UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC SECTOR BRANDING
An internal brand management perspective

Ulrika Leijerholt

To my grandmother Göta,
who did not get to pursue her dream of a higher education,
as it was deemed a waste for a girl

To my nieces Alina and Vira,
whose dreams I hope will take them wherever they want to go

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The journey of a thousand miles begins with one single step.
(Chinese proverb)

The journey of completing this dissertation has been challenging, rewarding, frustrating, interesting, confusing, hard…and absolutely amazing. While writing a dissertation can be a lonely process at times, I am fortunate enough to have not travelled it alone. I have many people to thank for helping me along the way. Far too many to mention all of them here.

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Abstract

The increased use of branding within the public sector signifies an important area for academic research that currently lacks theory and empirical evidence; public sector branding. Extant literature paints a scattered picture. On one hand, some branding principles appear to be equally relevant in the public sector as they are in the private sphere. On the other hand, the public sector appears to require a somewhat distinct approach to branding as there are contextual differences that may affect branding principles, their implementation, and outcomes. Thus, the field lacks established relevant theoretical frameworks to guide public sector organizations in their branding efforts.

One particular area of interest is that of internal brand management. A strong organizational brand is dependent on the brand values being incorporated into the fabric of an organization and into the behaviors of its employees. How this outcome can be achieved in the public sector, however, is still unknown. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate central factors affecting the implementation of internal brand management in the public sector, considering its specific nature.

Through a multi-method study, this dissertation presents the synthesized findings of four individual papers. The first paper, a literature review, explores extant research on public sector branding. The next two papers are based on a qualitative case study, which includes interviews, observations, and brand-related documents. The fourth paper is based on a quantitative study. The three empirical papers investigate various factors that influence internal brand management in the public sector.

The synthesized findings demonstrate that organizations within the public sector need to approach branding in a manner that considers its distinct nature. From an internal brand management perspective this entails considering contextual, organizational, and individual factors. These factors have been found to affect branding principles and their implementation in public organizations and indicate the unique nature of public sector branding.

Keywords: public sector branding, internal brand management, internal branding, organizational branding, brand commitment, brand architecture, internal communication, organizational practices, public service motivation

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Appended papers

I.   Leijerholt, U.; Biedenbach, G. and Hultén, P. (2019) 'Branding in the public sector: A systematic literature review and future research opportunities', *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 126–140

II.   Leijerholt, U. (n.d.) 'What about context in internal brand management? Understanding employee brand commitment in the public sector'. *Presented at the 14th Global Brand Conference, Berlin*

III.   Leijerholt, U., Chapleo, C. and O'Sullivan, H. (2019) 'A brand within a brand: an integrated understanding of internal brand management and brand architecture in the public sector', *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 277–290

IV.   Leijerholt, U.; Biedenbach, G. and Hultén, P. (n.d.) 'Internal brand management in the public sector: Internal communication, organizational practices, and affective outcomes'

1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research areas of public sector branding and internal brand management. The chapter presents an overview of the problem background, research gaps, the purpose of this dissertation, and its structure.

1.1 Branding of public sector organizations

Critical voices suggest that branding undermines the core responsibilities and values that the public sector is meant to secure (Erlingsson, 2016; Fredriksson and Pallas, 2013). Thus, traditional branding-related efforts, such as protecting the organizational image and managing communications strategies, represent aims that can be perceived as ill-suited to the public sector. Indeed, in media reports on the public sector, it is not difficult to find examples of branding gone wrong. For example, the healthcare director of a county council came under fire for the decision to classify information from a report that criticized a number of healthcare centers in the region (Westin, 2016). The purpose was allegedly to avoid negative publicity for the organization (Westin, 2016). A manager of another public sector organization under scrutiny attempted to identify employees who had spoken to the media about the organization (Färlin, 2016). The purpose was to get a clear idea of what had been said and to ensure that a consistent message was being communicated (Färlin, 2016). The act of this manager violated the right of public sector employees' to speak to the media, without risk of repercussions, which is protected by Swedish law. Employers are therefore not allowed to make inquiries to determine who has spoken to the media. These examples illustrate that branding may sometimes be at odds with the values, ethos and laws of the public sector. Arguments even suggest, "authorities, municipalities, and county councils should not primarily devote their time and resources to polishing their reputation and thinking about their 'brand'. They must follow the laws, see to the best of the citizens, and deliver what they are supposed to deliver with high quality and legal certainty" (Erlingsson, 2016).

As this criticism indicates, branding is no longer exclusively pursued by private companies. Public sector organizations have discovered its appeal and branding is becoming widespread within the sector. The Swedish public sector has an income of 2 280 billion SEK, represents approximately 50% of GDP and 29% of total employment, and 1.4 million Swedes work in the sector (Statskontoret, 2018). While it covers a heterogeneous range of areas, for example, defense, social protection and justice, healthcare, and education (Statskontoret, 2018), there are

also certain characteristic features. One of the most prominent characteristics relates to the complexity of governance and management of the organizations, which includes particular rules and regulations, and its political foundation and democratic principles (Solli, 2015). The impact of the shift toward branding may therefore be considerable, particularly from a societal perspective. From examples such as those above, we can assume that the innate nature of the public sector may require branding efforts to consider the public context in which it acts. When executed in a manner unsuitable for the public sector the branding efforts may threaten the democratic and legal rights of citizens and employees, and the failure of the organization to fulfil its core purpose and values. Done wrong, it may undermine the legitimacy of organizations, and consequently, the sector as a whole. As the public sector represents such a substantial share of GDP and employment, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive understanding of the nature of public sector branding and how it can be pursued in a manner suitable for its context.

So, what is a brand? While the American Marketing Association defines a brand as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers", this is a rather simplified definition. A more comprehensive account is proposed by de Chernatony and Dall-Olmo Riley (1998) who identify twelve themes, or categories, of brand definitions used in literature. These include the brand as 1) a legal instrument, 2) a logo, 3) a company, 4) a shorthand, 5) a risk reducer, 6) an identity system, 7) an image in consumers' minds, 8) a value system, 9) a personality, 10) a relationship, 11) adding value, and 12) evolving entity. Thus, the concept of 'a brand' is multifaceted and used in various manners in literature.

At their core, brands are symbols (de Chernatony, 2009; Gardner and Levy, 1955) that create associations in the minds of stakeholders. As such, brands help to create meaning (Hatch and Schultz 2009) for customers and other stakeholders. This meaning is based on functional and emotional values (de Chernatony, 2002). When a consumer decides on a brand to buy, the initial focus is on the rational, functional values that the brand provides to the consumer (de Chernatony, 2002). Related to these functional needs are the emotional, symbolic values that the customer relates to the brand, values that enhance the perceived experience with the brand (de Chernatony, 2002). The brand can thus be defined as the functional and emotional values related to an experience that customers (and other stakeholders) can expect (de Chernatony, 2002), which is the definition used in this dissertation. Management may define the desired brand values (de Chernatony, 2002) and the official brand communication, and then present them in the form of a brand promise (Punjaisri et al,. 2008). However, the authentic

brand values emerge from the total brand experience, which includes interactions with employees, brand communications, and other tangible elements (de Chernatony et al,. 2006). The functional and emotional brand values therefore need to be reinforced in the interaction between representatives of the brand and external stakeholders.

Branding thus refers to efforts to communicate and promote the brand to various stakeholders (Balmer, 2001). It requires a coordinated effort to ensure consistency and coherency in the message and delivery of the brand (King 1991). It is a complex task to ensure that various stakeholder perceptions align (Hatch and Schultz 2003). Employees play a critical role in this endeavor as an influence on external stakeholders' view of the brand (Sirianni et al., 2013). It has been suggested that these internal stakeholder groups are of equal, or even greater, importance than external mass-marketing activities (Sirianni et al., 2013; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). Thus, organizations must support employees' abilities and willingness to reinforce the brand values in external stakeholder brand experiences (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2009; Schultz and de Chernatony, 2002). Employee internalization of brand values is therefore necessary (Morhart et al., 2009; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Such internalization, or buy-in, has a significant impact on the brand; value-congruence between employee behavior and externally communicated brand values have been shown to affect organizational image (Kang, 2016). Furthermore, authentic brand-aligned employee performance significantly influences customers' brand evaluations (Sirianni et al., 2013).

Therefore, internal brand management is an essential part of branding. While the field of internal brand management is characterized by inconsistencies in conceptualization, and thus lacks a generally accepted definition (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016), the purpose of internal brand management is to support and reinforce alignment between brand values and employee values and behaviors (Harris and de Chernatony 2001). From a private sector perspective, these have been shown to improve brand performance (Iyer et al., 2018; Tuominen et al., 2016; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001) and to have an indirect influence on market performance (Tuominen et al., 2016). Organizations should therefore invest in internal brand management efforts, as the key to a strong brand lies in the hands of employees. A brand must consequently be built from within.

The field of internal brand management has traditionally focused on private companies. The industries studied include financial services and banking (du Preez and Bendixen, 2015; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2009), tourism and hospitality (Piehler, Schade and Burmann, 2018; King, 2010; Punjaisri, Wilson

and Evanschitzky, 2009), business-to-business (Baumgarth, 2010), call centers (Burmann and König, 2011), and a cross-section of companies (Iyer et al., 2018; Henkel et al., 2007; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Research has also been conducted within a non-profit setting (Liu et al., 2017). As such, the literature is now beginning to provide a clearer understanding of internal brand management. For example, research has identified the role of various components, such as internal communication (Burmann et al., 2009; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009; de Chernatony et al., 2006), human resource management (Chang et al., 2012; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Aurand et al., 2005), and leadership (Burmann et al., 2009; Morhart et al., 2009; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). Research has also identified main constructs related to internal brand management outcomes (Helm et al., 2016; Piehler et al., 2016; Burmann et al., 2009) and employee brand equity to measure the outcomes (Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010; King and Grace, 2010). However, while internal brand management has certainly been subject to academic interest, more studies are needed to provide comprehensive insights into employee-related outcomes of internal brand management (Piehler, Grace and Burmann, 2018). Furthermore, future studies are encouraged to develop insights into the factors that affect these outcomes, such as managerial instruments and the ownership status of the organization, in other words, public or private (Piehler, Grace and Burmann, 2018).

From a public sector perspective, the popularity of branding has flourished in the last few decades. Its growth appears to coincide with the rise of New Public Management (NPM) principles with tools, techniques and approaches from the private sector that are being implemented in the public sector. Diefenbach states (2009, p. 893), "NPM is a set of assumptions and value statements about how public sector organizations should be designed, organized, managed and how, in a quasi-business manner, they should function". Thus, it is characterized by concepts such as accountability, efficiency, performance, and transparency within public institutions (De Vries and Nemec, 2013; Lapsley, 2008; Hood, 1991, 1995). While it is doubtful that the original intention of implementing NPM principles was to enable the government to contribute to the branding of public sector organizations, a brand focus has indeed emerged within the sector. The consequences may be negative as well as positive. Even though public sector branding may have some undesirable effects that risk undermining the purpose and values of the sector, it may also have some positive effects for the organization and its stakeholders.

1.2 The current state of research on branding in the public sector

Research suggests that branding may play a positive and constructive role in the public sector, for example to support legitimacy (Gromark and Melin, 2013) and relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Hood and Henderson, 2005). However, it may not just be a case of implementing branding principles from the private sector into the public sector. Previous research indicates that theories and models introduced from the private sector may not necessarily be fully compatible with the public sector (Hytti et al., 2015; Chapleo, 2015a, 2011; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009; Temple, 2006). A modified version of branding may therefore be needed. However, existing literature provides an inconclusive picture. A heterogeneity of voices suggest a distinction, or lack thereof, between public and private sector branding. On one hand, studies show certain similarities between branding in the public and private sector, such as the role of brand vision (Chapleo, 2015b), brand image (Judson et al., 2008), and visual identity (Dholakia and Acciardo, 2014; Celly and Knepper, 2010; Hudson, 2009; Rowley, 1997). Studies also indicate the central role of internal stakeholders (e.g. Whelan et al., 2010; Judson et al., 2008).

On the other hand, differences are evident. There are indications that public sector branding is more complex than its private counterpart is. For example, attempts to support a single identity in an environment that, by nature, may contain multiple identities may prove to be a challenge (Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009). Other complexities include inconsistencies of values as public sector organizations need to ensure public interest and accommodate individual interests (Wæraas, 2008). Furthermore, public sector organizations often lack a unique, differentiated brand and message (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015) and may have very complex brand-structures (Celly and Knepper, 2010; Chapleo, 2007). Public sector organizations may also need to consider the organizational setting, which may include affiliated organizations such as local authorities (Rowley, 1997), and legal constraints (Kim et al., 2008) in their branding efforts.

Another interesting issue is the internal resistance to commercial concepts, such as branding, that may exist in this sector. Such resistance may relate to a sense of commercialization of the public realm; the representation of branding as a commercial concept may cause perceptions of a "dilution of the public service role" (Hood and Henderson 2005, p. 24). Thus, branding may be perceived to be in conflict with the public purpose and ethos. Indeed, arguments have been set forth that commercial terminology and concepts, for example, customers, should not be used in this sector as it is inappropriate and contradictory to a public setting (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007). In their branding efforts,

some public sector organizations may therefore prefer use alternative terms that are more suitable for the setting, for example, using the term identity rather than brand (Hariff and Rowley, 2011), information rather than communication, and trust rather than reputation (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015).

As the preceding discussion suggests, branding in the public sector raises concerns regarding its role, implementation, and peculiarity. This dissertation does not argue that branding is necessarily at odds with the public sector. Rather, it suggests that if public organizations are to be involved in branding, such efforts need to consider the nature and purpose of the sector. Thus, there are reasons to question the automatic applicability of all branding principles from the private sector to the public context. Public sector branding may be inherently distinctive compared to its private counterpart, especially from an internal perspective. It may consequently, need a somewhat different lens compared to branding in the private sector.

While branding in the public sector has attracted some academic interest, it is certainly a field that needs further studies. In the public sector the academic interest appears to be more prominent in some settings, for example, higher education (e.g. Chapleo, 2010; Judson et al., 2008; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007) and political branding (e.g. Marsh and Fawcett, 2011; Needham, 2006; Schneider, 2004). Extant research provides some interesting insights regarding the "processes, effects and challenges of branding in a public sector context" (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015, p. 444). However, the field is very much under development and there is still a lot to explore (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). While the internal perspective is especially interesting as the role of employees is central to branding, certain resistance is evident among internal stakeholders (Chapleo, 2007; Hood and Henderson, 2005). This topic has been subject to few studies, with existing research focused on a few selected public settings, such as higher education (e.g. Yu et al. 2018; Judson et al., 2008), non-profit organizations (e.g. Juntunen et al., 2013), publically owned corporations (e.g. Sharma and Kamalanabhan 2012), and privatized, previously public organizations (e.g. Hardaker and Fill 2005).

This lack of studies is problematic as it means that we currently lack the theoretical framework to ensure that internal brand management in the public sector is implemented in an effective manner that is consistent with the context. The contextual fit is important for the implementation because branding per se may not result in harmful effects for the sector and organizations within it, but the incorrect implementation will.

With the preceding arguments as point of departure, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate central factors affecting the implementation of internal brand management in the public sector, considering its specific nature.

1.3 Overview of the dissertation

As a compilation thesis, this doctoral dissertation includes a number of papers. It is structured in two parts: 1) an introductory part that provides a presentation of the conceptual framework and a comprehensive themed synthesis related to the individual papers and 2) the four individual papers of the dissertation.

The introductory chapter of the dissertation aims to provide an overview of the topic and insights into the problematization of public sector branding. Furthermore, this chapter identifies the research gaps that the dissertation fills and presents the purpose of the research. The introductory chapter is followed by a comprehensive literature review of the field of branding and internal brand management, including a section on how branding theories have been applied in the public sector. This literature review is a foundation for the later discussion and contribution to literature, which draws upon the knowledge gained in the individual papers. Chapter three consists of a presentation of the empirical context, which provides a description of the specific study setting. Chapter four presents the research methodology. Chapter five consists of a summary of the four papers, followed by a discussion and presentation of the synthesized research findings of the dissertation in chapter six. The final chapter presents the conclusions, which includes theoretical and managerial contribution, limitations, and some future research areas.

This dissertation includes four papers, one literature review and three empirical papers, which investigate various aspects of branding in the public sector. Paper 1, the literature review, presents the current state of public sector branding research and identifies future avenues of research. As such, this literature review has guided the development of the empirical papers. The three empirical papers subsequently focus on internal brand management in the public sector. Paper 2 and 3 are based on a qualitative method while paper 4 presents the empirical findings of a quantitative study. The specific topics of each of the four papers are illustrated in Figure 1.
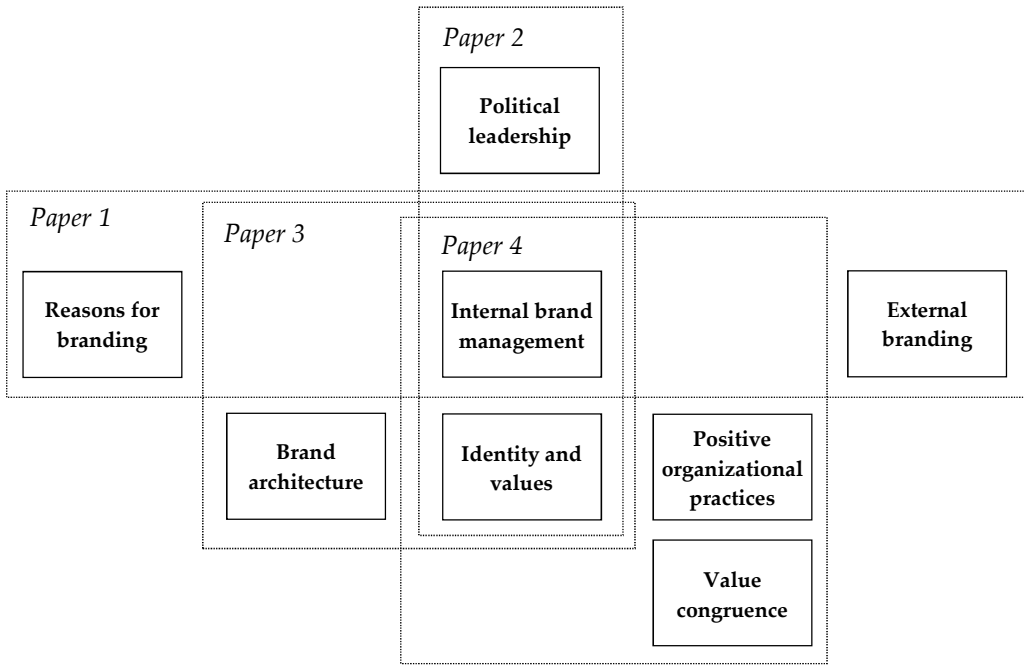
Figure 1. Main topics of the papers in the dissertation

Paper 1, the literature review, aims to provide an overview of literature on branding in the public sector. It focuses on three main issues: reasons to use branding principles, the internal perspective of branding, and the external perspective of branding. As a starting point for the empirical study of the dissertation, the subsequent empirical papers focuses on various issues related to internal brand management in the public sector.

The aim of paper 2 is to understand how the nature of the public sector affect internal brand management and its outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this explorative paper is to provide insights into how contextual factors in the Swedish public sector affect employee brand commitment. As such, it covers topics of political leadership as well as identity and values.

Paper 3 aims to provide insights into factors related to internal structures and processes and how they influence internal brand management. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore the brand management processes within a public sector organization and their implications for brand architecture. The main issues covered are brand architecture and identity and values.

Paper 4 aims to examine communicative and behavioral factors that affect internal brand management. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of value congruence in internal communication and positive organizational practices on affective outcomes of internal branding. As a result, the main issues covered are value congruence, positive organizational practices, and public service motivation.

2 Theoretical background

This chapter provides a review of literature on internal brand management. The purpose of this chapter is to develop an overview of extant knowledge, meant as a starting point for understanding the current state of research on internal brand management in the public sector. The chapter thus includes three main areas: 1) organizational branding, 2) internal brand management, and 3) public sector branding and internal brand management.

2.1 Organizational branding

Traditionally, branding was a tool that the marketing department used to promote individual products. However, in an era where the brand of the organization, rather than a product, is often the focal point, branding has evolved to a strategy that must encompass the entire organization. This line of thought emerged in the 1990s when market changes with shorter product life cycles, a growing service sector and increasing globalization (Hatch and Schultz 2009) raised an interest in the organization as a brand, in other words, corporate branding (Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012; Balmer and Greyser, 2006). This entails shifting focus from branding individual products to the organization and its brand, thus, to promote an 'umbrella image' that reflects on all products and services that is offered by the organization (Hatch and Schultz 2001). Corporate branding can be defined as "a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining favourable images and consequently a favourable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism" (Einwiller and Will 2002, p. 101). Because of its intangibility (Ind and Mariussen, 1997), managing the corporate brand requires a greater focus on identity to define the unique characteristic of the organization and its brand (Hatch and Schultz 2009; Burmann and Zeplin 2005; de Chernatony 1999). While the concept of corporate branding may be used for organizations in both the private and public sector, the term 'corporate' has strong commercial and private sector undertones. The term organizational branding is therefore more suitable for a public sector context and will be used throughout this dissertation.

While traditionally considered a rather stable construct, created and driven by management endorsement of the brand (Schultz, 2015; Vallaster and von Wallpach, 2013; Balmer, 2001), the brand is increasingly argued to be dynamic and continuously evolving (Schultz, 2015; Melewar et al., 2012). Thus, it consists of not one, single meaning, but many possible meanings as perceived by different

stakeholders (Berthon et al., 2009). Referring to brands as organic social processes, scholars such as Saleem and Iglesias (2016) argue that the brand and its values is created both in employee-customer interactions and experiences, as well as among a variety of stakeholders, such as brand partners. It is these stakeholder perceptions and experiences that shape and create a common brand meaning, not that of management strategies alone. Thus, while branding was viewed as created and managed by the organization, today a greater co-creation aspect has developed, in which the meaning and values associated with the brand are not solely under the control of the organization (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Melewar et al., 2012; Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007). Branding is therefore a mutual process that involves various stakeholders (Gregory, 2007), and the brand meaning consists of experiences and interpretations that customers and other stakeholders have of the organization. As a consequence, branding of an organization requires a focus on all stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz 2009; King 1991), together creating a common notion of the brand (Hatch and Schultz 2009; Harris and de Chernatony 2001). It is the responsibility of management to ensure that the vision, culture and image harmonize and that managements' aspirations are congruent to the experiences of internal and external stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz 2009). Reality and vision must be aligned and expectations must be reinforced with action (Ballantyne and Aitken 2007; Hatch and Schultz 2003; Balmer and Greyser 2002).

This reality must be upheld by the organization in the form of interactions between internal and external stakeholders. Employees are a great influence on external stakeholder perceptions of the brand (de Chernatony et al., 2006; Hatch and Schultz, 2001) and they need to be considered in their role to communicate the brand and its message (Bergstrom et al., 2002). Employees at all levels of the organization influence the experience of various external stakeholders with regard to the brand, both front-line, customer facing positions and back-office employees (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Foster et al., 2010). Through their actions and behavior, they become the bearers of the brand, on which the total experience of external stakeholders is formed. When employee behavior aligns with the brand values and positioning, it greatly influences external stakeholders' "brand responses" (Sirianni et al., 2013). Some even suggest that employees, in the form of personal encounters, may be more powerful to communicate the brand meaning to external stakeholders compared to mass-marketed messages (Sirianni et al., 2013). To align employee behaviors with organizational brand values is therefore as essential as any external branding activities (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). Without it, organizations will have to spend time, effort, and resources to build and maintain a brand that is not reinforced in employee-

customer relationships, which risks misalignment between customer expectations and experiences, and thus weakens the brand.

The "take-away" message of these arguments is that organizations must ensure that the perceptions of the brand align among stakeholders, in other words, management, employees, and various external stakeholder groups. A close relationship is needed between the organizational vision, culture and image, which is at the core of corporate branding (Hatch and Schultz 2009). The brand identity and values therefore need to be aligned with the organizational identity and values (Balmer, 2001) as these provide a genuine foundation to build a strong and positive brand for the organization. This enables organizations to support stakeholder experiences that match the perceptions and expectations of the brand. This alignment is important since there might be a negative perception of the brand if stakeholders perceive that their experience and expectations of the brand do not match (Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007). Not only can it lead to confusion about the brand among external stakeholders, it may also result in an infected work environment within the organization (Hatch and Schultz 2001).

The central notion of internal stakeholders in organizational branding has led to a number of different research streams that all have an employee focus, such as internal marketing, employer branding, and internal brand management. While arguably related, and sometimes overlapping, these three research streams have distinct individual characteristics.

The oldest of the three research streams is internal marketing, which emerged in the 1970s (Wieseke et al., 2009; Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). This stream, which has been described as "based on the idea of employee as a customer" (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993), regards the employees as an internal market that is to be motivated to become more market- and customer-oriented (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). As such, it can be described as a customer-based management with an outside-in approach where organizations train and motivate employees to understand and be able to deliver the brand promise to customers and to ensure customer satisfaction (Mosley, 2007). The focus of research has often been related to various customer-related outcomes, such as service quality, or internal outcomes, in the form of issues related to job satisfaction, leadership, empowerment, and support (Wieseke et al., 2009). The underlying assumption is that when organizations view their employees as 'internal customers', by satisfying the internal customer needs, they are more likely to achieve higher external customer satisfaction (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). However, such an approach is not without criticism as some argue that the view of employees as

internal customers is inappropriate because of their role within the organization (Mudie, 2003).

Organizations today recognize the central role and value of 'human capital' (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). This shift, together with the expected increased need for skilled and value-adding employees, which has seen a reduced supply because of demographic and social factors, has resulted in a greater interest in employer branding (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). This stream of research describes "an activity where principles of marketing, in particular the 'science of branding', are applied to HR activities in relation to current and potential employees" (Edwards 2009, p. 6). One key definition is that employer branding is "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (Ambler and Barrow 1996, p. 187). Thus, related to the employment experience, it is often referred to as the "employment offering" where current and (especially) potential recruits are promised a specific experience if they are employed by the organization (Edwards, 2009); employer branding is about attracting and retaining employees. As all organizations know, recruitment is a costly process, and employer branding is therefore vital for organizations. However, the employer brand messages must provide a realistic perception of the organization and its brand in regard to its culture, identity, and values (Foster et al., 2010). If this is not the case, the employer brand might be used as a marketing tool to attract new recruits, but not be able to substantiate their claims in the employee experience.

With a focus on internal stakeholders (Foster et al., 2010), a third research stream with an employee focus addresses internal brand management, also called internal branding. While the two terms are often used interchangeably, in this dissertation the term internal brand management is used as it has greater strategic association compared to (the activity) of internal branding. Internal brand management is an inside-out, values-based perspective (Mosley, 2007). It refers to a means to support employee behavior that is aligned with the brand identity and values (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). Therefore, it aims to "communicate, express and embed brand values among employees" (Sujchaphong et al. 2015, p. 214). Taking on an internal stakeholder focus, internal brand management aims to minimize the difference between what management desires and aspires for the brand and what is perceived by organizational stakeholders (Sujchaphong et al., 2015; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Mitchell, 2002). This is commonly considered related to ensuring that employees understand and internalizes the brand values so that they are able to support the brand in their behavior (Piehler, 2018; Sujchaphong et al., 2015; Burmann et al., 2009). Thus, internal brand management generally focuses on the

internalization of brand values among employees in order to manage the customer experience (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). However, it has also been argued that the execution of internal brand management is similar to an internal marketing approach, but with a defined focus that is less narrow and not solely on the customer (Mosley, 2007). Furthermore, while this approach often uses various marketing methods and communication to influence employees, it is not enough to overcome the difficulty of changing an organizational culture. Rather, such changes require continuous and consistent management, which makes it a challenging endeavor (Mosley, 2007).

The three research streams overlap and some suggest that internal brand management is closely related to employer branding (Hytti et al., 2015), For example, Mosley (2007) uses the term employer branding to refer to the internal processes that are related to interactions between customers and the brand. However, while overlapping, others suggest that internal and employer branding should be seen as two distinct concepts (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Foster et al., 2010). It has been suggested that employer branding differs from internal brand management in a number of key aspects, such as discipline, goals, focus, components, and brand role (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). Thus, internal brand management mainly relies on the branding and marketing discipline, aims to support co-creation of brand value, and focuses on current employees. Moreover, the role of internal brand management is to support relationships between internal and external stakeholders, which is achieved by a number of proposed components; brand ideologies, communication, leadership, HR management, and internal brand communities (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). In comparison, employer branding mainly relies on the HR discipline and focuses on making the brand attractive to prospective employees. In addition, the role of the brand is to differentiate the corporate identity and communicate symbolic and instrumental beliefs, with the main components being brand ideologies, recruitment and external communication of the brand (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). Therefore, a clear link exists between the two research streams and an effective organizational brand management arguably requires a greater alignment between the two concepts (Foster et al., 2010). As research has suggested that recruiting suitable candidates is important for successful internal brand management (King and Grace, 2012; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007; de Chernatony et al., 2003), to adopt an exclusively internal view may not be sufficient.

This dissertation focuses on internal brand management; an internal perspective is therefore at the core of the research. This perspective needs to be understood to enable public sector organizations to successfully manage their brands by

effectively implementing internal brand management within the organization. As the brand is formed by different stakeholders, a considerable discrepancy between various stakeholder groups' perceptions of the brand will make it difficult for organizations to support a strong and positive brand. Stakeholder experiences signaling certain brand values are therefore essential. However, while this dissertation has an internal perspective, it is acknowledged that internal brand management and employer branding overlaps, and an external perspective may also need to be considered in branding efforts.

2.2 Internal brand management

Beginning in the late 1990s (Thomson et al., 1999) internal brand management has evolved as a stream of research that focuses on internal stakeholders and their role in branding. As employees and their behavior is considered an essential issue for organizations and their brand, an internally focused brand management is paramount to support employees to identify with the brand, be committed to it, and behave accordingly (Piehler et al., 2016; King and Grace, 2012; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Blurring brand-influencing boundaries means that all employees within the organization, at all functions and levels, must be the focus of attention; internal brand management requires an organization-wide effort (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016).

Internal brand management is generally argued as necessary to ensure a strong and positive brand for the organization (Foster et al., 2010). Several benefits are related to the internal and external perspective. Internal benefits include unifying employees in a common purpose, being a catalyst for change, supporting professionalism (Hankinson, 2004), influencing service employees' brand commitment and brand-related behavior, job satisfaction, and hence, indirectly enhance employee intention to remain with the organization (du Preez et al. 2017; du Preez et al. 2015). From an external perspective, internal brand management has a positive influence on employee attitudes and behaviors in the delivery of the brand promise (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky and Wilson, 2009). It also has benefits with regards to customers, as brand-related behavior at the organizational level has a positive effect on customer satisfaction (Chang et al., 2012). Furthermore, a brand orientation within an organization has a positive influence on market and economic performance (Baumgarth, 2010). Organizations must therefore, in order to reap its benefits, effectively manage the internal brand. If they do not, it will have negative consequences for the organization and its brand. Indeed, it has been argued that an ill-managed and ineffective internal brand management poses the risk of causing tensions for internal stakeholders, which can undermine the entire brand-management process (Dean et al., 2016).

However, while employee brand commitment and behavior is important, internal brand management, which consists of many interrelated aspects, is a rather complex issue. Even well planned and executed internal brand management campaigns can be met with muted responses (Gapp and Merrilees, 2006). This highlights the necessity of considering four core components of the internal brand; functional, symbolic, behavioral, and experiential, which all need to be taken into account to support employee brand commitment (Hankinson, 2004). These four components suggest that employee perception of the brand is dependent on what the organization does, what it stands for, management behavior, and the working environment within the organization (Hankinson, 2004). This requires organizations to adopt an all-encompassing approach to internal brand management, which is colored by factors that characterize successful brands. These factors include an approach to branding that is holistic, consistent, integrated, and emphasizes a level of excellence and personalization of the customer service, a norm-challenging ethos, a responsiveness to change, high brand literacy, and alignment between the brand and the culture of the organization (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006). Internal brand management efforts also need to make the brand alive for employees, create an emotional connection to the company that extends beyond a single employee experience, and introduce and reinforce brand messages that seizes employee attention while it is integrated into the organization (Mitchell, 2002). As such, it has been posited that the initiation of an internal brand-building process consists of three stages: brand audit, brand identity, and brand position statements (Wallström et al., 2008). Thus, organizations must carefully analyze the core of the brand and its messages before communicating and integrating it to the organization. This is important, as, without such a process, it is difficult to strategically manage the brand, because the current brand meaning and identity must carry through into brand statements and positioning, as defined by the organization. This creates a clear foundation on which to support a desired brand meaning. However, organizations may still find it difficult to translate the brand to all internal stakeholders (Gapp and Merrilees, 2006). While these initial processes of brand management are not the focus of this dissertation, it is important that organizations assess and define the brand before it is communicated to employees. This should facilitate a smoother implementation of the branding efforts and support the desired internal brand management outcomes.

2.2.1 Outcomes of internal brand management

As stated earlier, internal brand management aims to support employee values and behaviors that are aligned with the brand values (Harris and de Chernatony 2001). Such alignments are dependent on cognitive, affective, and behavioral

outcomes. Cognitive outcomes are generally referred to as brand understanding (Piehler, 2018; Piehler et al., 2016; Xiong et al., 2013) or brand knowledge (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014; Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010; Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Therefore, these outcomes describe "employees' comprehension of brand-related information" (Piehler et al., 2016, p. 1580). Employees need to understand the brand, what it stands for (Piehler et al., 2016; King and So, 2015; King and Grace, 2012), and what is expected of them in the form of brand-supportive behavior (King 2010).

The affective outcomes of internal brand management are often represented by brand commitment (Piehler et al., 2016; Xiong et al., 2013; Burmann et al., 2009), defined as "the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals" (Burmann and Zeplin 2005, p. 284). While brand commitment can be identified as the main construct of affective outcomes of internal brand management, studies identify other affective outcomes, such as brand identification (Piehler et al., 2016; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005), in other words, "employees' feeling of belonging to the brand" (Piehler et al,. 2016, p. 1579), which also support employee brand-aligned behavior. Furthermore, a new construct, brand pride, has recently emerged as an affective outcome of internal brand management (Helm et al., 2016). Brand pride can be defined as "the pleasure taken in being associated with the (corporate) brand" (Helm et al., 2016, 62). Brand identification and brand pride, however, are arguably antecedents to employee brand commitment, rather than the main affective outcomes. Affective outcomes, such as commitment, identification, and pride are thus important for employees to be able to sincerely carry the brand in their behavior.

Research shows that brand knowledge and brand commitment are antecedents to desired brand-related employee behavior (Piehler et al., 2016; Xiong et al., 2013). Often expressed as brand citizenship behavior (Bravo et al., 2017; Helm et al., 2016; Piehler et al., 2016; Burmann et al., 2009), it describes all employee behaviors that enhance the brand identity and thereby strengthen the brand (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Thus, the final outcome of internal brand management is to support employees to become what is commonly referred to as 'brand champions' (Yakimova et al., 2017; Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014) or 'brand ambassadors' (Schmidt and Baumgarth, 2018; Xiong et al., 2013).

While the cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes are all central to internal brand management, this dissertation mainly focuses on affective outcomes of internal brand management in the form of employee brand commitment. While

there are various studies on employee brand commitment and its antecedents in the private sector (Xiong et al., 2013; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010; Burmann et al., 2009), research providing insights into employee brand commitment in the public sector is scarce. However, an emotional connection between the employees and the brand is of integral importance in internal brand management, and we therefore need to understand how it can be achieved in the public sector. Thus, this dissertation aims to provide insights into affective outcomes of internal brand management in the public sector, notably employee brand commitment.

2.2.2 Components of internal brand management

As stated earlier, internal brand management is a complex, holistic endeavor, which is influenced by many interrelated components. Previous research addressed a variety of components. For example, Burmann et al. (2009) studied the role of HR activities, brand communication, and brand leadership. Furthermore, de Chernatony et al. (2006) presented findings related to internal and external communications, HR activities, and senior management while Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) focused on social interactions. The review of extant literature reveals central components. These include identity and values (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003), internal communication and marketing (Baker et al., 2014; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009; Thomson et al., 1999), the role of HR (King and So, 2015; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009; Aurand et al., 2005), leadership (Morhart et al., 2009; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005, 2006) and social interactions (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013), internal and external brand links (Celsi and Gilly, 2010; Roper and Davies, 2010), internal brand communities (Devasagayam et al., 2010), and internal structures and operations (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). These components are discussed in the upcoming text to support our understanding of how they influence affective outcomes of internal brand management. Therefore, part of this literature has direct implications for the discussion on the empirical findings of this dissertation.

2.2.2.1 Identity and values

Using the term 'brand ideologies', Saleem and Iglesias (2016) describe the foundation of internal brand management, that of the organizational mission, vision, goals, norms, and shared values. Successful internal brand management is characterized by consistent and coherent identity structures, such as culture, design, communication, and behavior (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). As "institutionalised rules for behaviour" (Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006, p.

768), culture helps guide behavior within an organization (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005) and provides a clear link between culture and branding (McCoy and Venter, 2016). The culture originates from the values, beliefs, and assumptions that employees have of the organization and its brand (Balmer and Greyser, 2002). Because it emerges from social interaction it can only be influenced, not controlled (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Successful brands therefore support congruency between the culture and the brand values to ensure consistency in how the brand is presented (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006).

De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003, p. 1095) argue for "ruthless clarity" in regard to positioning and the genuine values of the organization. Brand success is more likely when all internal stakeholders believe in the brand values. This is because shared values increases the possibility of clearer brand understanding, commitment, loyalty, and consistency when the brand is communicated to external stakeholders through various employee interactions (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). Organizations must therefore pursue internal brand building activities to align the values of the brand and the employees (Matanda and Ndubisi, 2013). However, it should be noted that one challenge for internal brand management is the common misalignment between employee and company values (Burmann et al., 2009; Macaverty et al., 2007).

Thus, identification and values, being the core of the brand, is an essential consideration in internal brand management. Within the public sector, however, it becomes especially interesting as many employees are attracted to the public sector as a result of the values and purpose related to the sector (Perry and Hondeghem 2008). This can become an asset for public sector organizations (Wright and Pandey, 2011) in relation to the employees. Furthermore, employees in the public sector tend to show greater value alignment with the organization (Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Perry and Wise 1990). Public sector organizations must therefore, when managing their internal brand, consider how their identity and values influence affective outcomes of internal brand management.

2.2.2.2 Internal communication and marketing

As a central contributor to successful internal brand management (du Preez et al. 2015; Punjaisri and Wilson 2007), internal communication has been the subject of several studies offering insights into how organizations should manage their internal communication and marketing (Baker et al., 2014; Chong, 2007; de Chernatony et al., 2006). As a means to provide internal stakeholders with the information and knowledge they need to be able to commit and adhere to the brand in their behavior (King, 2010; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009), it

has important implications. In fact, internal communication may be central to supporting emotional bonds between the employee and organization (Thomson et al., 1999) where brand-related information, combined with internal organizational information, supports a strong allegiance (King and Grace 2008). Similarly, brand-oriented communication has been shown to have a significant influence on employee brand commitment, even more so than empowerment and the prospect of promotion (Burmann and König, 2011).

Organizations need to support employee brand knowledge through regular internal communication of the organizational brand values and desired image (du Preez et al. 2017). Organizational message systems, such as internal newsletters, story-telling, videos, brand-books, blogs, and brand ambassadors are suitable tools for such communication (du Preez et al. 2017). However, other studies suggest that not all of these communications are actually read and understood by employees at lower levels of the organization (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013). Internal brand communication is a complex issue, and previous studies suggest that challenges exist in the mode of communication (Whisman, 2009), employee-firm value alignment, and authenticity of the brand message (Baker et al., 2014).

While often described as a top-down activity, two-way communication is needed with a vertical flow within the organization (Vallaster and Lindgreen 2013). This may be accomplished by engaging stakeholders in the brand development through dialogue (Whisman, 2009) and informal communication and interaction (Vallaster and Lindgreen 2013). Such an approach appears to encourage employee responsibility and make them more receptive to brand-related information (Vallaster and Lindgreen 2013). Furthermore, the values and authenticity of brand messages are central in internal communication, as effective communication requires employees to perceive the brand to be consistent with their own values (Baker et al., 2014). It also needs to be perceived as authentic. Thus, the communication approach needs to consider the meaningfulness and relevance of the message, as well as quantity and unanimity, in other words, the approach must demonstrate that the organization is committed to and consistent in their messages (Baker et al., 2014). Thus, branding can be considered the summation of the organizations' benefits. Therefore, the substance of the brand needs to be managed and then communicated to stakeholders in an effective and simplified way to ensure that the brand promise is fulfilled (Gapp and Merrilees, 2006).

2.2.2.3 Human resources

To ensure consistency in internal brand communication, HR has a central role (King and So, 2015; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005) in influencing employee brand commitment and brand-related behavior (Chiang et al., 2018). Through training and support, HR can strengthen the brand-message sent to new and existing employees (King and So, 2015; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009; Chong, 2007). Furthermore, a brand-centered human resource management can support greater congruence between employee values and brand values (Chiang et al., 2018). The brand should therefore be integrated into HR functions, such as recruitment, training and development, compensation, and performance systems, hence, HR and marketing managers should work together to develop internal brand management plans (du Preez et al. 2017). Coordination between HR and internal communications is generally regarded as essential for successful internal brand management (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky and Wilson, 2009; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007; Aurand et al., 2005). Such coordination has a significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors when delivering the brand promise (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky and Wilson, 2009).

Another central role for HR management is to create a fruitful organizational environment for successful internal brand management. Not only is employee brand commitment strongly linked to employee perceptions of how customers perceive the brand, but it is also strongly linked to employee experience with the brand (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009). Thus, work environment issues influence the effectiveness of the internal brand management (Punjaisri and Wilson 2011, 2007). The employee experience of the brand is one of the most central means to develop employee brand commitment (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009). Factors such as job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards, job characteristics, dual-way communication, leadership, satisfaction with promotion, trust in the supervisors, and employee perception of the values of the organization are all predictors of such commitment (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009). A relational aspect is therefore key to successful brand management (King and Grace 2010). Using the term relationship orientation, King and Grace (2012) show that 'soft tools' factors, such as trust, respect, open communication, and consideration, support employee brand commitment. However, employees' personal characteristics also play a role; supporting brand citizenship behavior among employees is a matter of employee receptiveness (King and Grace 2012), and factors such as employees' age, education, and length of service, which influence internal brand management effectiveness (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007).

It is therefore not surprising that a development regarding the role of HR in internal brand management is the close relationship between internal brand management and recruitment. Many scholars suggest that organizations need to choose people who have similar values as the organization and its brand (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; de Chernatony et al., 2003), and bring the right attitudes (King and Grace 2012). However, in practice, recruiting people whose values fit with the organization may not be as straightforward as it sounds (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007).

2.2.2.4 Leadership and social interactions

Leadership is an important component in internal brand management (Burmann et al., 2009; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006), as it can support increased employee identification and internalization of brand values (Morhart et al., 2009; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). Good leadership also decreases turnover intentions and increases brand-related behavior among employees (Morhart et al., 2009).

All levels of management have a role to play in internal brand management, both top and middle management (McCoy and Venter, 2016; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009). While top management commitment to the brand, both in mind and behavior, has been shown to be critical (McCoy and Venter, 2016; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013), organizations need to consider employee relationships with their closest managers and leadership figures (Mosley, 2007). Furthermore, it needs to be recognized that shared values within the organization are more likely when leaders' behaviors are based on genuine conviction rather than them 'playing the part' (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003).

Successful leaders act as an integrating force of the brand. They support coherency and consistency through integrating corporate identity structures, and they act as mediators between the employee and the branding structures of the organization, in other words, a 'catalyst' for the brand (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). A key part to the leadership aspect of internal brand management is that of social interaction, which may support employee brand commitment and shared brand beliefs (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013). Informal management and empowerment of employees have a great impact on the consistency of brand-behavior among employees, much greater than that of formal management instruments (Henkel et al., 2007). Therefore, in order to attain successful internal brand management and employee brand commitment, one must define a clear brand vision and support social interaction, both verbal

and non-verbal, such as showing trust in employees and commitment to the brand and its values (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005). Research suggests that transformational leadership, such as, motivating employees through 'idealized influence', in other words, setting a vision and high standards to live by, encouraging innovation and creativity, and functioning as a coach to support employees in their development is essential (Bass, 1999). It can support successful implementation of internal brand management, as it provides consideration for employees and facilitates intellectual stimulation (Sujchaphong et al., 2015). Consideration for employees should not be underestimated, as research shows that considerate leadership, in other words, "the degree to which a leader shows concern and respect for followers, looks out for their welfare and expresses appreciation and support" (Judge et al. 2004, p 36) influences employees' affective commitment to the organization (Wallace et al., 2013).

However, it should be noted that while leadership issues are essential, success is not solely dependent on management-controllable social interaction factors. Rather, recent studies within the stream of brand co-creation show that employee brand meaning evolves with brand-related interactions and experiences with other stakeholders in close proximity, whether management, employees, or external (Dean et al., 2016). Similar findings have been offered by Iglesias and Bonet (2012) and they suggest that learning about the brand occurs in what they call reinterpretation loops. Thus, employees' continuous experiences with the brand results in continuous learning about the brand. In the case of perceived discrepancies between brand information and employee experiences, the experiences take preference in employee interpretation (Dean et al., 2016). Therefore, "employees perceive brand meaning co-created through social interactions as the real brand identity, which may not necessarily be the same as the marketing communications strategy" (Dean et al. 2016, p. 3046).

2.2.2.5 Internal and external brand links

While the nature of internal brand management focuses on internal stakeholders, it may also have an external component. It has been shown that external branding efforts may be used to support an emotional relationship and pride among employees (Celsi and Gilly, 2010) and that external communication is a means to influence employee perceptions of the brand and its values (de Chernatony et al., 2006). Furthermore, a recent study showed that external communication congruence, in other words, communication that is in line with the authentic values, internal communication, and product and service offering of the organization, has a positive effect on cognitive, affective, and behavioral internal brand management outcomes, with the strongest influence on brand

understanding (Piehler, Schade and Burmann, 2018). External communication may thus play a role in internal brand management. However, naturally, the message needs to be considered as ads that are perceived as effective and congruent with employee values earn a favorable employee response in the form of increased pride and customer focus (Celsi and Gilly, 2010). Nevertheless, using external branding efforts in the form of ads internally in the organization may be suitable to support an emotional employee connection. This connection may help build employee identification, value congruence, pride, and performance (Celsi and Gilly, 2010).

Surprisingly, while some alignment between internal and external brand management is needed (Roper and Davies, 2010; Hankinson, 2004; Mitchell, 2002), it has also been argued that complete coherency is not a critical factor between the external and internal brand perceptions (Roper and Davies, 2010). Employees who show greater identification with the organization and its brand may actually be more willing to view ads as being value-congruent (Celsi and Gilly, 2010). Indeed, "when employees already believe that the organization shares their values, they evaluate ads through that lens" (Celsi and Gilly 2010, p. 527).

2.2.2.6 Internal brand communities

Brand communities, in other words, "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, p. 412) are generally referred to as external stakeholder audiences. However, research suggests that internal brand communities may be a suitable means and strategy for successful brand management related to internal stakeholders (Devasagayam et al., 2010) and a valuable asset for internal brand management efforts (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). Although limited research has been conducted (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016), it has been found that these communities contribute in a number of ways; they support employee identification with brand communications, improve employee support for strategic branding initiatives, and increase satisfaction with external stakeholder interactions. (Devasagayam et al., 2010).

2.2.2.7 Internal structures and operations

Some scholars within the field of internal brand management suggest the need for suitable internal structures to support effective implementation (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). It is also suggested that both tactical and operational issues must be considered, which entails careful

orchestration and coordination of internal brand efforts (McCoy and Venter, 2016).

The corporate structures, in other words, the rules and resources that employees' use in their work (Giddens, 1979), provide employees with resources and know-how of the brand and its values. These structures include reward systems, infrastructure and factors such as budgeting, control, and information (Burmann et al., 2009). While a suitable system is necessary, it does not guarantee successful internal brand management (de Chernatony et al., 2003). All components of internal brand management must align, which sends a coherent and consistent message to the employees (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005), and organizations must incorporate the brand into the daily lives of employees (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005).

Internal structures, systems and operations, however, do have a great impact on internal brand management efforts. Scholars such as Gapp and Merrilees (2006) argue for a greater interdisciplinary approach wherein branding can be integrated with quality and organizational development to achieve excellence within the organization, which increases the chances of successful internally focused branding efforts. This argument is mirrored in adjacent brand fields. For example, a study by Gyrd-Jones et al (2013) on brand orientation and internal silos demonstrated that structural factors such as performance objectives and different priorities between departments can hinder creating a consistent brand within the organization. Mosley (2007), using the term employer brand management, argues that managing the employee experience requires an approach in which all employee touch-points should be considered and the 'everyday experience' of employees should be taken into account. This includes orientation, communication, shared services, performance and development, measurement, reward, and recognition (Mosley, 2007). Studying control mechanisms and goal-orientation among front-line employees, various formal and informal control mechanisms within the organizations can help managers influence employee behaviors (Rodrigues et al., 2015). Furthermore, within corporate brand building, Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011, p. 200) argue for a "practice of calibrating" to align organizational operations with the brand promise through various activities related to monitoring and assessing performance. Examples of such mechanisms for monitoring and controlling its operational alignment include steering groups, audits, self-assessments and surveys (McCoy and Venter, 2016). As these studies suggest, it may be imperative to consider the internal structure, systems, and operations when adopting an integrative approach to internal brand management.

2.3 Public sector branding and internal brand management

Within Western society values such as freedom of speech, democracy, transparency, and political responsiveness are generally taken for granted (Van der Wal, 2016); we expect our institutions to live up to the societal values we hold dear. As such, the purpose, and arguably the core ambition, of public sector organizations is to ensure a benefit to society (Wæraas, 2008), which is a political aim rather than financial one (Lovelock and Weinberg, 1990). While often criticized, the purpose of a traditional bureaucracy is to safeguard the efficiency, democracy, and equality of the system in which formal, impersonal obligations and responsibilities rather than individual moral choices are at the core (du Gay, 2008; Weber, 1978), characterized by impartiality and fairness (Hoggett, 2006). This aims to ensure a fair and impartial system for its citizens, being of service to society and its multiple stakeholder groups.

However, within the public sector, the ethical foundation of organizations has been subject to a shift, and it has moved from a traditional bureaucracy to an allegedly more service-oriented, or responsive, public sector (du Gay, 2008). Therefore, during the last decades the public sector organizations have, arguably, been decreasingly responsible for upholding the core values and ethics of the public sector (Kallinikos, 2006), transferred to a greater focus on NPM principles. In an attempt to improve the largely negative attitudes toward a traditional bureaucracy (Kallinikos, 2006), organizations moved toward a market and privatization ideal and enterprising mode, with a greater focus on performance, goals (du Gay, 2008), and cost minimization (Kallinikos, 2006). While it was borrowed from the private sector to ensure efficiency and simplification of a bureaucratic administration, it created certain challenges in the form of even more cumbersome procedures, rules, and regulations (Kallinikos, 2006), and it undermined the core ethics and values of a traditional public sector (du Gay, 2004). Private companies operate in an open market for the purpose of profit, and they survive as long as they have a market for their products or services, regardless of whether they provide value for society (e.g. cigarettes). In contrast, public sector legitimacy and survival are directly connected to the societal values they provide (Hoggett, 2006). Governing is therefore not solely about securing efficiency and measurement, but rather about balancing a variety of interests and values, securing the values of security, equality, pluralism, democracy, and health (Kallinikos, 2006). Thus, in the past decades, public sector organizations have been subject to changes in the form of NPM. With increased accountability, resource allocation has become closely related to performance and goals (du Gay, 2004; Hood, 1991). Furthermore, many of these organizations are subject to constant questioning and scrutiny regarding to their existence (Gromark and

Melin, 2013), sometimes meeting similar challenges to those of organizations within the private sector (Hytti et al., 2015; Whelan et al., 2010). While there has been a tendency in the last few years to move away from NPM principles (Lindsay et al., 2014), they still permeate the sector.

With pressure to justify their existence, branding becomes an option to turn to (Dahlqvist and Melin, 2010), as it is intended to create recognition and differentiation for the organization (Aaker, 1991). The shift toward branding is evident in many Swedish public sector organizations, which demonstrate clear indications of organizational branding through the development of a set of values, a mission statement, and style guides (e.g. the Swedish Police, many municipalities and county councils). These efforts can help make organizations more visible, relevant, and valuable (Gromark and Melin, 2013), and provide legitimacy and trust (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015; Gromark and Melin, 2013).

Legitimacy and citizen trust are arguably central notions for public sector organizations and the state-funded system as a whole (Wæraas and Byrkjeflot, 2012; Walsh, 1994). However, in the last 10 years, many areas within the sector have seen a decline in citizen perceptions of the organization. While the Swedish Tax Agency generally enjoys positive perceptions, with 58% of the population satisfied with their work, areas such as pre- and elementary school, elderly care, and healthcare are subject to more negative perceptions (Statskontoret, 2018). These organizations may view branding as an attractive means to cultivate a more positive perception among external stakeholders. Consequently, the brand and values that these organizations develop and communicate must then be reinforced through interaction with stakeholders, thereby making the employees and internal brand management a key consideration.

Research shows that various branding activities can be valuable for public sector organizations. Three main benefits of branding have been identified: 1) the development of central organizational assets, such as supporting trust, credibility, and legitimacy (Karens et al., 2016; Gromark and Melin, 2013; Hood and Henderson, 2005), 2) strengthening the relationship with internal stakeholders (Whisman, 2009; Hood and Henderson, 2005), and 3) establishing relationships with external stakeholders (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin, 2015; Apaydin, 2011; Voeth and Herbst, 2008; Hood and Henderson, 2005).

Research also suggests similarities between branding in the private and public sectors, which includes the need for a clear vision (Chapleo, 2010, 2015c) and consideration of the application of branding, such as defining brand objectives, the design of the brand name and visual identity, and monitoring the

development of the brand (Rowley, 1997). There are also similarities in internal brand management, such as ensuring strong leadership (Chapleo, 2015b; Harris and Lock, 2001), internal support (Chapleo, 2010), and a strong identity (Schneider, 2004).

While similarities certainly exist, there are also indications that branding in the public sector may be somewhat different from that in the private sector. Indeed, studies indicate that branding theories and models that originate in the private sector are not always well suited to the public sector (Chapleo, 2010, 2015c; Hytti et al., 2015; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009; Temple, 2006). Contextual differences between the two sectors mean that branding efforts need to be adjusted and adopted to suit the nature of the public sector. Thus, while branding may initially appear somewhat similar within the public and private sectors, not least in regards of employee behavior being crucial to a strong and positive brand, contextual differences exist that may affect branding principles, implementation and outcomes. For example, it is well established that differentiation and uniqueness are at the core of branding. However, while some studies indicate certain opportunities for differentiation in public sector branding, notably within the higher education setting (Rutter et al., 2016; Chapleo, 2015a; Opoku et al., 2006), others suggest that differentiation may be difficult to achieve (Chapleo, 2004, 2007). Moreover, differentiation and uniqueness may not be regarded as relevant brand objectives within certain public sector organizations (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015).

Some research indicates that branding in the public sector may be more complex compared to that in the private sector (Suomi et al., 2013; Wæraas, 2008). For example, with regard to identity, the expectation to meet multiple, inconsistent, and competing demands and needs from various stakeholders may lead to multiple identities and values, which is challenging from a brand perspective, which proposes consistency (Wæraas, 2008). The core issue relates to the wide variety of roles and responsibilities that many public sector organizations are subject to (Wæraas, 2008), for example, municipalities that are responsible for schools, elder care, libraries, emergency services, etc., and tax authorities need to be both regulatory and service oriented. Such difficulties are echoed in other studies, for example, the difficulty of ensuring a coherent culture (Chapleo, 2015c) and defining its essential characteristics (Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009). Thus, fragmentation and inconsistencies may be an innate characteristic of the public sector, which naturally influences branding efforts. Public sector branding may also be subject to challenges connected to relationships with other internally related organizations, for example, the university brand vs. individual university departments and schools that may have strong brands (Sujchaphong et al., 2015).

Furthermore, individual library organizations may have to accommodate the identity and branding consideration of aligned organizations, for example, the local authority, higher education institution, or professional body of which they are a part (Rowley, 1997).

While many of public sector organizations apply branding that is very similar to that of private companies (Hudson, 2009; Caldwell and Coshall, 2002), there is a need for greater understanding and clarity on how the context influences the implementation of branding and internal brand management within the public sector. We currently know very little about how branding should be pursued in the public sector, especially from an internal brand management perspective. Extant research provides an inconclusive picture, which does little to ensure that public sector branding, as currently implemented, does not create problems for, or damage, the very brand that organizations are attempting to build. Such problems may, as suggested earlier, risk undermining the sector as a whole.

3 The context

This chapter presents the context of the research. It therefore describes the specific setting of the organizations in focus in this dissertation: its definition, responsibilities and some central characteristics.

3.1 Classification of public sector organizations

The Swedish public sector consists of a heterogeneous group of organizations, which have various roles, functions, and organizational forms (Statskontoret, 2014). The Swedish Agency for Public Management divides the sector into 10 areas, based on the international classification system developed by OECD, Classification of Functions of Government (COFOG): general public management; defense; social protection and justice; trade and industry; environmental protection; housing and community development; healthcare; leisure, culture and religion; education; and social care (Statskontoret, 2018). These areas describe the variety of services and responsibilities that national and local governments secure for their residents.

From an academic perspective, it is a challenge to classify organizations within the public sector, especially as the field becomes more complex (Wettenhall, 2003). Even in the 1950s, classification was not clear cut, as shown in the Chester classification (1951). It divides the public sector into three main groups: 1) the departments related to central government, 2) local authorities that provide services that are decentralized from central government, and 3) various organizations with certain autonomy that provide services that are decentralized from central government, but where classification is based on function rather than geographical area or territory (Wettenhall, 2003). This third category is also referred to as 'the rest'.

The confusion within public sector classification did not ease with New Public Management (NPM) reforms sweeping the Western world in the last few decades. Rather, the variation within these third-group categories has continued. There are thus various options how to decide which organizations to include, as issues related to limits and overlapping of sectors makes this difficult (Wettenhall, 2003). Additionally, in order to enhance the effectiveness of governance, public-private partnerships have provided solutions for some of the problems that face society today (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2011). Therefore, while the limits and distinction of public sector organizations have never been

completely clear, the increasing complexity of society and public sector governance compounds the challenges of the past.

The long academic history of attempts to define and classify organizations has resulted in a fragmented view of the differences between the private and public sectors and how they can be defined. Some classifications are based on public service and a central focus of benefit to society. Services can thus be performed by either public or private organizations, as well as with various levels of commercial business focus (Laing, 2003). Others suggest that "organizations are not wholly 'public' or 'private', but more or less public or private" (Bozeman, 2004, p.5). Within such a classification, its basis lies within the level of political (how much the organization is subject to the influence of markets or politics) and economic (whether the organization is funded through a commercial market or relies on public funding) authority (Bozeman, 2004).

While many classifications exist, one useful foundation is based on the work of Wamsley and Zald (1973), adapted by Rainey (2009), which divides organizations according to whether they are subject to public or private financing and ownership, as seen in table 1. While the division may not be incontrovertible, as some organizations can be mostly based on public resources and have some private funding, such as public kindergartens and healthcare agencies, it is a classification that offers a relatively clear definition.

Table 1. Classification of public and private organizations; an ownership and financing perspective

	Public ownership	Private ownership
Publically financed (taxes, etc.)	Universities County councils The police authority	Private healthcare providers such as Capio and Aleris
Privately financed (sales, and private donations etc.)	Publically owned corporations, such as Vattenfall	Private companies such as IKEA, H&M, and Ericsson

Source: Adapted from Rainey (2009), based on Wamsley and Zald (1973)

However, a similar, yet more complex classification, illustrated in table 2, is offered by Perry and Rainey (1988) who, after reviewing a large number of public-private classifications, developed a new classification that added one dimension to the financing and ownership factors, mode of social control. This dimension is influential as organizations that operate in an economic market or polyarchy are subject to different types of steering and control, as expressed on a

complex continuum of various control structures and processes. Such steering is characterized by the following: 1) rules for establishment and termination, 2) mission and goals, 3) goods and services, 4) geographical sphere of operations, 5) clients, 6) major technologies and operating procedures (including procurement, top management appointment, and financial systems), and 7) charges or prices for the outputs and levels of those charges (Perry and Rainey 1988). This means that public organizations that operate within a polyarchy are subject to greater influence, control, and steering from governments and organizations with regard to these factors. In comparison, organizations that act in an economic market have greater autonomy as the external control is mainly in the form of general laws and guidelines, and to meet customer and supplier needs and expectations.

Table 2. Classification of public and private organizations: an ownership, funding, and mode of social control perspective

	Ownership	Funding	Mode of Social Control	Examples
Bureau	Public	Public	Polyarchy	Region Stockholm
Government Corporation	Public	Private	Polyarchy	Systembolaget
Government Sponsored Enterprise	Private	Public	Polyarchy	Capio
Regulated Enterprise	Private	Private	Polyarchy	Kronans apotek
Governmental Enterprise	Public	Public	Market	Energi och klimatrådgivningen
State-Owned Enterprise	Public	Private	Market	Vattenfall
Government Contractor	Private	Public	Market	NCC
Private Enterprise	Private	Private	Market	IKEA

Source: Adapted from Perry and Rainey (1988)

Previous research demonstrates that the definition of public and private sector is relatively unclear and that the boundaries between what is public and private are relatively fluid. However, the sectors are arguably differentiated according to strategic and economic conditions, and the degree of publicness can be seen on a continuum, from very low public involvement, in other words, high level of autonomy, to very high public involvement and steering, with lesser autonomy

as a result. For the purpose of this dissertation, of specific interest are the publically owned and funded organizations that are under the influence of government steering and control, in other words, those organizations defined as bureaus (Perry and Rainey 1988). These organizations arguably represent what can be called a "traditional" public sector organization in that they are subject to public ownership, tax-revenue as the main funding, and limited autonomy from government oversight. Thus, the level of social control, in other words, the rules, directives, oversight, and interventions from government (Perry and Rainey, 1988) create certain characteristics and similarities within this group of organizations. This may present similar conditions related to branding. As such, by focusing on organizations within the 'bureau' definition, the research is set in a county council, particularly within the healthcare responsibility of the organization.

3.2 The Swedish county councils

Sweden is divided into 20 county councils, or regions, as they are generally referred to since the beginning of 2019 (Lagercrantz, 2019). The official concept of county councils will be phased out in the next few years, especially from a legal perspective (SKL, 2018a). The shift from county councils to regions has entailed broader responsibilities for the organizations, transferring power from the national to the regional level (Lagercrantz, 2019). Hereinafter, the concept of county council is used in this dissertation, as all data collection was conducted before 2019.

The Swedish county councils are politically governed organizations responsible for regional issues. The political representatives are appointed in general regional elections. As a result, the political composition varies across the country, and different ideologies permeate strategies and decisions. For example, the Stockholm region is governed by a coalition government consisting of Moderaterna, Centerpartiet, Kristdemokraterna, and Liberalerna, along with Miljöpartiet, in other words, center-right parties and the green party in collaboration (Larsson and Eckerskog, 2018). In the region Gävleborg, the coalition consists of Vänsterpartiet, Socialdemokraterna, Miljöpartiet, and Centerpartiet, in other words, center-left parties, including the green party (Dahlberg, 2018). The political power may also shift with each election, as was the case for 13 county councils in the 2018 general election (SKL, 2019a).

The county councils are funded by government grants, regional taxes, and fees (Regeringskansliet, 2014). Its primary responsibility is healthcare, which represents approximately 80% of the spending (Regeringskansliet, 2014). Other

obligatory responsibilities include dental care for residents under 20 years of age (SKL, 2019b) and public transportation, a responsibility that is shared with the municipalities (Regeringskansliet, 2019). Voluntary tasks include culture, education, and tourism (Regeringskansliet, 2019). With the recent shift into regions, the county councils are now also responsible for regional development (SKL, 2018a).

3.3 The healthcare sector

This dissertation focuses on the healthcare organization of the county council, as healthcare is the primary responsibility of the county council organizations.

The Swedish healthcare sector is one of 10 public sector areas as defined by the Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret, 2018). It is divided into three administrative levels: national, regional, and local levels (Kliniska Studier Sverige, 2019). The main responsibility for Swedish healthcare remains at regional level, and it is managed by the county councils (SKL, 2019b). They are responsible for primary, specialist, and in-patient care. The national administrative level is responsible for securing the overarching political healthcare agenda and establishing laws, and national principles and guidelines (Kliniska Studier Sverige, 2019). The municipalities, which represent the local administrative level, are responsible for certain healthcare services, for example, home care and school healthcare services (Kliniska Studier Sverige, 2019).

Swedish healthcare is predominantly tax-funded, with the exception of some minor fees. As it is also under a polyarchic mode of control and is publically owned, the organizations in charge of healthcare, in other words, the county councils, fall under the 'bureau' classification (Perry and Rainey 1988). However, the Swedish healthcare system also consists of 'government sponsored enterprises' (Perry and Rainey 1988) in which private companies offer healthcare services even though they are publically funded and subject to government steering and control. This is a result of a new law, 'Lagen om Valfrihetssystem' (LOV), which was implemented in 2009 and allows patients to choose their preferred practitioner. Municipalities are not compelled to implement this system, except for primary care services (Riksdagen 2019). These 'government sponsored enterprises' remain under the authority of the county councils, subject to the relevant laws and regulations. Furthermore, they are also publically funded and are not allowed to charge additional fees other those regulated (Ekonomifakta, 2019). The Swedish county councils procured approximately 23% of the healthcare services from organizations other than the county councils, and 10% of services were sourced by private companies (Ekonomifakta, 2019). There

are also some entirely private actors within the Swedish healthcare sector, 'regulated enterprises', that are fully privately funded.

From an academic perspective, healthcare is a highly institutionalized and complex field (Currie and Guah, 2007). Organizations within the field are influenced by "rules, norms, and beliefs that describe reality for the organization, explaining what is and is not, what can be acted upon and what cannot" (Hoffman 1999, p. 351). Therefore, the behaviors of organizations and their members are not merely a result of the specific characteristics or motives of that individual organization or member, but are mainly ascribed to the context or "higher-order factors" (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006, p. 195). Some key players within healthcare help to establish the rules, norms, procedures, and practice within the publically governed healthcare organizations: 1) the purchasers, including patient and general practitioners, 2) the intermediaries in form of, for example, commercial insurance companies and additional healthcare providers, 3) governing bodies, and 4) patient organizations and groups (Currie and Guah, 2007). These players assert influence on the organizations with regard to experiences and behaviors. As such, they are key stakeholders that guide the organizations within the organizational field toward homogenization.

The institutional pressures on organizations within an organizational field, for example, healthcare, occur through coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Coercive isomorphic pressures can include, for example, changes in financial incentives and payment systems for healthcare organizations to be financially reimbursed, or new regulatory programs (Yang et al., 2007). NPM-principles can be defined as one of the coercive pressures that healthcare organizations and other public sector organizations have been subject to in the last few decades. These pressures have moved organizations toward a greater focus on, for example, efficiency and performance, and they influence behaviors within the organizations in the sector.

Normative isomorphic pressures can, for example, materialize through new professional groups that enter the field with their specific expectations, norms, and values (Yang et al., 2007). In Swedish healthcare, these new professional groups include private healthcare owners and corporations. These groups have arguably influenced the field, as commercial interests have increasingly emerged that differ from the traditional interest of public institutions. Normative pressures can also originate from society at large in the form of a changing place of medicine, changes in doctor-patient relationships (Yang et al., 2007), as well as increased consumerism within the public sector. Enhanced customer orientation is a central element of NPM (Diefenbach, 2009). Thus, greater expectations from

residents may result, which is evidenced by the demand for immediate responses, such as those offered by online doctors and psychologists. Changes in the relationship between residents and the healthcare institutions may therefore occur.

Mimetic isomorphic pressures can include pressures to imitate what is perceived as a successful healthcare organization, including the organizational adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM) (Yang et al., 2007) and other central systems, processes, and tools. These pressures force actors to conform to institutional standards (Yang et al., 2007). Therefore, Swedish healthcare organizations that are deemed successful may influence the behavior of other healthcare organizations. Furthermore, the interest to adopt systems that are perceived as successful may be enhanced.

From a branding perspective, these institutional pressures may have influenced the increasing use of branding within the public sector. Moreover, these pressures may also affect the implementation of branding. For example, legitimacy is vital for public sector organizations (Wæraas and Byrkjeflot, 2012; Walsh, 1994), not least healthcare organizations. Furthermore, in the last decade, many areas within the Swedish public sector have witnessed declining citizen perceptions of the organization, including healthcare, which tends to be subject to negative perceptions (Statskontoret, 2018). Branding might enable organizations to improve citizen perceptions of the organization. Indeed, legitimacy is a leading benefit of branding in the public sector (Gromark and Melin, 2013). However, there are also indications that within the Scandinavian part of the world the egalitarian values that are institutionalized in various public sectors, for example, healthcare, affect the way in which branding is approached and implemented (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). For example, in the Norwegian healthcare sector, "the objective for introducing corporate branding in the hospitals is to develop general solidarity and secure equal opportunities, not to boast about own performances" (Sataøen and Wæraas 2015, p. 456). As this example demonstrates, the context within which the organization functions needs to be understood if one is to approach and pursue branding in a suitable manner.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I present my ontological and epistemological assumptions and the methodological choices. As a compilation thesis, the practical methods are presented in each paper, and this chapter thus provides a general description of the research design process and methods used.

4.1 Philosophical foundation

Methodology is "the intricate set of ontological and epistemological commitments that a researcher brings to his or her work" (Prasad 1997, p. 103). I set out this research process with a constructivist view and the knowledge that we all view the world based on prior experiences and underlying assumptions and affect it according to those views. In the words of Klotz and Lynch (2007, p.3), "individuals and groups are not only shaped by their world but can also change it". With reality being considered "subjective, pluralistic, and elastic" (Bisman and Highfield 2012, p. 5), our experiences and assumptions consequently guide us in how we view the world. Thus, it affects the choices we make, including research purpose, questions, and theoretical approaches (Klotz and Lynch, 2007). As all researchers bring their experiences and underlying assumptions into the field, complete neutrality and objectivity is not possible (Charmaz, 2006).

From a constructivist perspective, research can help us provide meaning and insights, and make sense of the world (Bisman and Highfield, 2012). With such a foundation, qualitative research affords the researcher the opportunity to closely examine an organization or issue, and to explore the understanding and interpretation of the perceived reality of the respondents. Being close to what is being studied, taking a holistic view of certain contexts or structures, and pursuing an understanding of the individuals' interpretations of the world (Holme and Solvang, 1997) enables a thorough understanding of the topic at hand. As internal brand management in the public sector is currently under-investigated, a predominantly qualitative, in-depth study was deemed suitable.

However, throughout the dissertation process, pragmatist thinking has increasingly influenced my philosophical foundation. Pragmatists "tend to view the social world in terms of processes that connect all sorts of entities in relational and recursive ways" (Farjoun et al., 2015, p. 1789). While quite process-oriented, it acknowledges that processes and structures are inherently interconnected

(Farjoun et al., 2015). In essence, pragmatism is a problem-solving philosophy with certain fundamental principles:

> "a rich and behaviorally plausible model of human nature, an emphasis on the interplay of action and meaning, a strong distrust of dualisms ("means versus ends"), and an appreciation of recursive influences; it highlights process, time, events, and relations without neglecting structures and entities" (Farjoun et al., 2015, p. 1788)

Pragmatism focuses on understanding a certain issue, question, or phenomenon using the best research method for the purpose (Farjoun et al., 2015). Thus, the method chosen is less a result of underlying philosophical foundations and more a question of whether the method allows the researcher to answer the research question at hand.

As such, throughout the research process it was found that a multi-method approach would be useful. It was chosen for two reasons: the nature of the topic studied and because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Internal brand management in the public sector is a complex issue. Affective outcomes of internal brand management are not solely a result of a single, or a few interrelated, factors but can rather be described as a web of factors that combine to support desired organizational results. The understanding of these interrelated factors is facilitated by collecting different types of data to study different aspects of the issue. By combining qualitative and quantitative research, it is possible to surpass the findings of one single method, and thus forge the findings into an overall account (Bryman, 2007) and highlight similarities and differences between various issues related to a certain phenomenon (Bernardi et al., 2007).

Commencing with a literature review, the empirical research that followed consisted of a qualitative case study based on interviews, observations, and brand-related documents. Finally, a quantitative study was conducted through a survey. Each part of the research process captured different aspects of internal brand management in the public sector. The methods thus complemented each other and provide a deeper understanding of the processes and structures that affect the topic at hand.

4.2 Literature review

Literature reviews map and assess a specific topic in order to identify research questions suitable for further research (Tranfield et al., 2003). While some

literature reviews lack thoroughness and genuine methodological rigor (Tranfield et al., 2003), systematic literature reviews use certain procedures to investigate existing research on a topic. It was therefore deemed a valuable method for the first paper of this dissertation. Thus, the topic of public sector branding was investigated using procedures that included careful planning, conducting, and reporting of various stages of the review process, in accordance with recent literature reviews (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Mingione, 2015). The goal was to ensure a high-quality review process that entailed synthesizing the research in a "systematic, transparent, and reproducible manner" (Tranfield et al., 2003, p. 209).

Two databases were used, EBSCO (Business Source Premier) and Web of Science. Key words used in both databases were "brand" and "public sector". From the EBSCO search, 1 269 papers were identified, which were reduced to 329 papers after removing the papers that did not fulfill the inclusion criteria: English-language papers in academic peer-reviewed journals. A Web of Science search identified 86 relevant articles. After a careful assessment of topics, empirical contexts, and identifying duplicates, 46 papers were included in the literature review. Based on these 46 papers, a "snowballing" search was conducted (Mingione, 2015), in which we scanned the titles in the reference lists to identify additional papers. As a result, 92 papers on public sector branding were included in the literature review.

4.3 Qualitative study

4.3.1 Case study

Case studies are widely used in social sciences (Yin, 2003) as they enable researchers to study and access real-life situations and issues (Silverman, 2011). They are suitable when the research aims to investigate a phenomenon within a certain context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are obscure (Yin, 2003). Case studies also facilitate insights and generate theory (Dubois and Gibbert, 2010). While important insights have been provided from research on internal brand management in the private sector, the topic is still under-researched in a public sector context. We know that conditions and internal structures within a sector or an organization can affect internal behavior. Within a sector that is arguably distinct from a private context, it is therefore essential to understand the underlying conditions and motivations for affective employee outcomes of internal brand management. A qualitative case study was therefore deemed suitable to explore the topic of interest. Furthermore, as this study covers internal brand management, specifically concerning he public

sector, the interchangeability of the topic and the context make it suitable for a case study approach.

Case studies tend to combine various data collection methods, which may include archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observations in either a qualitative or quantitative approach, or a combination of both (Eisenhardt, 1989). Qualitative research within a case study setting can provide meaning and understanding, and explain the factors that influence affective outcomes of internal brand management. It allows an in-depth understanding of the underlying motivations and dimensions, and it explores how and why affective brand support does or does not emerge among employees. In an effort to determine patterns in the data, researchers must go beyond initial impressions and counteract information-processing biases (Eisenhardt, 1989). This can be achieved by examining the data in many different ways for similarities and differences within and between groups and cases, and separating analyses of various data, for example interviews and observations (Eisenhardt, 1989). Researchers employ these tactics to increase the probability of accurate and reliable theory, to match the data, and capture unique findings in the data (Eisenhardt, 1989).

4.3.2 Case selection

The case organization chosen was a Swedish county council, as it is a 'traditional' public sector organization, in other words, a 'bureau' (Perry and Rainey 1988). As the county councils are publically owned and financed, and governed by elected officials, a county council was a suitable representative of a public sector organization. However, the varied and multifaceted areas of responsibilities of county councils warranted a more focused approach. Therefore, the study would focus on the healthcare organization of the county council, which also represents its primary responsibility.

The county council chosen, while anonymous, is a large (several thousand employees), well-known organization in the region. A brand focus was evident, as the organization had developed an official brand with a logotype, organizational vision, core values statement, and core values. The brand values are communicated both internally and externally, for example, on the website, intranet, and organizational documents. The organization also has a communication department responsible for the organizational brand. Brand guidelines have been developed to ensure brand consistency throughout the organization.

4.3.3 Data collection

The qualitative study aimed to explore various issues that may affect internal brand management in a public context. To do so, the qualitative study included respondents from four departments within the organization and representatives from the communications department. The four departments were included to gain a comprehensive understanding of various levels and functions within the organization in order to explore different organizational conditions and relationships. Thus, the departments represented a cross-section of the organization, with one having a strategic leadership role, one being a strategic development department, an R&D department, and an operative department. This allowed for developing knowledge that may be relevant to the organization as a whole and be applicable to a greater number of organizations in similar settings.

Most of the interviews were held with employees, although management interviews were conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of internal stakeholder perception of the topics. The reason for focusing on employees, rather than top management, was to understand how the brand is integrated and accepted into the organization, thus ensuring affective outcomes of internal brand management. To do so, one needs a thorough understanding of employee perceptions and experiences.

Access was gained through a gatekeeper at the organization, a former colleague of the researcher. This gatekeeper, who was working at one of the departments included in the study, helped to gain access to two more departments, three in total. The choice of departments was made after discussions of the type of departments that would be suitable to include in the study. Once the relevant departments had been identified, a document was sent to the gatekeeper, which contained a brief, general introduction to the research and the data needed, in other words, the researcher requested permission to interview a number of employees and attend one or two staff meetings at each department. The gatekeeper then forwarded this to the managers of the two departments who agreed to be part of the study.

Having studied three departments within the organization, access was needed for an operative department that had direct patient contact. It was however difficult to gain access to such a department. A decision was made to use a personal contact within the organization and not within the department studied, who could facilitate access to an operative department. Thus, access was secured and data collection could continue.

Once access had been granted to a specific department, the managers were sent a short e-mail, which they then forwarded to the employees. The e-mail described the research and the interview format in order to ensure that employees were provided relevant information while maintaining control of the type of information that was shared. Thus, it aimed to ensure that previous information about the topic would not influence their responses during the interviews. However, staff introductions were generally done at a staff meeting to ensure an initial meeting between the researcher and the employees before the interviews took place. After the employees were informed about the study, they could volunteer to participate. Hence, most respondents were identified on a voluntary basis. However, there were also instances where the manager of the department suggested a certain respondent because the nature of their work was relevant for the study. In one department, further respondents were needed in addition to those who had volunteered. On that occasion, the manager was informed that diversity among respondents would be valuable, so two respondents were suggested based on their varied job characteristics and length of employment.

Respondent confidentiality was ensured by not presenting their personal information in the dissertation materials. Care has also been taken when including quotes in the presentation of the results, so that they cannot be traced to the individual respondent. The only defining characteristic of the quotes is whether the respondent is a manager or an employee. With regard to the individual departments, the findings are presented in a way that ensures the specific department cannot be identified.

The data collection methods were varied, and interviews served as a foundation, complemented by observations, memos, and brand-related materials such as the organizational website and various documents. These are included to compare and contrast interview findings (Charmaz, 2006). However, while the study included some official documents and information, such as the core values statement and information on the website, these materials were generally reviewed after interviews and observations had been conducted. This would ensure that the official brand version did not color the results and interpretation of the data. Even if management-led meetings and interviews may be considered official brand communication, statements made during the meetings and interviews suggest that the department perceptions may not always completely align with the official version of the brand.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 managers and employees within the various departments: seven managers and fourteen employees, including one interview with the head of communications of the

organization (at this interview, an employee from the communications department also took part). The 20 interviews allowed theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006) to be reached as no new theoretical insights emerged regarding the topic. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 3:

Table 3. Interview details

Respondent*	Date of interview	Gender	Length of interview	Role
A1	160222	Woman	1 hour and 36 min	Manager
A2	160226	Man	59 min	Employee
A3	160310	Woman	1 hour and 5 min	Employee
A4	160331	Man	1 hour and 26 min	Employee
A5	160404	Man	1 hour and 16 min	Employee
B1	160602	Man	55 min	Manager
B2	160518 + 160627	Woman	1 hour and 30 min	Manager
B3	160427 + 160504	Man	1 hour and 32 min	Employee
B4	160427	Woman	50 min	Employee
B5	160610	Woman	1 hour and 30 min	Employee
B6	160616	Man	1 hour and 7 min	Employee
C1	160317	Man	55 min	Manager
C2	160317	Woman	1 hour and 22 min	Employee
C3	161102	Man	1 hour and 32 min	Employee
D1	160930	Man	1 hour and 10 min	Manager
D2	161101	Woman	1 hour and 18 min	Manager
D3	161108	Woman	45 min	Employee
D4	161108	Woman	1 hour and 9 min	Employee
D5	161123	Woman	1 hour and 11 min	Employee
E1**	170607	Woman	1 hour and 20 min	Manager
E2**	170607	Woman	1 hour and 20 min	Employee

* The letter represents the department and the number represents the respondent
**One interview with two respondents

An interview guide was developed that explored various themes related to branding. Given the explorative nature of the research, a broad list of themes and topics related to internal brand management was included. These topics included questions related to factors such as communication, organizational values, internal structures, leadership, and the relationship with various stakeholder groups. During the interviews the questions were used to provide a foundation for all interviews and to allow relevant follow-up questions to be asked when needed. The interview guide evolved during the data collection process, which enabled the researcher to focus on areas that emerged throughout the process. It

should be noted that only one question in the interview guide mentioned the word branding. This is because extant literature indicates that public sector employees may have a rather complex relationship with the concept of branding, as it is considered closely related to a commercial setting, in other words, private companies and corporations. Questions were therefore constructed to ask about branding-related issues closely connected to the daily work of the employees, but without mentioning the branding concept as such.

Nineteen interviews were conducted from February to November 2016, and the last interview, with the head of communications and one employee took place in June 2017. The respondents consisted of twelve women and nine men. Among the managers, four were women and three were men. All interviews except four were conducted in person and took place via Skype or by phone. The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 36 minutes, with the average time for an interview being 1 hour and 13 minutes. Two of the interviews had to be discontinued, which necessitated scheduling the final part of the interviews later. Twelve respondents had extensive experience of the organization, as they had been employees for more than 10 years. Five respondents were relatively new, as they were employed three years or less. The interviews were all recorded and then transcribed, which resulted in 462 single-line transcription pages. As all interviews were conducted in Swedish, translations were needed when using quotes in the presentation of the findings. These translations were carefully done, and care was taken to ensure a correct translation, which would safeguard the flow and meaning of the statement.

Respondents were generally open and forthcoming during interviews, although managements' answers did not always fully align with those of employees. However, with different roles and contacts within the organization, such differences are not surprising. However, on a few occasions I did notice a possible perceived official policy regarding the brand that may not be shared by the respondent personally. Therefore, the answers may, on a few occasions, reflect the official message, the policy, rather than a personal conviction. While this was noticed and subjected to a follow-up question during the interview, in the analysis phase it was merely accepted.

At the start of each interview, the respondents were informed about the research, including what the data would be used for, how respondent anonymity would be ensured, that the interview was voluntary, that they had the right to end the interview, that the interviews were to be transcribed, and that they had the right to view the transcription. Only one respondent wanted to see the transcription

but did not offer any comments on the transcription. All respondents, when asked, accepted that the interviews were recorded.

As previously mentioned, the interviews were complemented by observations of staff meetings, including weekly and monthly meetings, and bi-annual or annual planning days. The type of meeting observed varied and depended on the individual department and their meeting schedule. One meeting was attended in each department. In one department, however, two meetings were attended as the opportunity presented itself. Furthermore, one meeting between representatives of two of the departments was also attended. This meeting was interesting as it provided an opportunity to see how the two departments interacted and related to one another. The purpose of these observations was to understand whether, and to what extent, the brand was integrated into daily activities and internal communication. Therefore, the observation of various internal meetings was a valuable means of data collection. The observations were documented by writing field notes in which own reflections were combined with discussions and statements from the various participants. The discussions and statements were carefully documented and stayed as close as possible to the expressions used by the participants in order to ensure limited researcher interpretation at this point. The observations made the analytical process stronger, as it enabled a comparison of the interview data with that of observations. The field notes resulted in 57 type-written single-lined pages.

4.3.4 Data analysis

The data analysis process of the qualitative data was conducted mainly by coding. The coding was conducted in adherence to the work of Charmaz (2006) who uses a coding process that consists of a minimum of two coding phases, in other words, initial and focused coding. The initial coding entails an analytical process that stays close to data and uses precise and simple codes, such as participant voices, to help the researcher in remain close to reality (Charmaz 2006). The second phase is the focused coding, which entails synthesizing the initial codes to determine "which initial codes make the most analytical sense" (Charmaz 2006, p. 57). Therefore, it allows a greater abstraction level of data analysis. These codes can then be used to form data categories and subcategories (Charmaz, 2006). The following descriptions from paper 2 and 3 illustrate how this was done in practice.

Paper 2: What about context in internal brand management? Understanding employee brand commitment in the public sector

The empirical data was manually coded using Nvivo. Throughout the coding process, the data was analyzed with an increased abstraction level to define themes that developed within the data. The first step of analysis entailed initial coding to explore the theoretical issues that may exist within the data (Charmaz, 2006). The initial coding was "provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data" (Charmaz 2006, p.48). This step necessitated remaining close to the data and keeping an open mind to what the data provides (Charmaz, 2006). No restrictions on topics were considered, which facilitated the identification of various interesting issues related to branding and branding outcomes. The second step required a more focused approach, with a greater focus on factors that influence employee brand commitment.

The initial codes were thus concentrated in a greater abstraction level from which new analytical codes emerged. Finally, the themes were developed into categories and key themes that helped to explain how and why various factors affect employee brand commitment in the organization studied.

Paper 3: A brand within the brand: an integrated understanding of internal brand management and brand architecture in the public sector

During the data collection, it became clear that three of the four departments studied were managing their own brands, to different extents and levels of professionalism. This was a rather surprising finding as branding literature emphasizes the role of consistency in the identity structure (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006) and how the brand is communicated (de Chernatony et al., 2006). As branding efforts of individual departments do not adhere to traditional branding knowledge, it was deemed an interesting topic for a paper. Thus, the topic of this paper did not align fully with the onset of research. The analytical process was therefore adapted. The data was first coded in two steps using Nvivo. The first step of this process was a line-by-line coding that remained close to the data and often used expressions of the respondents (Charmaz, 2006). From this part of the analytical process, various themes emerged that identified underlying objectives for individual department branding. However, to identify underlying issues related to the topic, a different analytical technique was needed. Therefore, in the second part of the analysis, a number of research questions were asked of the data to help identify relevant relationships within the topic. These research questions acted as pattern codes, in other words, "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 69): why do employees perceive that departmental branding is important; how do employees relate to the organizational brand vision, core value statement and core values;

how is the brand communicated to employees; and how do employees talk about the relationships between the parent and the departmental brand? This process enabled us to identify and define not only the objectives of departmental branding, but also underlying issues related to how and why departments are involved in brand management and the relationship between the two brand levels.

4.4 Quantitative study

4.4.1 Research design and measurement

After the qualitative study was conducted, it was deemed valuable to complement the findings with a quantitative study and to focus on specific issues of internal brand management in the public sector. The quantitative study aimed to investigate the effects of value congruence in internal communication and positive organizational practices on affective outcomes of internal branding. Data was collected using a survey instrument. The constructs of the survey were developed using established scales from five previous studies (a more detailed description of this study, including the constructs, is presented in paper 4). The items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The survey was pre-tested by two experts: a senior manager within the county council and an academic expert.

4.4.2 Data collection

The quantitative study was conducted by using a web-based questionnaire designed and distributed through Netigate. The respondent group comprised employees of operative healthcare departments within the county council. Three modes of distribution were used during the data collection. First, an e-mail that described the purpose of the study was sent to the contact person who then forwarded it to 27 department managers along with the link to the survey for further distribution among employees within the primary care section of the organization. A reminder was the sent to the department managers approximately two weeks after the initial e-mail, which prompted further responses.

The second distribution mode utilized four Facebook groups that included employees of various sections of the specialist healthcare organization within the county council. The Facebook groups represented a variety of roles and operative departments within the organization. The first two Facebook groups had one posting each, while a reminder was posted to the remaining two groups a week after the initial post.

The third distribution mode utilized the county councils' communication department. Thus, in an attempt to increase the number of responses, a request was sent to request permission to distribute the survey through their official channels. As a result, a brief notice was posted on the county council Intranet, which clearly described the purpose of the study and the target respondents, in other words, employees in operative healthcare departments.

In total, 284 respondents responded to the survey, which resulted in 211 complete responses, which are included in the analysis. This sample size was deemed appropriate, as a sample size over 200 is generally recommended (Hair et al., 1998).

4.4.3 Data analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), which is a widely used method to analyze quantitative data in marketing research (Hair et al., 2012). SEM was used because it:

> "makes it possible to investigate in a straightforward fashion comprehensive theoretical frameworks in which the effects of constructs are propagated across multiple layers of variables via direct, indirect, or bi-directional path of influence" (Baumgartner and Homburg 1996, p. 158)

Thus, a number of different constructs, and their interrelationships can be tested simultaneously. While some analytical techniques examine single relationships between variables, structural equation modeling addresses a combination of constructs with one technique (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, it enables more complex analysis with several layers of constructs and effects between them (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2005).

The research model, as shown in figure 2, presents the hypothesized relationships between the variables: public service motivation, value congruence in internal communication, positive organizational practices, and three forms of affective outcomes of internal brand management. The data analysis confirmed all hypotheses except the effect of positive organizational practices on brand commitment.
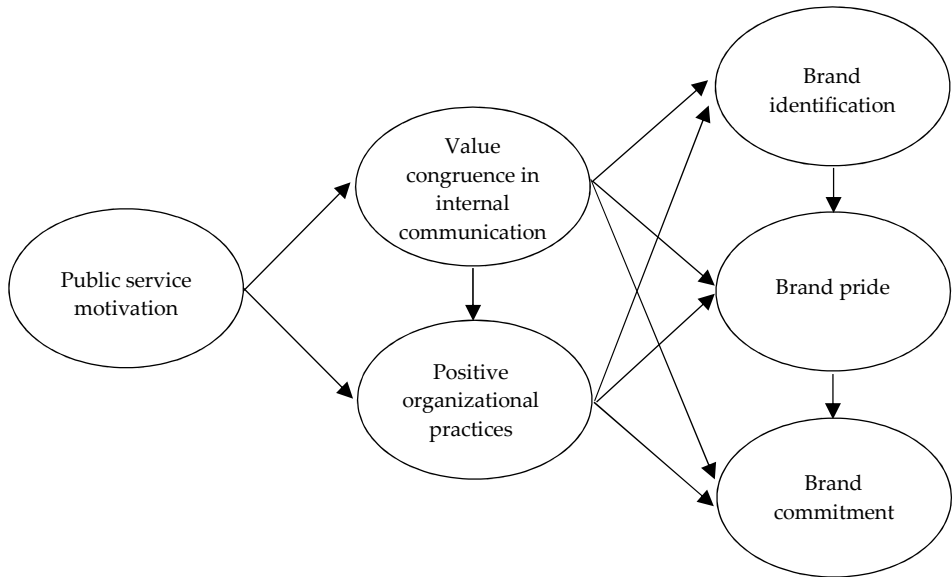
Figure 2. Conceptual model of affective outcomes of internal brand management in the public sector

It should be noted that the sample demographics of the study show a high majority of female respondents. This number (80.6%), however, corresponds to national statistics for healthcare personnel: women represent 79.8% of healthcare employees within Swedish County Councils/Regions (SKL, 2018b).

The data analysis was conducted using SPSS and Amos. To assess potential non-response errors in the data, t-tests and ANOVA were used. The t-test is a method that tests the statistical significance of potential differences between two respondent groups (Hair et al., 1998). The t-test was conducted by dividing the sample into two groups of early and late respondents. ANOVA, in other words, an analysis of variance, on the other hand, tests the differences between three or more respondent groups and determines whether any differences in means across are the result of sampling error (Hair et al., 1998). To conduct the ANOVA, three groups were analyzed based on the distribution mode, in other words, an e-mail from the department head, Facebook, and the Intranet. No significant non-response errors were found.

5 Summary of papers

In a compilation thesis the individual papers tell their own stories, independent of each other. However, the papers are also connected within a greater framework and are integrated into an overarching understanding of the topic at hand. This chapter presents the abstracts of the four papers to provide an overview of the topic, purpose, and findings of each paper.

5.1 Abstract paper 1

Branding in the public sector: A systematic literature review and directions for future research

The increased interest of public organizations in using corporate branding principles creates a need to understand how to implement such principles effectively. Although previous research investigates challenges related to branding in this context, the findings provide contradictory evidence and opposing recommendations. The purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic review of literature on branding in the public sector and to explore directions for future research. The results demonstrate that owing to the distinct differences between the private sector and the public sectors, there is a need to adapt branding principles to meet the sector-specific challenges faced by public organizations. However, the extent of the required changes needs further research. This literature review presents a number of potential directions for future studies, which focus on diverse topics related to the internal and external aspects that are crucial to the successful branding of public sector organizations.

Keywords: literature review, corporate branding, public organization, public sector, stakeholders

5.2 Abstract paper 2

What about context in internal brand management? Understanding employee brand commitment in the public sector

Branding has become an established means for many public sector organizations to support desired perceptions of the organization. While branding is often presented as useful and advantageous for organizations, this study cautions against over-simplification of the issue. By focusing on the perspective of employees, this study explores contextual factors that affect employee brand commitment in the public sector. The findings reveal the critical importance of the identity and values of the organization and its employees, and how the leadership, in the form of political governance, affects the internal brand management efforts.

Keywords: Public sector branding, internal brand management, employee brand commitment, identity and values, political leadership

5.3 Abstract paper 3

A brand within a brand: an integrated understanding of internal brand management and brand architecture in the public sector

Branding in the public sector is emerging as an interesting area of research, as diverse organisations find themselves using branding principles to promote a consistent, clear brand. However, very little is known how public organisations could, or should, manage their brands. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to explore brand management processes in the public sector, and its implication for brand architecture, from an employee perspective. With a qualitative approach, the study argues that branding is important not only for the organisation, but also for individual departments. Further, unlike branding in the private sector, public organisations may be more concerned with supporting a positive perception and organizational attractiveness rather than a unique and differentiated brand. This may have implications for brand architecture. By allowing individual departments to manage their brand with support from organisational structures that provide alignment and focus, organisations can form a brand architecture that supports a strong organisational brand and employee brand commitment.

5.4 Abstract paper 4

Internal brand management in the public sector: Internal communication, organizational practices, and affective outcomes

Working paper
Authors: Leijerholt, Ulrika, Biedenbach, Galina and Hultén, Peter (n.d)

Internal brand management in the public sector has gained increasing attention from practitioners and researchers during the last decade. Challenged by demanding contextual conditions, public sector organizations struggle to succeed in internal branding. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of value congruence in internal communication and positive organizational practices on affective outcomes of internal branding. Furthermore, the study examines the role of public service motivation in shaping employee perceptions and its influence on outcomes of internal branding. The results of a survey conducted among employees of a healthcare organization at a county council in Sweden demonstrate the importance of value congruence and positive organizational practices for facilitating employee brand identification, brand pride, and brand commitment. The findings demonstrate that public service motivation of employees directly affects their perceptions about value congruence and positive organizational practices, and indirectly influences the affective outcomes. The study advances extant knowledge on internal brand management by examining critical factors that facilitate brand commitment among employees in the public sector.

6 Discussion

This chapter presents a proposed model, including a number of factors that are central to consider in the implementation of internal brand management from a public sector perspective. The model is based on the findings of the three empirical papers and illustrates the areas where the study contributes to the literature on internal brand management in the public sector.

6.1 Three levels of central factors affecting internal brand management

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate central factors affecting the implementation of internal brand management in the public sector, considering its specific nature. Traditionally, internal brand management research has provided insights into various factors on the organizational level, for example, the role of HR, internal communication, and leadership (Burmann et al., 2009). Some studies have also provided insights into factors on the individual level, for example, the role of employee receptiveness (King and Grace 2012). This dissertation, however, shows that internal brand management needs to consider factors at contextual, organizational and individual levels. From a public sector perspective, this dissertation identifies a number of such factors that influence implementation of the internal brand management. These need to be understood and considered in branding efforts within public sector organizations.

The identified levels and factors are illustrated in figure 4. Each level and the associated factors are also discussed in the upcoming sub-chapters.
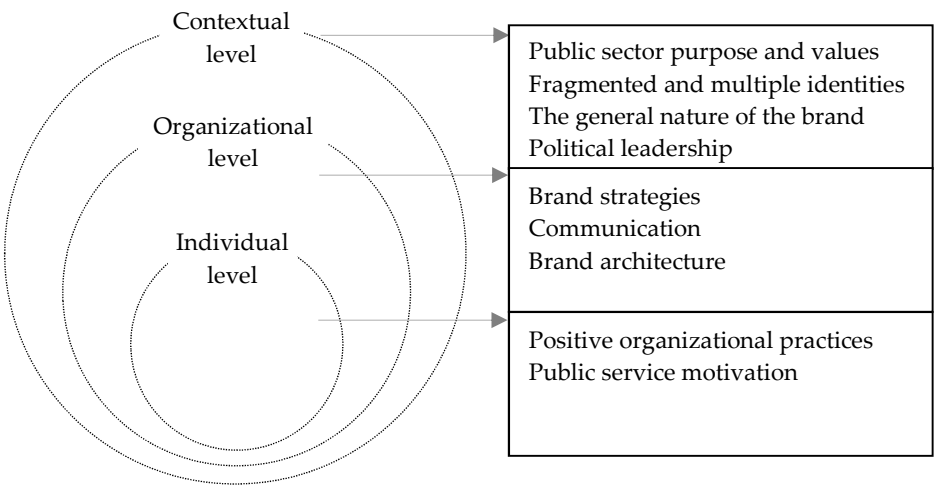

Figure 3. Factors affecting internal brand management in the public sector

6.2 Contextual level

The contextual factors presented in this dissertation suggest that public sector organizations need to approach branding and internal brand management in a manner that considers its distinct nature. Particularly the role of public sector values and purpose, fragmented and multiple identities, the general nature of the brand, and the political leadership are shown to influence its implementation and sometimes even its core nature.

6.2.1 Public sector purpose and values

Unlike private companies whose first priority is finding a profitable market for their products, regardless of their nature and societal value, the legitimacy, and thus survival, of public sector organizations depends on the public value provided: "for public organizations the crucial question is not what it must to do survive but what it must to do survive with value" (Hoggett 2006, p. 189). Therefore, benefiting society is its primary purpose. Research also suggests that the purpose and values of the public sector tend to attract certain people (Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Perry and Wise 1990). This has interesting branding implications; such pro-social motivations seem to be at the core of affective outcomes of internal brand management among employees (Leijerholt, n.d.; Leijerholt et al., n.d.; Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019).

Public sector organizations therefore need to link the organizational brand to the purpose and values of the sector. This may be a prerequisite for successful internal brand management implementation. Empirical data suggest that "employees may be more committed to doing good for others and society than committed to the organizational brand" (Leijerholt n.d., p. 7). Furthermore, organizational brand values that tap into employee motivation to do good for society and others seem to achieve greater employee commitment, and are able to unite the organization (Leijerholt, Chapleo, and O'Sullivan, 2019). Indeed, such motivations seems to be at the core of employee brand commitment (Leijerholt, n.d.).

The foundation of public sector branding may therefore lie in the purpose and values of the sector. If the public sector purpose and values are carefully integrated into the fabric of the brand, it can support greater alignment between employee and brand values. Thus, those values should be highlighted. A report by the Canadian Marketing Association demonstrated that a significant challenge of internal brand management is a common misalignment between employee and brand values (Macaverty et al., 2007). In the public sector,

however, organizations may have an advantage to support greater employee-brand value alignment and employee commitment if it taps into employee motivation to do good for society and others (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019; Leijerholt, n.d.; Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Rather than develop organizational brand values and then attempt to support employee alignment with those values, public sector organizations should ensure that the brand values are developed in alignment with employee motivation and the purpose and values of the public sector. The logic behind this suggestion is that employee motivation to do good for society and others not only affects employee relationships with the brand (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019; Leijerholt, n.d.), but also employee perceptions of the internal communication and how they relate to others in the workplace (Leijerholt et al., n.d.).

6.2.2 Fragmented and multiple identities

Research demonstrates that many public sector organizations tend to be subject to multiple identities and conflicting values (Wæraas and Byrkjeflot, 2012; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009; Wæraas, 2008). While the literature suggests that successful internal brand management is characterized by a consistent and coherent identity structure (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006), this may be difficult to achieve in a public context. Rather, developing and managing a consistent brand in this context becomes challenging, and possibly even counterproductive to its nature. Many public sector organizations, such as the organization studied, may be rather complex, with a multiplicity of service offerings, roles, and internal cultures (Leijerholt, n.d.). Indeed, research suggests that the dual role of being authoritative and user-friendly (Wæraas, 2008), and the complexity and fragmentation of many public sector organizations may complicate consistency and defining a single identity (Wæraas and Byrkjeflot, 2012; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009). It is therefore advisable for public sector organizations to embrace this heterogeneity to ensure that the brand represents the true nature of the organization. The empirical evidence of this dissertation suggests that one useful solution is to keep the brand rather condensed, and thereby suitable for most parts of the organization (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Other studies support such arguments, suggesting that public sector organizations may choose to find a common ground within its identity instead of highlighting its differences (Dholakia and Acciardo, 2014). It has also been suggested that these organizations should use their diversity in their branding (Wæraas, 2008). This dissertation argues for a branding effort that finds a fundamental common ground while taking advantage of the organizational diversity; in the public sector, branding may benefit from multi-level branding efforts to support the organizational brand. The empirical findings show that,

while a common ground may be useful for the organization at large, it may be wise to emphasize the organizational diversity by allowing individual departments to also manage their brand under certain conditions (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Such efforts may support a strong organizational brand and be an effective means of internal brand management.

6.2.3 The general nature of the brand

Findings suggest that, in the public sector, the brand may be more a means to support a general positive perception of the organization rather than to create uniqueness and differentiation (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). This result is important as it has key implications for a central principle of branding, that of its objective. Within private companies differentiation and uniqueness is generally argued to be at the core of branding. Similarly, in the public sector, branding can be a means to competition, at least in some settings (Leijerholt, Biedenbach and Hultén, 2019), for example, higher education (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin, 2015) and politics (Smith, 2001). However, in other settings, uniqueness does not seem to be at the core of branding (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019; Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). It has been suggested that differentiation may not be easily achieved in the public sector (Chapleo, 2007). Indeed, within public sector organizations that are not subject to extensive competition, branding efforts may be more geared toward supporting a general positive perception for the brand (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Such findings are confirmed in earlier studies (Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). As such, in the public sector the brand can be of a rather general nature, in stark contrast to brand knowledge originating from the private sector.

6.2.4 Political leadership

A final contextual factor identified in this dissertation is that of the political leadership. Research show that leaders have an important role in internal brand management: (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). Leadership behavior, as based on sincere belief in the brand values, supports internally shared values in the organization (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). Furthermore, the relationships between employees and leaders play an important role (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). In the public sector, however, internal brand management is not solely dependent on the top- and middle management, but the political leadership also plays a role (Leijerholt, n.d.). The political leadership, while generally considered rather abstract and remote, influences employee perceptions of the organization, its values, and how it is managed (Leijerholt, n.d.). As such, the innate nature of the political steering of

public sector organizations may create a detachment between the political and organizational level. In turn, this can create a challenging environment for affective employee outcomes of internal brand management.

Furthermore, having a leadership level that may sometimes be perceived as very critical of, or even at odds with, the organization is detrimental to internal brand management efforts. In large, fragmented public sector organizations, this contextual factor may push employees further into a local, departmental focus at the expense of organizational relationships. It is also shown that behaviors among political leaders may reflect distinctively different values than that of the brand, which is an obvious concern for internal brand management. It is therefore suggested that "the nature of political governance may be incompatible with organizational brand considerations" (Leijerholt n.d., p. 13).

6.3 Organizational level

Research suggests that internal brand management is dependent on the brand being integrated into the everyday work life of employees. The various components of the effort must align to ensure that employees receive a coherent and consistent brand-message (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2005); all touch-points should be considered (Mosley, 2007). The research within the scope of this dissertation confirms such sentiments; the organization studied attempts to ensure, although not completely successfully, to "make the brand integral to daily work life" by connecting values to, for example, strategies, goals, and management recruitment criteria (Leijerholt, Chapleo, and O'Sullivan 2019, p. 282). Furthermore, both internal communication and practices within the organization were shown to affect employee perceptions of the brand (Leijerholt et al., n.d.).

This integration is imperative for employees to perceive an alignment between the authentic and official brand values. For example, public sector organizations have for the last decades been subject to NPM principles, which is evident in the organization included in the study (Leijerholt, n.d.). This has brought a greater focus on efficiency and production. Such a focus is not necessarily seen as negative if implemented in moderation. However, it may shift focus away from the perceived purpose and values of the public sector toward a more private sector outlook. If such values take upper hand, employee motivation is undermined while the values also become part of the authentic brand values. As such, it will affect behaviors within the organization. Organizations must ensure that the official brand values aligns with the authentic brand values.

Indeed, the brand needs to be embedded within the organization and thus incorporate the whole organization (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2009). In the public sector, a number of organizational level factors have been identified that help to integrate the brand into daily life, not least to ensure alignment between official and authentic brand values: brand strategies, communication, and brand architecture.

6.3.1 Brand strategies

Organizations need to ensure alignment between various stakeholder perceptions of the brand (Hatch and Schultz 2009). Consistency in how the brand is communicated is therefore considered important (de Chernatony et al., 2006; de Chernatony, 1999). However, this dissertation shows that the public sector organizations should approach their branding efforts in a somewhat less stringent manner. Thus, an organization may have an overarching brand and brand elements, for example, a common logo and style guides, but it should not manage, in other words, control the brand to the same extent as private companies (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Rather, a greater internal flexibility and autonomy may actually strengthen the brand and employee-brand relationships. Such an approach may be especially suitable in a public context where the public sector purpose and values and employee pro-social motivation provide some alignment (Leijerholt, n.d.). Furthermore, such a branding strategy may ensure that branding efforts do not infringe on citizens' and employees' democratic and legal rights and that it does not undermine the legitimacy of the organization.

6.3.2 Communication

Internal communication has a central role in internal brand management (du Preez et al. 2015; Punjaisri and Wilson 2007). The role of communication is equally important in a public context. Suitable modes of communication have been identified to include meetings and the intranet (Leijerholt, Chapleo, O'Sullivan, 2019). Furthermore, externally focused communication channels, for example, PowerPoint presentations and the website, are also modes of employee brand communication (Leijerholt, Chapleo, O'Sullivan, 2019). The significance of meetings in brand communication are in line with previous research suggesting that a two-way communication (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2013) and dialogue (Whisman, 2009) are important. However, it was also found that intranet communication has a role in brand communication (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Of particular interest is the importance of value congruence between official communicated values and employees values. Such value congruence can support

affective employee outcomes of internal brand management (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Thus, organizations must ensure that the values communicated on the Intranet are congruent with employee values. The values must also be perceived as valuable by employees (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). This approach can help organizations to support affective employee outcomes of internal brand management (Leijerholt et al., n.d.).

6.3.3 Brand architecture

The empirical findings in this dissertation suggest that within the public sector, an additional factor or internal brand management needs to be considered compared to those identified in traditional internal brand management literature. In the public sector, brand architecture is identified to have an important role to play (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Brand architecture is a term that describes the hierarchical structure and relationship between brands within an organization (Brexendorf and Keller, 2017; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). This dissertation shows that branding is not solely an issue for the organization at large, but also for individual departments (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). Interestingly, however, is that the organizational and departmental branding efforts do not seem to compete, but rather harmonize (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019). The departmental branding efforts may therefore have the ability to reinforce the organizational brand. While this view may be problematic from a traditional brand perspective, it does not seem to be as problematic in a public context. The reason is the rather general nature of the brand (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019) and the underlying employee motivation related to public sector purpose and values (Leijerholt, Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2019; Leijerholt, n.d.), which support aligned branding efforts. Therefore, certain departmental autonomy related to branding may be fruitful in the public sector, as it may help to strengthen the organizational brand. Furthermore, such autonomy may arguably have the potential to support greater employee commitment and external brand perceptions. While not completely aligned with traditional branding literature, within the context of the public sector such an approach seems appropriate.

6.4 Individual level

While organizational factors tend to be the focus of much of the internal brand management research, this dissertation suggests that factors on the individual level also need to be considered. Particularly public service motivation and 'colleagueship', in other words, positive organizational practices within the

organization, have been shown to be important in shaping affective outcomes of internal brand management (Leijerholt et al., n.d.).

6.4.1 Positive organizational practices

Literature suggests that employee experiences with the brand are critical for their perception of the brand (Dean et al., 2016; Mosley, 2007). Empirical findings in this dissertation support such arguments (Leijerholt, n.d.), but also suggest that such experiences are not solely dependent on organizational factors, but also on the people with whom each individual employee works (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Employee brand meaning develops and evolves through interactions and experiences with people with whom employees interact, including other employees (Dean et al., 2016). The findings in this dissertation suggest that positive organizational practices, for example, whether people are treated with respect, are provided with emotional support, care and inspire each other, have a direct effect on affective outcomes of internal brand management (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Thus, the 'colleagueship' of employees directly influences how employees perceive and relate to the brand. As such, it is an important factor that needs to be considered for internal brand management purposes.

6.4.2 Public service motivation

An important factor in internal brand management is employee motivation to do good for society and others. Such motivations were evident within the studies of this dissertation (Leijerholt, n.d.; Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Indeed, such motivations directly affected positive organizational practices and value congruence within the organization. In turn, these had a direct effect on affective employee outcomes (Leijerholt et al., n.d.). Public sector organizations should therefore pay close attention to employee pro-social motivation during the recruitment of employees. Furthermore, organizations need to consider the role of individual employees and what they bring to the organization in terms of motivation and collective behaviors that can help support the brand.

7 Conclusions

This chapter presents the conclusions of the dissertation. The chapter highlights the theoretical and practical implications. The chapter also includes a discussion of the limitations and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Concluding remarks

Branding is no longer solely an issue for private companies. Rather, the findings in this dissertation suggest that branding may be a valuable means for public sector organizations to support organizational assets, for example, trust and legitimacy, and relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Leijerholt, Biedenbach and Hultén, 2019). However, it needs to be acknowledged that organizations within the public sector may require a rather distinct approach to branding, suitable for the sector. The primary concern for public sector organizations should not be their brand but living up to their core purpose, upholding the democratic and legal rights of citizens and their employees, and protecting the ethos and values of the sector. Therefore, public sector branding needs to be developed within its context and be managed with care. This approach can ensure the desired results for the organization, its internal and external stakeholders, and the public sector at large.

From an internal brand management perspective, this dissertation demonstrates that organizations need to consider factors on contextual, organizational, and individual levels to support desired outcomes. Considering the specific nature of the public sector, this dissertation has identified a number of central factors that affect the branding efforts. These factors ensure that the implementation of the branding efforts are aligned with the nature, and thereby contextual distinction, of the sector. Understanding the impact of these factors may also support affective outcomes of the internal brand management. Therefore, for public sector organizations it is not solely an issue of implementing branding in the same way as in the private sector. Rather, public sector organizations need to ensure that branding efforts are implemented in a manner suited to the sector.

7.2 Contributions

The findings within the scope of this dissertation provide a number of theoretical and practical contributions. First, the dissertation makes an important contribution to the field of public sector branding by providing greater understanding of how certain core branding principles may require a somewhat

distinct approach compared to traditional principles highlighted in the current brand literature. In the public sector, the organizational brand is shown to require a more general nature, where the purpose and values of the sector are integrated into the organizational brand. The core of the brand is therefore not only an organizational consideration, but it becomes an extension of the values of the public sector and its role in society. These sector-related values can become an advantage in terms of aligning the organization around its brand values, in spite of a common internal diversity within public sector organizations. Thus, in the public sector, the branding efforts need to consider the public context in which public organizations act. While the brand traditionally facilitates uniqueness and differentiation, this dissertation demonstrates that, in the public sector, branding may be more a means to a general positive perception of the organization. Thus, this dissertation shows that branding in the public sector may be of somewhat distinct nature than assumed by traditional brand knowledge.

The findings of this dissertation have important practical implications. First, the conclusions about the brand being a means to a general positive perception for public sector organizations rather than competition may be particularly relevant for public sector organizations that are not subject to extensive competition. As such, from a societal perspective governments need to recognize that pressures towards greater marketization, and thus competition in the public sector may also result in a greater competitive focus in organizational branding efforts. Such a focus may push public sector organizations toward a manner of branding that is more closely related to that of a private company. The ramifications of such a shift need to be carefully considered. Second, from a management perspective, the findings of this dissertation indicate that public sector organizations need to carefully consider how their brands are developed and managed in order to ensure an approach suitable for a public context. Managers in the public sector do not merely have to consider the best interests of the organizations in their branding efforts, but also the roles of their organization in a larger context, for example, their role in society, democratic and legal obligations, and the legitimacy of the public sector as a whole. Without such a perspective branding may risk being pursued in a way that undermines the relationship with internal and external stakeholders.

A second key theoretical contribution of this dissertation is made to the field of internal brand management. The findings show that supporting affective outcomes of internal brand management is not solely a matter of managing a number of interrelated organizational factors. Rather, this dissertation advances extant knowledge by highlighting the need for a multi-dimensional perspective that includes factors on contextual, organizational, and individual levels. Thus,

internal brand management is not solely an organizational issue, but the context in which the organization acts need to be considered, as do individual factors related to employees. This approach means that internal brand management cannot be 'managed' in the manner suggested by its name. One issue that public sector organizations need to consider is the role of the political leadership in internal brand management. This leadership level has a significant impact as it influences how employees perceive the organization and its values. In fact, it is shown that the political leadership may seriously complicate the internal brand management efforts. Furthermore, the dissertation shows that brand architecture within the public sector requires attention. While brand architecture has traditionally not been identified as a main factor of internal brand management, it may have such a role in the public sector. In the fragmented, complex reality that many public sector organizations are faced with, brand architecture can be a means to align the organization around the brand and help to support affective outcomes of internal brand management. Finally, this dissertation demonstrates that, in the public sector, internal brand management may demand a less stringent approach that allows greater flexibility and autonomy of individual departments. While some alignment is undoubtedly needed, a focus on complete coherency and consistency in brand communication may be unnecessary. Such alignment can, under the right circumstances, be facilitated naturally within the organization. This is because of the general nature of the brand and employee motivation to do good for society and others, as mentioned earlier. However, it requires the organization and its employees to 'walk the talk', in other words, to ensure that communication and behaviors within the organization supports positive experiences and such underlying motivations among employees.

From the discussion above, the findings presented in this dissertation lead to evident practical implications for internal brand management in the public sector, namely a conclusion that a moderately managed internal brand management may be more appropriate for a public sector context. Managers in the public sector may need to allow for certain internal autonomy and flexibility regarding the brand. Furthermore, managers in public sector organizations need to, in addition to traditional internal brand management factors, such as internal communication, HR, and internal and external brand links, consider the role of brand architecture. Managed well, brand architecture can be a means to support a positive organizational brand and employee brand commitment. However, public sector managers also have to be aware of a potential challenge to the internal brand management efforts; that of the political leadership. This challenge may be difficult to overcome, yet it needs to be considered because of its significant influence on the organization and its brand.

To conclude, this dissertation advances literature on both public sector branding and internal brand management, especially in the public sector. The findings of this dissertation have a direct relevance for practitioners in the public sector. In order to pursue branding that adds value to public organizations and all their stakeholders, including citizens, employees, and many other stakeholder groups, managers need increased knowledge of the nature of branding in this sector. Such knowledge will enable political leaders and policy-makers to respond to and proactively develop appropriate guidelines and policies that ensures that branding-efforts strengthen the legitimacy of public institutions, rather than undermine it. These findings presented in this dissertation will help managers in the public sector to make appropriate decisions regarding their branding efforts. In general, an over-simplification of public sector branding should be avoided and it is not beneficial to automatically borrow and directly implement principles from the private sector. Rather, managers in the public sector need to consider the context in which their organizations act, and how sector-specific issues affect their organizational brands and outcomes of their branding efforts.

7.3 Limitations and future research

While this dissertation provides valuable insights into the nature and implementation of branding and internal brand management in the public sector, further research is needed.

This dissertation focuses on public organizations defined as bureaus (Perry and Rainey 1988). As such, there are no claims that the dissertation provides a greater understanding of other types of public sector organizations, for example, publically owned corporations. One future avenue of research is therefore whether similar results can be found in other types of public sector organizations or whether there are other factors that need to be considered in other public settings. In addition, as the research was conducted in one organization, in other words, a county council, it would be valuable to test the generalizability of these findings within other types of public sector bureaus, for example, municipal organizations, the police authority, social services, the military, and the educational organizations.

This dissertation takes on an internal, employee perspective on internal brand management in the public sector. As such, it does not consider other internal and external perspectives on the topic. A second avenue for future research is therefore to explore branding from the perspectives of the political leadership, top management, and the public. Further studies from an internal, employee perspective would also be valuable, focusing on the relationship between an

external and internal perspective. For example, public sector employees are both external and internal stakeholders, being employed by the organization, while also being a member of the public, and thus a consumer of its services. It would be of value to explore how this relationship influences internal brand management outcomes, both cognitive and affective.

Finally, this dissertation presents a number of factors relating to internal brand management and how these factors affect the implementation of branding in a public context. However, no claims are made that this study has exhausted all relevant factors. Future studies may want to focus on other factors on contextual and individual levels that may affect the outcomes of the internal brand management. While organizational factors have often been in focus for extant research, this dissertation shows the importance of context and individual employee considerations for internal brand management outcomes. The scope and impact of such factors, however, need to be explored further to identify whether there are additional factors that affect how internal brand management efforts can be successfully managed in the public sector.

A final note: as branding is becoming increasingly popular within the public sector, it is important that we gain further insights into the nature of branding in this sector. If branding is pursued in an identical manner to that in the private sector, without consideration for the context, it has the potential of damaging not only the organizational brand, but also the legitimacy of the public sector. Therefore, a more critical exploration of branding in the public sector, both from an internal and external perspective, would be of great value.

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