees to get a stronger brand. In the limitation part it was clarified that the biggest limitations were to get access to the banks and also the limited time constraints. For future research other factors that might influence employees’ brand commitment could be considered. It would also be preferable to carry out this study in different industries.
7. References


Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Enkätundersökning gällande

Varumärkesförståelse

Hej!

Hur upplever Du Ditt företags varumärke?

Vi är tre studenter vid Linnéuniversitetet i Växjö som just nu skriver en kandidatuppsats i ämnet intern varumärkning. Vi undersöker hur anställda inom företaget har förstått vad varumärket står för.

Nedanstående enkät innehåller fyra inledande frågor följt av sexton påståenden gällande varumärkesförståelse. Detta i syfte att undersöka banken som varumärke och inte Ditt specifika bankkontor.

Läs påståendena noggrant och svara genom att kryssa i det svarsalternativ som stämmer bäst in på Dig. Inga svar anses vara rätt eller fel utan svara så ärligt Du kan. Dina svar är anonyma och enkäten beräknas ta ca 5 minuter.

Har Du några frågor eller synpunkter angående enkäten så är Du välkommen att kontakta Caroline Ahlberg på antingen c.ahlberg@hotmail.com eller 0730-60 90 34.

Dina svar är viktiga för oss och vi vill tacka Dig på förhand för Ditt deltagande.

Vänliga hälsningar
Caroline Ahlberg
Emelie Carlson
Johanna Karlström

Hur gammal är Du?

☐ 18–24
☐ 25–34
☐ 35–44
☐ 45–54
☐ 55–

Är Du...

☐ Man
☐ Kvinna

Vilken är den högsta utbildning Du har fullfölj?

☐ Grundskola
☐ Gymnasial utbildning
☐ Eftergymnasial utbildning

Vilken bank arbetar Du på?

☐ Sparbanken 1826
☐ Swedbank
☐ Sparbanken Eken
Jag har förståelse för vad mitt företags varumärke står för.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag har en tydlig förståelse för de mål och värderingar som min bank står för.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag förstår vad jag behöver göra i mitt eget arbete för att stödja företagets syfte och mål.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag tror mig förstå kundernas uppfattning om banken.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag har förståelse för vad som är utlovet i bankens erbjudande till kunderna, i relation till den service som jag erbjuder.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag har förståelse för kundernas förväntningar av bankens prestation.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag känner att min förståelse för vad varumärket står för underlättar min kontakt med kunden.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag känner mig känslomässigt engagerad vid den här banken.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag tror på mitt företags framtida vision.
Instämmer inte
alls
Instämmer helt

Jag känner att nivån av mitt känslomässiga engagemang gentemot banken påverkar hur jag sköter mitt dagliga arbete.
Jag bryr mig om den här banken.
Instämmer inte
allt

Jag känner mig känslosägigt engagerad att göra mitt bästa för att banken ska lyckas.
Instämmer inte
allt

Det skulle krävas mycket för mig att lämna varumärket jag arbetar för.
Instämmer inte
allt

Jag är känslosägigt engagerad i att förmedla det varumärket utlovar till bankens kunder.
Instämmer inte
allt

Jag berättar stolt för andra att jag är en del av den här banken.
Instämmer inte
allt

Mitt känslosägiga engagemang för att förmedla varumärket ökar i takt med min kunskap om varumärket.
Instämmer inte
allt
Appendix 2: Distribution of Questionnaire - Sparbanken 1826

The picture shows the announcement that was distributed through the contact person at one of the participating banks.
Appendix 3: Descriptive statistics

Following tables are discussed in 5.2 Descriptive Statistics. The tables were redundant since the data of this kind is not the main focus of this thesis. It would though be interesting for further investigations.

Table 12: Are you...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36,2</td>
<td>36,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>63,8</td>
<td>63,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: How old are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>4,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17,4</td>
<td>22,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20,1</td>
<td>42,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34,2</td>
<td>76,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23,5</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Which is the highest education you have completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>4,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>48,3</td>
<td>52,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tertiary School</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>47,7</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Which bank do you work for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Bank 1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>65,8</td>
<td>65,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bank 2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8,1</td>
<td>73,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bank 3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26,2</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4. Calculation for each Participating Bank

To be able to give the banks something in return the relationship between employees’ understanding of the brand and the brand commitment was calculated for each participating bank. The tables below shows the correlation between the variables calculated for each bank separately. Correlation analysis is a concept that indicates the strength and direction of a relationship between two or more variables. The Correlation shows how understanding and commitment are correlating. A high number indicates a strong relationship between the variables and a low number indicates no relationship between the variables. The correlation is expressed in a value between 1 and -1, where 0 represent no relationship, 1 represent a strong positive relationship and -1 represent a strong negative relationship. The correlation should also be less than 0.9. Otherwise the variables are measuring almost the same thing. To be able to trust the Correlation the number also has to have statistical significance (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Correlation for Bank 1

The correlation for Bank 1 is 0.547. This represents a fairly strong relationship between understanding the brand promise and brand commitment among the bank employees in this bank. The result is also significant, which means that the result can be trusted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: The Correlation between Understanding and Commitment for Bank 1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Correlation for Bank 2

The correlation number for bank 2 is 0.523 and shows a fairly strong relationship. But the number is not significant (0.081) which means that the correlation can only be trusted to 91.5%. The significance must be more than 0.05 to be a trustworthy number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td>0.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: The Correlation between Understanding and Commitment for Bank 2

Correlation for Bank 3

The correlation for Bank 3 is 0.758. This represents a really strong relationship between brand promise understanding and brand commitment within this bank. The result is also significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td>0.758**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Linnaeus University – a firm focus on quality and competence

On 1 January 2010 Växjö University and the University of Kalmar merged to form Linnaeus University. This new university is the product of a will to improve the quality, enhance the appeal and boost the development potential of teaching and research, at the same time as it plays a prominent role in working closely together with local society. Linnaeus University offers an attractive knowledge environment characterised by high quality and a competitive portfolio of skills.

Linnaeus University is a modern, international university with the emphasis on the desire for knowledge, creative thinking and practical innovations. For us, the focus is on proximity to our students, but also on the world around us and the future ahead.

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