Internal brand management in South African contact centers

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This academic thesis, with the approval of KTH Royal Institute of Technology, will be presented to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The public defense will be held in Room F3, Lindstedtsvägen 26, at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, at 08h30 on the 25th March 2020.
Abstract

Globally contact centers are ubiquitous in medium to large organizations operating in both B2B and B2C service industries. Frontline staff working in contact centers represent a major component of the way in which customers experience service organizations’ brands.

There is a paucity of research on marketing in contact centers. Internal brand management is acknowledged as being difficult to implement, this could be exacerbated if an organization outsources their contact center operations. This presents a research gap as contact centers represent an important medium through which customers experience a service brand.

The overall research question in this thesis is:

Are extant theoretical models for internal brand management applicable to frontline employees in contact centers?

The overall research question is subdivided into the following research questions:

RQ1: What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?

RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?

RQ3: What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?

The overall contribution of this thesis is that evidence indicates that extant theoretical models of internal brand management are not applicable to frontline employees in contact centers. Paper 1 reveals that managers are unfamiliar with the theoretical models and practices of internal brand management, furthermore, they face numerous barriers and obstacles with implementation. Paper 2 provides the first direct evidence of internal brand management affecting job satisfaction, and the inclusion of job satisfaction improves a theoretical internal brand management model. Paper 3 develops and tests a model which includes job satisfaction, and two behavioral consequences viz. intention to stay and brand citizenship behavior. This paper reveals that the drivers of internal brand management are organization-specific. Paper 4 demonstrates that the dominant experience of contact center outsourcing is negative, and organizations which outsource tend to lose control of internal brand management and the customers’ brand experience.

Keywords: Contact centers, internal brand management, brand citizenship behavior, brand commitment, outsourcing.
**Sammanfattning**


Det råder brist på forskning om marknadsföring i kontaktcenter. Åtgärder för intern varumärkesutveckling anses vara svåra att genomföra och de kan försvåras ytterligare om en organisation utkontrakterar sin kontaktcenterverksamhet. Detta innebär en forskningslucka eftersom kontaktcenter utgör en viktig kanal genom vilken kunder upplever ett servicevarumärke.

Den övergripande forskningsfrågan i denna avhandling är den följande:

Är befintliga teoretiska modeller för intern varumärkesutveckling tillämpliga på frontlinjepersonal i kontaktcenter?

Den övergripande forskningsfrågan är indelad i följande tre forskningsfrågor:

**FF 1:** Vilka är de förfaranden som chefer tillämpar för intern varumärkesutveckling i kontaktcenter och vilka erfarenheter av detta har de?

**FF 2:** Kan nuvarande teoretiska modeller för intern varumärkesutveckling ge en adekvat förklaring av de beteendemässiga konsekvenserna hos frontlinjepersonal i kontaktcenter?

**FF 3:** Vilka konsekvenser kan utkontraktering av kontaktcenter få för intern varumärkesutveckling?

Avhandlingsens övergripande bidrag är att det finns belägg för att befintliga teoretiska modeller för intern varumärkesutveckling inte är tillämpliga på frontlinjepersonal i kontaktcenter. Av artikel 1 framgår att chefer inte känner till de teoretiska modellerna och förfarandena för intern varumärkesutveckling och att de dessutom ställs inför flera hinder vid genomförandet. I artikel 2 ges de första bevisen på att intern varumärkesutveckling påverkar arbetstillfredsställelse och att en teoretisk modell för intern varumärkesutveckling kan förbättras genom att inkludera arbetstillfredsställelse. I artikel 3 utvecklas och testas en modell som innefattar arbetstillfredsställelse och två beteendemässiga konsekvenser, nämligen intention att stanna och varumärkesmedborgarskap. Denna artikel visar att drivkrafterna för intern varumärkesutveckling är organisationsspecifika. Av artikel 4 framgår att erfarenheterna av utkontraktering av kontaktcenter är övervägande negativa och att organisationer som utkontrakterar tenderar att förlora kontrollen över intern varumärkesutveckling och kundernas varumärkesupplevelse.

**Nyckelord:** Kontaktcenter, intern varumärkesutveckling, varumärkesmedborgarskap, varumärkesengagemang, utkontraktning
Preface / Acknowledgements

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Finally, to the Swedish people who welcomed us into the country and shared their valuable culture and traditions – from the brisk, cold beauty and midnight sun of Lulea, to historic and cosmopolitan Stockholm, I will miss visiting so frequently.

Johannesburg, 17 February 2020
Rose Du Preez
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Gallup - a well-known and highly regarded independent research firm in the USA - has been tracking employee engagement\(^1\) since the year 2000. According to Gallup (2018) only 13% of staff are engaged - worldwide. This contrasts sharply with the Gallup finding that 34% of American employees are engaged.

Imagine the consequences of such disengagement by a contact center agent, in a developing economy, attempting to serve a loyal customer! It is little wonder that academics have developed theories relating to internal brand management as a remedy for this phenomenon and that practitioners have also taken a keen interest.

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\(^1\) **Gallup** defines **engaged employees** as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. **Gallup** categorizes workers as "engaged" based on their responses to key workplace elements it has found predict important organizational performance outcomes.
Chapter 1: Introduction to the research

1.1 Background

Worldwide contact centers are ubiquitous in medium to large organizations operating in both B2B and B2C service industries. According to (Saberi et al., 2017):

Contact centers (CCs) are one of the main touch points of customers in an organization. They form one of the inputs to customer relationship management (CRM) to enable an organization to efficiently resolve customer queries. CCs have an important impact on customer satisfaction and are a strategic asset for CRM systems (p.543).

The frontline staff working in contact centers represent a major component of the way in which customers experience service organizations’ brands. In this regard contact centers and retailers are similar. In their conceptualization of internal marketing, Berry et al. (1976) state:

by satisfying the needs of its customer-affecting employees, the retail firm upgrades its capability for satisfying the needs of its customers (p.8).

For retailers and contact centers, it is the operations function which has direct contact with customers while marketing has responsibility for the management of the brand. This creates an inherent conflict between operations and marketing as the latter does not have full control of customer relationship management (Piercy, 2007). This conflict may be further aggravated should an organization choose to outsource all or some of their contact center operations.

Ueltschy et al. (2006) note that outsourcing call centers in the US is not uncommon but express some concern that this negatively impacts customer satisfaction. Park et al. (2011) and Park and Morgan (2017) found that the level of outsourcing CRM functions has a negative impact on the market-based learning process of organizations.

At the commencement of this thesis, internal brand management emerged as an important extension of the research in the field of internal marketing.² (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005) base their theory of internal brand management on the theories of Organizational Commitment (Buchanan, 1974), Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Organ, 1964) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974). Internal brand management is a facilitator of strategic brand management and brand orientation which drives brand performance (Iyer et al., 2018, Saberi et al., 2017). Internal branding is a planned managerial activity that focuses specifically on the brand (Matanda and Ndubisi, 2013, Santos-Vijande et al., 2013). It is executed to help employees to understand the brand values and brand promise which enables

² The terms internal brand management and internal branding are used interchangeably.
consistent service delivery to customers. This is referred to as employees ‘living the brand’ (Ind, 2001) so that organizations can build a solid brand reputation.

1.2 Research problem

1.2.1 Identification of research gaps

While there is considerable research into operations, for example, planning, resource allocation, etc. there is a paucity of research on marketing in contact centers. This presents a substantial research gap given that contact centers represent an important medium through which customers experience a service brand. This is especially true when the quality of service delivered has failed to meet expectations and the customer seeks fulfilment of the brand promise.

At the time of commencing this research, only two articles referred to internal brand management in contact centers (Burmann and König, 2011, Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). In service industries frontline employees are key (Aurand et al., 2005, Burmann and Zeplin, 2005, de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006, Einwiller and Will, 2002, King and Grace, 2008, King and Grace, 2012, Mahnert and Torres, 2007, Opoku et al., 2009), yet there is a lack of research into the role of the frontline employee. Although there is a significant body of literature on internal brand management very few studies focus on employees. Those that have examined frontline employees have generally focused on hospitality (Chang et al., 2012, Shaari et al., 2012, Xie et al., 2014), in particular Thai hotels (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009, Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007, Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011, Punjaisri et al., 2008, Punjaisri et al., 2009).

Given the research gap identified, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the applicability of extant theoretical internal brand management models to frontline employees in contact centers.

1.2.2 Research questions

The overall research question is:

Are extant theoretical models for internal brand management applicable to frontline employees in contact centers?

The overall research question is subdivided into the following research questions:

RQ1: What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?

RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?
RQ3: What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?

The rationale for these three research questions is detailed in Chapter 2: Literature review. The research questions are addressed in four published journal articles. The first journal article addresses RQ1; the second and third journal articles address RQ2; the fourth journal article addresses RQ3.

1.2.3 Delimitations

This research is delimited as follows:

The empirical data collected is restricted to South African contact centers,

The theoretical basis of the models used in testing for applicability is not challenged.
Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Contact Centers

The modern omnichannel contact center has evolved from the 1950s when Automatic Call Distributors led to the emergence of call centers, predominantly in the large telephone companies (Pearce, 2018). More recently, customers are served by contact centers using a range of media including inbound calls supplemented by email, chat, messaging, social media, and sophisticated self-service (ContactBabel, 2018). Different staff serve different channels, in a variety of settings (including home-based), and geographic locations.

Contact centers typically employ entry level applicants as customer facing agents. For instance, according to the Cordant report “Profile of the Contact Centre Sector Workforce” (Cordant, 2013), 39% of contact center agents in the United Kingdom (UK) are aged 16-24.

Although the focus in contact centers is customer relationship management, marketing typically plays a limited, if any, role in their management (Piercy, 2007). Furthermore, contact centers are characterized by transactional leadership. Operations management strictly monitors employee performance using metrics such as adherence to schedule and call handle time, often forcing scripted responses to customers making the job repetitive and boring. It also creates a stressful situation of emotional labor (Steinberg and Figart, 1999) as employees are required to deal with difficult and/or abusive customers. These circumstances create an environment frequently characterized by employee disengagement (Corace, 2007), stress, and low job satisfaction (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002, Jin and Guy, 2009).

The conditions described above are conducive to high staff attrition. Staff attrition in contact centers is typically very high, for example; for 2019 the median annual attrition rate was 16% in the UK (ContactBabel, 2019a) and the median annual attrition rate was 24% in the USA (ContactBabel, 2019b). The key reasons cited in both countries are:
Table 1. Reasons for staff attrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reason for staff attrition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Just the wrong type of person for the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Lack of promotion or development opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Repetitive work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Low pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Excessive pressure or stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>High numbers of temporary / seasonal staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Competition from other contact centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Abusive or unpleasant calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Poor working environment and conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (ContactBabel, 2019b, ContactBabel, 2019a)

2.2 From internal marketing to internal brand management

The term internal marketing is rooted in services marketing theory. The term was originally formulated by Berry et al. (1976) as a potential solution to the desire to drive customer satisfaction and loyalty in retail organizations.

Winter (1985) acknowledges the role of internal marketing in driving strategic initiatives while Rafiq and Ahmed (1993) propose a broader, more strategic, definition of internal marketing to “overcome organizational resistance to change and to align, motivate and integrate employees towards the effective implementation of corporate and functional strategies.” (p.222). They recommend that the responsibility for internal marketing be moved away from the traditional human resource custodians and elevated to a more strategic level in the organization.

Internal marketing was viewed as a strategic approach to managing human assets. Importantly (Grönroos, 1984, Piercy and Morgan, 1991) highlight that internal politics and resistance to change often impede strategy implementation.

Ind (2001) introduced the concept of 'living the brand' whereby employees are responsible for creating positive brand experiences while interacting with customers. This is particularly important among frontline employees. Frontline staff represents a major component of the way in which customers experience service organizations’ brands. Brand ambassadors (Jacobs, 2003) typically fulfil this role.
Burmann and Zeplin (2005) developed the construct of internal brand management within organizations. This stimulates the psychological attachment of employees to the brand and to exhibit extra-role brand behavior (brand citizenship behavior). This model is later tested empirically by Burmann et al. (2009b).

King and Grace (2008) examine how internal branding affects employee brand commitment, concluding that an internal market orientation is required. They develop a model for employee-based brand equity including an important component of internal brand management (King and Grace, 2009). Also King et al. (2012) developed and validated a scale for the measurement of employee brand equity in order to assess the effectiveness of internal brand management activities.

Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) recognize the key role played by employees in delivering the brand promise. Their empirical study confirms the impact of internal branding on employee attitudes, identification and loyalty to the brand. Punjaisri et al. (2009) demonstrate empirically the relationship between internal branding its behavioral outcomes. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) determine the relationship between internal branding, brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand performance among frontline employees. They conclude that internal branding is "unlikely to be successful if the work environment is not conducive to the employees and the brand values" (p.1521).

The Burmann et al. (2009b) study was conducted in Germany among all levels of employees across multiple industries. The King et al. (2012) study was conducted in Australia among all levels of employees in service industries. The Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) study was conducted in Thailand among customer interfacing hotel employees.

The nature of contact centers is quite different from industry in general, services in general and hotels which leads to the following research question:

**RQ1 - What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?**
2.3 The theoretical foundation of internal brand management

Among the researchers studying internal brand management (refer to previous section) only Burmann and Zeplin (2005) articulate the theoretical basis on which their model was developed. The theoretical foundations are now explored in greater detail.

Brand citizenship behavior

Brand citizenship behavior is based largely on the theory of organizational citizenship behavior which, according to Uçanok and Karabatı (2013) is the notion that "organizations need their employees to engage in discretionary behaviors beyond formal job requirements" (p. 89). Organizational citizenship behavior was originally developed by (Organ, 1964).

In their review of theoretical and empirical research on organizational citizenship behavior, Podsakoff et al. (2000) identify seven common dimensions, viz. helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue and self-development.

By changing the focus from colleagues to customers and the organization as a whole to the brand, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) map the seven dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior identified by Podsakoff et al. (2000) into a marketing context and thus conceptualize brand citizenship behavior. This was later tested by Burmann et al. (2009b) and distilled into three dimensions, viz. willingness to help (brand acceptance, BAcc), brand enthusiasm (brand proselytization, BPro) and propensity for further development (brand development, BDev).

Brand commitment

Brand commitment is based on the Theory of Organizational Commitment. It was originally developed by Buchanan (1974) and is described by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) as “the individual's psychological attachment to an organization - the psychological bond linking the individual and the organization” (p.492).

Organizational commitment is considered by Podsakoff et al. (2000) to be an antecedent of organizational citizenship behavior organizational citizenship behavior and thus logically of brand citizenship behavior as well. While organizational commitment is often considered as comprising affective, normative and continuance commitment (Allen and Meyer (1990), Bloemer and Oderkerken-Schröder (2006) found that affective commitment was the largest contributor to employee loyalty behaviors. In the case of a corporate brand, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) regard organizational commitment as synonymous with brand commitment. They base their definition on the work of Allen and Meyer (1990).
Internal brand management

Kelman (1958) identifies three processes of influence namely; compliance, identification and internalization. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) use these drivers as antecedents of organizational commitment. They find that neither compliance nor internalization influence extra-role behaviors whereas identification has a significant influence. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) acknowledge the three antecedents found by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). However, they only use identification in the development of the three levers which drive internal brand management. Brand identification is based on Social Identity Theory, (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity is described by Tajfel (1974) as

_that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that._

According to Burmann and Zeplin (2005)

_Strong identification will induce brand citizenship behaviors due to a feeling of personal obligation to the brand as a group, the group of direct colleagues, the CEO or the immediate superior._

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) identify three levers to drive brand commitment, and subsequently brand citizenship behavior in organizations. The use of these three levers represents their concept of internal brand management. The first lever is ‘brand-centered HR activities’, (also known as brand identity). These activities include staff selection and recruitment to ensure the alignment of personal and brand identities. Further activities include orientation and initial training to initiate the socialization process and therefore “convey the brand identity with its heritage and vision, its values, capabilities and personality” Burmann and Zeplin (2005) p.287.

The second lever is ‘brand communication’ which comprises largely internal communications with employees to develop their understanding of brand relevance, the brand identity concept, and the brand value statement. The organizations’ external communications also exert some influence on brand commitment.

The third lever is ‘brand leadership’ which occurs at both macro - and micro-levels. Macro-leadership refers to the CEO while micro refers to managers. Both levels reflect the brand with their words and deeds.

The theory-based model developed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and tested by Burmann et al. (2009b) is illustrated in Figure 1. The three levers representing the dimensions of internal brand management were measured as first-order reflective constructs. The relationships are reflective because the construct can be seen to cause the variables used in measurement i.e. the manifest variables, however, internal brand management is measured as a second-order formative construct as
it results from the first order levers (constructs). In sharp contrast, brand citizenship behavior is measured as a second-order reflective construct as it is the cause of the three constructs which define it.

**Figure 1: The theory based Burmann and Zeplin (2005) model**

![Diagram showing constructs Bld, BCom, BLead, IBM, BC, BCB, BAcc, and BPco]

**Additional theoretical considerations**

Given that staff attrition is a significant problem in contact centers, it is clearly necessary to add employee job satisfaction (JS) and intention to stay (IS) to the theory-based model. Corace (2007) highlights that ‘the quiet majority’, often the majority of employees in an organization, are not actively engaged in their jobs. He highlights that a:

*Critical challenge is to clearly understand which factors have the greatest potential for motivating the investment of discretionary work effort by employees (p.172).*

Discretionary effort corresponds to extra-role behavior (BCB). He identifies the first factor as job satisfaction, which Podsakoff et al. (2000) identify as an antecedent to BCB.

Furthermore, with respect to brand commitment O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) state that:

*Without a psychological attachment predicated on more than simple material exchange, higher turnover is also possible*” (p.493).

This leads to the following research question:

**RQ2 - Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?**
2.4 Outsourcing contact centers

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) refer to the difficulties associated with fostering brand commitment among frontline employees in an outsourced environment, due to the lack of brand identity and brand internalization. Ueltschy et al. (2006) note that outsourcing call centers in the US is not uncommon but express some concern that this negatively impacts customer satisfaction. Park et al. (2011) and Park and Morgan (2017) found that the level of outsourcing customer relationship management functions has a negative impact on the market-based learning process of organizations. Burmann and König (2011) question whether internal brand management can succeed in creating brand ambassadors in an outsourced call center operation.

According to Luvison and Bendixen (2010) the decision to outsource is driven by six factors including:

• the reduction of costs
• the conversion of fixed to variable costs
• enhanced flexibility
• the promise of superior expertise
• leading-edge technology and
• an ability to focus on core competencies of the business

The first three factors are based on the theory of transaction cost economics (TCE) developed by Williamson (1979). The last three factors are based on the theory of the resource-based view of the firm (RBV) developed by Barney (1991).

It is important to note that the expertise of contact center outsource providers lies in operational efficiencies through economies of scale, and possibly leading-edge technology. Their business philosophy and modus operandi do not include ensuring customers' experience the brand as intended by the brand owner.

It seems likely that organizations outsourcing all or part of their contact center operations would subscribe to a TCE view of the world. Those who retain their contact center operations in-house would subscribe to an RBV world view.

Luvison and Bendixen (2010) warn that outsourcing creates organizational complexity which may result in unintended consequences. This leads to the following research question:

**RQ3 - What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?**
Chapter 3: Research approach and methodology

3.1 Introduction

The overall research question in this thesis is:

Are extant theoretical models for internal brand management applicable to frontline employees in contact centers?

The three theory-based research questions addressed in this thesis are:

RQ1: What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?

RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?

RQ3: What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?

The nature of these research questions requires an empirical rather than conceptual investigation. Furthermore, a nomothetic rather than idiographic approach is indicated because the phenomena studied pertain to a general population rather than individual persons. Research questions 1 and 3 are exploratory in nature whereas RQ2 is confirmatory in nature.

3.2 Nature of reasoning

There are three main types of reasoning used in research, viz. deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning starts with a premise or assumption which the researcher assumes to be true, then proceeds logically to develop conclusions. This type of reasoning was used in the development of the research questions for this thesis, the research questions in research papers 1 and 4 and the development of hypotheses in research papers 2 and 3 (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012).

Inductive reasoning begins with specific observations which are then used to formulate general conclusions. This type of reasoning was used in the testing of hypotheses in research papers 2 and 3 (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012).

Abductive reasoning is inferential in nature and seeks the most plausible explanation for a given set of data (Walton, 2014). This type of reasoning is the overall approach adopted in all four research papers.
3.3 Philosophical assumptions

When conducting research, it is important for a researcher to declare their philosophical assumptions. According to Goles and Hirschheim (2000)

*Methods and perspectives are important. They provide standards on which to judge the rigor and relevance of a piece of research. But they are secondary to the contribution of ideas (p.264).*

As a researcher my perspective is aligned to the post-positivist world view described by Creswell and Creswell (2018) viz.

- Knowledge is conjectural
- Research is the process of making claims and then refining or abandoning some of them for other claims more strongly warranted
- Data, evidence, and rational considerations shape knowledge
- Research seeks to develop relevant, true statements, ones that can serve to explain the situation of concern or that describe the causal relationships of interest
- Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry (p.7)

3.4 Overall research design

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2012)

*when little information exists on a topic, when variables are unknown, when a relevant theory base is inadequate or missing, a qualitative study can help define what is important, that is, what needs to be studied (p.139).*

Research questions 1 and 3 are exploratory in nature and lend themselves to a qualitative rather than quantitative research approach. The reasons for this are that questions need to be answered rather than hypotheses tested. In sharp contrast, research question 2 requires the testing (and possibly expanding) of theory based causal models. This means that RQ2 requires a quantitative approach.

Leedy and Ormrod (2012) highlight that:

*Especially in studies of human behavior, mixed-methods design with both quantitative and qualitative elements often provide a more complete picture of a phenomenon than either approach could do alone (p.98).*
This means that mixed-methods is the most appropriate approach to answer the overall research question.

Leedy and Ormrod (2012) describe four mixed-methods designs as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Mixed-methods research designs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Data Collection Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convergent</td>
<td>Equal emphasis to quantitative and qualitative</td>
<td>Same research questions</td>
<td>Same time frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>Usually one dominates</td>
<td>Different research questions</td>
<td>Same time frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>Qualitative in order to conduct quantitative</td>
<td>Same research questions</td>
<td>Phased, qualitative then quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>Qualitative in order to explain quantitative</td>
<td>Same research questions</td>
<td>Phased, quantitative then qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it is evident that an embedded design is appropriate.

3.5 Methods adopted for the research papers

3.5.1 Methods adopted for the qualitative papers

Research design

Leedy and Ormrod (2012) identify five qualitative research designs, viz: case study, ethnography, phenomenological study, grounded theory study and content analysis. Research papers 1 and 4 (which addresses RQ 1 and 3 respectively) required the perspective and experiences of contact center industry participants. This implies that a phenomenological approach was an appropriate research design (Groenewald, 2004, Husserl, 1962, Leedy and Ormrod, 2012).
Sampling

For research paper 1 a combination of purposive and criterion sampling was employed as the most logical approach to cultivating rich and textured data; specifically seeking those who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988) (p.150.) and who are likely to know the study area and offer informed responses (Creswell, 2007).

Five financial services organizations familiar to the author were selected. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with three respondents per organization (a senior executive, a marketing/communications manager with responsibility for internal branding and a first-line supervisor).

Research paper 4 also required a non-random purposive sample (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012, Welman and Kruger, 1999). As per Kruger (1988), each respondent was selected based on their individual experiences “relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (p.150). Each respondent was uniquely positioned to offer insight into the research topic. For this type of study, Boyd (2001) recommends a sample size of between two and ten, whilst Leedy and Ormrod (2012) recommend between five and 25.

Ten contact center executives consented to be interviewed anonymously in this study. A semi-structured interview outline was emailed to respondents prior to the in-depth face to face interviews being conducted.

Method of analysis

Papers 1 and 4, semi-structured discussion outlines were used for the interviews. Each interview was approximately one hour in duration and was recorded (with permission). To minimize observer bias each interview was independently transcribed in full (Schilling, 2006). Transcriptions were read and checked for accuracy. Each transcription was read several times. The researchers independently coded the responses to each question pertaining to the assertions. The minor differences were resolved by referring to the transcriptions and interviews whenever further clarity was required.

Each statement was allocated a three-digit numeric code. These codes were documented in a statement matrix. Codes were then synthesized based on commonality. To further avoid researcher bias the themes were cross-checked by an independent party familiar with the topic. The coding was checked for consistency. Common meaning units were identified and integrated to typify respondents perspectives and experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012, Miles and Huberman, 1994).

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3 In general probability sampling is inappropriate for qualitative research designs.
3.5.2 Methods adopted for the quantitative papers

Research design

Quantitative research falls broadly into two categories: descriptive and causal (Iacobucci and Churchill, 2018). Research papers 2 and 3 which address RQ 2 tested hypotheses which could be represented in causal path models. Thus, a causal research approach in which the relationship between independent and dependent variables are measured was appropriate.

Sampling

For research paper 2 a convenience sample of a single financial services firm operating in South Africa was selected. The contact center executive invited all frontline employees, supervisors, managers, and support staff to participate in the survey. The 175 employees anonymously completed a questionnaire using SurveyMonkey, which yielded 156 usable responses.

In research paper 3 the case method was used with data collected from three organizations. In addition to the data collected for research paper 2, data was collected from a large multinational telecommunications company, employing about 25,000 people. A random sample of 100 contact center agents and their supervisors (based in South Africa) were invited by their executive to anonymously complete a questionnaire using SurveyMonkey. A research colleague ⁴ provided the third set of data. This data was collected among employees of a well-known regional grocery chain operating in the USA. The chain employs more than 200,000 people and operates over 1,100 stores. Ten randomly selected stores in a specific district were selected and 40 surveys, per site, distributed to employees for completion. The completed surveys were returned to the company’s survey department, scanned and the data provided to the researchers.

Method of analysis

For research papers 2 and 3 the dimensions of internal brand management were adapted from the Burmann et al. (2009b) instrument. Internal brand management was modeled as a second order, formative construct of brand identity, brand communication, and brand leadership.

Brand commitment was adapted from the Burmann et al. (2009b), King and Grace (2010) and King and Grace (2012) instruments. Job satisfaction and intention to stay were adapted from Firth et al. (2004) and Siong et al. (2006) instruments. For research paper 3 the Burmann et al. (2009b) instrument was the basis of questions used for the measurement of brand acceptance, brand proselytization, and brand development. Brand citizenship behavior was measured as a second-order reflective construct of these three dimensions. For the two South African samples respondents were asked to rate the questions on

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⁴ I would like to thank Dr Matthew Porricelli for allowing me to use his data in this research.
a 7-point Likert scale. For the retail sample, respondents were asked to rate the questions on a 5-point Likert scale.

In order to measure the path coefficients in the models, and thus test the hypotheses for both research papers 2 and 3, PLS path modelling was used. This method was used for several reasons: 1) to be consistent with the source models from the literature which also used PLS path modelling; 2) the formative nature of internal brand management; 3) the relatively small sample sizes; and 4) the fact that the normal distribution of the variables could not be assumed. For both research papers 2 and 3 exploratory factor analysis was used to confirm the unidimensionality of the constructs.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Confirmatory factor analysis is used in association with SEM path modelling and is not used in PLS path modelling.
Chapter 4: Summary of papers

This chapter provides a summary of the four research papers included in this thesis. The overall research question is:

Are extant theoretical models for internal brand management applicable to frontline employees in contact centers?

The overall research question is subdivided into the following research questions which are addressed in four published articles:

**RQ1:** What are managers' practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?

**RQ2:** Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?

**RQ3:** What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?

### 4.1 Paper 1: Internal branding experiences in the financial services sector in South Africa

#### 4.1.1 Gap and purpose

Frontline staff represents a major component of the way in which customers experience service organizations’ brands. ‘Brand ambassadors’ (Jacobs, 2003) typically fulfill this role. Ind (2001) introduced the concept of ‘living the brand’ whereby employees are responsible for creating positive brand experiences while interacting with customers. This is particularly important among frontline employees.

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) then developed the construct of internal brand management within organizations. This stimulates the psychological attachment of employees to the brand and to extra-role brand behavior (brand citizenship behavior).

In the extremely competitive financial services industry, employees are critical to the delivery of the service brand. Existing theoretical models propose methods of internal brand management however, very little is known about the practices and experiences of organizations.

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This research paper addresses the research question:

**RQ1: What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?**

### 4.1.2 Findings

This paper found that while managers in the contact centers studied claimed to be using internal brand management, they were unfamiliar with the theoretical models and practices. In terms of their experiences, these managers found internal branding difficult to implement and highlighted numerous barriers and obstacles: recruitment of appropriate staff, resistance to change, and language comprehension/communication. Specific mention was made of employee laziness.

### 4.1.3 Contribution

The overall contribution of this paper is summarized as: contact center managers claim to be implementing internal brand management but are unfamiliar with extant internal brand management models, referring to dated internal marketing practices. This paper offers insight into the practices and challenges experienced by practitioners.

### 4.2 Paper 2: The impact of internal brand management on employee job satisfaction, brand commitment and intention to stay.

#### 4.2.1 Gap and purpose

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) identify three levers to drive brand commitment, and subsequently brand citizenship behavior in organizations. The use of these three levers represents their concept of internal brand management. The first lever is ‘brand-centered HR activities’, (also known as brand identity). These activities include staff selection and recruitment to ensure the alignment of personal and brand identities. Further activities include orientation and initial training to initiate the socialization process and therefore “convey the brand identity with its heritage and vision, its values, capabilities and personality” Burmann and Zeplin (2005) p.287.

The second lever is ‘brand communication’ which comprises largely internal communications with employees to develop their understanding of brand relevance, the brand identity concept, and the brand

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value statement. The organizations’ external communications also exert some influence on brand commitment.

The third lever is ‘brand leadership’ which occurs at both macro- and micro-levels. Macro-leadership refers to the CEO while micro refers to managers. Both levels reflect the brand with their words and deeds.

Given that staff attrition is a significant problem in contact centers, it is clearly necessary to add employee job satisfaction (JS) and intention to stay (IS) to the theory-based model.

This research paper addresses the research question:

**RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?**

### 4.2.2 Findings

This paper found that internal brand management is a stronger driver of job satisfaction than of brand commitment, with job satisfaction partially mediating the relationship between internal brand management and brand commitment. These findings are important in that this is the first direct evidence of internal brand management affecting job satisfaction, and the inclusion of job satisfaction improves a theoretical internal brand management model.

Furthermore, it was found that the three levers driving internal brand management were not the same as those theoretically postulated. The brand leadership lever was not supported, brand communication separated into internal and external brand communication and brand identity was supported.

### 4.2.3 Contribution

The inclusion of job satisfaction in the internal brand management models is significant and has been widely used in recent research articles.
4.3 Paper 3: The behavioral consequences of internal brand management among frontline employees.8

4.3.1 Gap and purpose

Extant theoretical models only include one behavioral consequence of internal brand management viz. brand citizenship behavior. Likewise, only one driver of brand citizenship behavior is included viz. brand commitment. In this paper job satisfaction is added as a driver of brand citizenship behavior and intention to stay is added as a behavioral consequence of internal brand management.

This research paper addresses the research question:

RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?

4.3.2 Findings

The key finding in this paper was that the levers driving internal brand management are context dependent. It was also found that only brand acceptance and brand development were components of brand citizenship behavior with brand proselytization absent in all three cases. Evidence from three organizations demonstrates that the additions of job satisfaction and intention to stay are justified.

4.3.3 Contribution

A model which includes job satisfaction, and two behavioral consequences viz. intention to stay and brand citizenship behavior was developed and tested. The finding that brand proselytization was not a component of brand citizenship behavior is of considerable research interest.

4.4 Paper 4: Outsourcing contact centers: Internal branding challenges and consequences.9

4.4.1 Gap and purpose

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) refer to the difficulties associated with fostering brand commitment among frontline employees in an outsourced environment, due to the lack of brand identity and brand

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internalization. Burmann and König (2011) question whether internal brand management can succeed in creating brand ambassadors in an outsourced call center operation.

According to Luvison and Bendixen (2010) the decision to outsource is driven by six factors including:

- the reduction of costs
- the conversion of fixed to variable costs
- enhanced flexibility
- the promise of superior expertise
- leading-edge technology and
- an ability to focus on core competencies of the business

Luvison and Bendixen (2010) warn that outsourcing creates organizational complexity which may result in unintended consequences.

This research paper addresses the research question:

**RQ3: What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?**

### 4.4.2 Findings

Paper 4 reveals that those organizations which chose to keep their contact center operations in-house are characterized as having a very strong commitment to their customers’ experience of the brand and have strong internal branding programs in place. In sharp contrast organizations which outsource all or part of their contact center operations do so for reasons of cost savings and headcount reduction where operational efficiency is mission critical. Marketing plays little, if any role in the decision to outsource and in the quality of customer service provided.

The dominant experience of outsourcing is negative. Damage to brand reputation and deterioration in customer experience at the outsourcer were among the key problems experienced.

These findings indicate that when contact center operations outsource, the organization tends to lose control of internal brand management and the customers’ brand experience.

### 4.4.3 Contribution

This paper provides evidence of the damage to brand reputation and the deterioration in customer experience when outsourcing contact centers.

An overall summary of the papers is presented in Table 3 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Propositions/hypotheses</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1     | Internal branding experiences in the financial services sector in South Africa | To elicit managers’ experiences as to how their organizations, enable frontline employees to understand the brand, focusing on those aspects deemed critical to the success of internal branding. To explore managers’ perspectives of the barriers and obstacles which inhibit the success of internal branding. | • Main themes correspond to extant literature.  
• Two new enabling/critical factors emerge, viz. celebrate and pay/incentives.  
• One new barrier/obstacle emerges – laziness.  
• Practitioners unfamiliar with theoretical models. | • Contact center managers claim to be implementing internal brand management, but they are unfamiliar with extant theoretical models.  
• Their perspectives and experiences are based on dated internal marketing concepts. |
| 2     | The impact of internal brand management on employee job satisfaction, brand commitment and intention to stay | H1: Internal brand management will have a positive effect on brand commitment.  
H2: Internal brand management will have a positive effect on job satisfaction.  
H3: Brand commitment mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and employees’ intention to stay. | • All hypotheses supported.  
• The dimensions of IBM are different to those postulated by Burmann et al. (2009b). | • The inclusion of job satisfaction in IBM models is significant and has been widely used in recent research articles. |
| 3 | The behavioral consequences of internal brand management among frontline employees | H\(_{1a}\). IBM has a direct positive influence on JS.  
H\(_{1b}\). IBM has a direct positive influence on BC.  
H\(_{1c}\). IBM has a direct positive influence on BCB.  
H\(_{1d}\). IBM has a direct positive influence on IS.  
H\(_2\). The positive effect of JS on IS is mediated by BC.  
H\(_3\). The positive effect of JS on BCB is mediated by BC. | • H\(_{1a}\), H\(_{1b}\), and H\(_{1c}\) are supported. 
• H\(_{1d}\) not supported. 
• H\(_2\) and H\(_3\) partially supported. 
• The drivers of IBM are organization dependent. 
• BPro was absent as a component of BCB. | • A model which includes job satisfaction, and two behavioral consequences viz. intention to stay and brand citizenship behavior was developed and tested. This has been cited in several recent research articles. |
| 4 | Outsourcing contact centers: Internal branding challenges and consequences | Proposition 1: Organizations whose strategic priority is their customers’ brand experience, will not outsource the contact center function.  
Proposition 2: Organizations whose strategic priority is operational and cost efficiency will outsource the contact center function.  
Proposition 3: Organizations which outsource contact centers will experience increased: management complexity; learning complexity; strategic complexity. | • All propositions supported. 
• Outsourcing may result in a loss of control over internal brand management. | • Evidence of damage to brand reputation and deterioration in customer experience when outsourcing contact centers. |
Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter the answers to the individual and overall research questions are presented. In addition, the theoretical contributions of the thesis are discussed as well as the managerial implications, avenues for future research, and the limitations of the research.

5.1 Answers to the research questions

RQ1: What are managers’ practices and experiences of internal brand management in contact centers?

In research paper 1 it was found that managers in the contact centers studied claimed to use internal branding. However, they were unfamiliar with the theoretical models and practices described in academic literature. Their key practices include communicating brand identity, clarifying the role and contribution of employees, and measuring customer satisfaction. Specific mention was made of the importance of incentives (remuneration and rewards) and celebration of success. Other than communicating brand identity, these practices do not form part of the theoretical internal brand management models.

In terms of their experiences, these managers found internal branding difficult to implement and highlighted numerous barriers and obstacles: recruitment of appropriate staff, resistance to change, and language comprehension/communication. Specific mention was made of employee laziness. It is interesting to note that these challenges correspond largely to those identified by Schultz (2004) in the implementation of internal marketing programs. It appears that academic research in the field of internal brand management has yet to filter into the practitioner world.

RQ2: Do current theoretical models of internal brand management adequately explain the behavioral consequences among frontline employees in contact centers?

In research paper 2, intention to stay is introduced as a variable because of the inherently high staff turnover present in contact centers. Likewise, job satisfaction is introduced as a known driver of intention to stay, possibly mediated by organizational commitment (Firth et al., 2004, Schaubroeck et al., 1989). In this context organizational commitment is synonymous with brand commitment.

It was found that internal brand management is a stronger driver of job satisfaction than of brand commitment, with job satisfaction partially mediating the relationship between internal brand management and brand commitment.
These findings are important in that this is the first direct evidence of internal brand management affecting job satisfaction, and the inclusion of job satisfaction improves a theoretical internal brand management model.

Furthermore, it was found that the three levers driving internal brand management were not the same as those theoretically postulated. The brand leadership lever was not supported, brand communication separated into internal and external brand communication and brand identity was supported.

Extant theoretical models only include one behavioral consequence of internal brand management viz. brand citizenship behavior. Likewise, only one driver of brand citizenship behavior is included viz. brand commitment. In research paper 3, job satisfaction is added as a driver of brand citizenship behavior and intention to stay is added as a behavioral consequence of internal brand management. Evidence from three organizations demonstrated that these additions are justified.

The key findings across these cases was that the levers driving internal brand management are context dependent. It was also found that only brand acceptance and brand development were components of brand citizenship behavior with brand proselytization absent in all three cases.

The findings from research papers 2 and 3 illustrate the inadequacy of current theoretical models of internal brand management to adequately explain behavioral consequences among frontline employees.

**RQ3: What are the implications of outsourcing contact centers for internal brand management?**

In research paper 4 those organizations which chose to keep their contact center operations in-house were characterized as having a very strong commitment to their customers' experience of the brand and have strong internal branding programs in place. This aligns with the view of Mohr et al. (2011) that customer relationships are mission critical. In sharp contrast organizations which outsource all or some of their contact center operations do so for reasons of cost savings and headcount reduction where operational efficiency is mission critical. Marketing plays little, if any role in the decision to outsource and in the quality of customer service provided.

The dominant experience of outsourcing was negative. Damage to brand reputation and deterioration in customer experience at the outsourcer were among the key problems experienced. These indicate that when contact center operations are outsourced, the organization tends to lose control of internal brand management and the customers' brand experience. This is further complicated by employees of the outsourcer having divided loyalty between their employers' brand and the brand for which they are providing service.
The two key messages for management are: 1) to resist being lured to the short-term benefits of outsourcing like ‘magpies to bright shiny objects’ and 2) for the marketing function to recognize that contact center operations are an integral part of customer relationship management and they should, therefore, be actively involved in any decision to outsource this function.

Overall research question:

Are extant theoretical models for internal brand management applicable to frontline employees in contact centers?

In this thesis it has been demonstrated that, while contact center managers claim to be implementing internal brand management in their organizations, they are unfamiliar with extant theoretical models. Their perspectives and experiences of the subject reflect knowledge of dated internal marketing concepts. Contact centers are characterized by high turnover rates among frontline employees. Intention to stay is thus an important behavioral consequence of any internal brand management initiative. Job satisfaction was found to be a driver of intention to stay, brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior. The dominant experience of those organizations which outsource all/part of their contact center operations is negative. In terms of marketing, outsourcing results in loss of control of the internal brand management function and customers experience of the brand. This evidence indicates that extant theoretical models of internal brand management are not applicable to frontline employees in contact centers.

5.2 Theoretical contribution of the thesis

The inclusion of job satisfaction in internal brand management models is a significant contribution and has been recognized in many recent research articles on the subject for example: Anselmsson et al. (2016), Bravo et al. (2017) Buil et al. (2016) Burmann and Piehler (2017), Burmann et al. (2018), Garas et al. (2018), Gilani (2019), Iyer et al. (2018), Murillo and King (2019), Piehler et al. (2018) and Saleem and Iglesias (2016).

A unique contribution is made in developing and testing a model which includes job satisfaction, and two behavioral consequences viz. intention to stay and brand citizenship behavior. This is important in that it demonstrates both marketing and human resources related behaviors. This contribution has been recognized in recent research articles for example: Boukis and Christodoulides (2018), Chiang et al. (2018), Hasni et al. (2018), Gilani (2019), Liao et al. (2019), Murillo and King (2019) and Sujchaphong et al. (2019).

The finding that the drivers of internal brand management are organization-specific is important. Burmann et al. (2009b) hints that this may be caused by two contextual factors “those aligning the
corporate culture and corporate structure fit with the identity of the brand” (p.267). Alternatively, this could indicate either that the construct of internal brand management is poorly defined or that there is scope for further development of the construct.

The finding that brand proselytization was not a component of brand citizenship behavior is of considerable research interest. It is probably the consequence of the sharp difference in the sample structure used in this research compared to other research studies, in that it comprised largely frontline employees and their immediate supervisors rather than a broad spectrum of employees. Furthermore, the research was conducted in contact centers characterized by high levels of staff turnover indicating an unhealthy work environment dominated by transactional leadership. The working world for frontline employees is very different from that of management and staff in general because of the intensity of customer interaction. Furthermore, what is considered extra-role behavior for managers and staff in general, has become in-role for frontline staff (i.e. included in their job description), for example:

- being helpful towards customers and other colleagues,
- putting yourself in the customers shoes,
- caring about the quality of their work and the customer outcomes,
- participating in training.

This implies that the theoretical construct of brand citizenship behavior needs to be modified for frontline employees.

Research into the marketing consequences of outsourcing contact centers is extremely limited. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggest outsourcing may prove difficult because of the ‘emotional distance’ between the outsourcers employees and the brand. Ueltschy et al. (2006) express some concern that outsourcing contact centers negatively impacts customer satisfaction. Burmann and König (2011) question whether internal brand management can be developed in an outsourced contact center environment. Park et al. (2011) and Park and Morgan (2017) found that outsourcing customer relationship management functions has a negative impact on the market-based learning processes of organizations.

In this research the reasons for and consequences of outsourcing contact centers are explored in detail. The dominant experience of outsourcing was negative. Damage to brand reputation and deterioration in customer experience at the outsourcer were among the key problems experienced. These indicate that when contact center operations outsource, the organization tends to lose control of internal brand management and the customers’ brand experience. This is further complicated by employees of the outsourcer having divided loyalty between their employers’ brand and the brand for which they are providing service.
5.3 Managerial implications

Many organizations regard contact centers as cost centers rather than as an asset contributing to customer relationship management. The CEO and managers expect frontline staff to ‘live the brand’ while they seldom do. For frontline staff to ‘live the brand’ it is imperative that managers act as role models in both word and deed i.e. behave as internal brand ambassadors.

It is apparent that practitioners are unfamiliar with the current theoretical models of internal brand management however, they have a clear understanding of the importance of internal brand management and the potential benefits to the organization. Numerous obstacles to implementation have been described. The recruitment of frontline line staff, as well as resistance to change across the organization, are serious concerns. Largely due to the low levels of education in South Africa, it is difficult to recruit appropriate staff in terms of brand identity fit, however, this could be partly solved through thorough induction and initial training. Many organizations have dramatically reduced their initial training from as long as three months down to a couple of weeks. By limiting training, the organization sets employees up for failure and drives high attrition. All these actions can destroy the outcomes of an internal brand management program while negatively impacting customers’ experience of the brand.

In order to bridge the gap between the worlds of management and frontline employees the internal brand management program should be tailored to suit the audience. For example, the means of communication, as well as the choice of language and terminology used, need to be carefully considered.

Managers can learn a great deal by listening to frontline staff about their experiences with customers. This would not only result in a better understanding of frontline employees ‘world of work’, for example, dealing with dissatisfied and complaining customers most of their working day. The contact center also represents an important source of customers current sentiments about the brand and products or services offered.

Internal branding should be viewed as a cross-functional endeavor. Marketing, Human Resources, and Operations are impacted by and benefit from a well-executed internal branding program. A siloed approach will inhibit the success of an internal brand management program. The benefits of internal brand management by department are presented in Table 4.
**Table 4. Internal branding benefits by function**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Augmented customer relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthened brand image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved customer retention and loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Lower recruitment and initial training costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved employee retention especially among frontline staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced job satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Improved ‘first contact resolution’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved job satisfaction and lower absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower employee attrition resulting in improved retention of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other functions</td>
<td>A consistent understanding of brand values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better appreciation of customers and their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create more brand champions across the organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizations which outsource contact center operations face a grave risk of losing control of any internal branding initiatives. Often the decision to outsource is made at an executive level driven by finance and operations. Marketing is seldom consulted, and thus the impact of the decision to outsource on the brand is not taken into consideration. Marketing needs to recognize that contact center operations are an integral part of CRM, and therefore their input is vital.

Executives need to be cognizant of the unintended consequences of outsourcing which manifest themselves as increased organizational complexity.

### 5.4 Avenues future research

High staff attrition is not only characteristic of contact centers but also impacts many other sectors of the service industry, such as retail and hospitality. This means that the findings of this research are applicable in a broader context where organizations are heavily reliant on entry level frontline employees.
The finding that internal brand management is context specific should be addressed in future research. It is suggested that the work of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) be revisited. While Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Burmann et al. (2009b) explore the three antecedents of brand commitment suggested by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) they abandon compliance and combine identification and internalization.

Compliance is likely to be extremely important for frontline employees in the above-mentioned industries, for example, dress code is regarded as important in both the retail and hospitality industries whilst ‘scripted responses’ are prevalent in customer facing services. These examples constitute in-role brand behavior. The process of brand identification is critically dependent on both internal and external communications by the organization. The physical aspects of brand identity also play a role (Gilani, 2019, Glanfield et al., 2017). Logically, this is quite different from the process of brand internalization where the transmission of values congruency emanates from the behavior of colleagues and superiors (Bravo et al., 2017, Gilani, 2019, Shaari et al., 2015) as well as internal communications.

The measurement of brand citizenship behavior is inconsistent among researchers. For instance, Burmann et al. (2009a), King and Grace (2010), Xie et al. (2014) and Buil et al. (2016) all use different instruments to measure brand citizenship behavior. This problem is recognized by Saleem and Iglesias (2016) and Piehler (2018). Piehler et al. (2016) attempt to reconceptualize the construct of brand citizenship behavior (without explicitly defining it). They emphasize that the crux of brand citizenship behavior is discretionary behavior yet include brand compliance as a dimension. Including this dimension is contradictory as brand compliance is in-role behavior and therefore is not discretionary, particularly among frontline employees where brand compliance is usually included in their job description. It is suggested that specific research defining and confirming the dimensions of brand citizenship behavior be conducted.

Since the initial research of Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) and King and Grace (2008) on internal brand management there have been a considerable number of publications on the subject in marketing journals. Many different methodologies incorporating additional variables have been proposed and tested. It is time for a systematic literature review to synthesize the characteristics and findings in the field. This would consolidate key findings, identify research gaps, highlight inconsistencies and create a foundation for future research on the topic.

The use of second-order constructs which are not directly measured is problematic in that the granular details of relationships may be lost. For instance, the relationship between the specific dimensions of internal brand management on intermediary constructs such as brand commitment, are not measured. Similarly, the relationship between brand commitment and the specific dimensions of brand citizenship behavior are not measured. Examples of such an approach are provided by Buil et al. (2016) and Piehler (2018).
Most extant research on internal branding focuses on creating positive employee behaviors. However, there are many disgruntled and disengaged employees in many organizations which could lead to sabotage of the brand ((Harris and Ogbonna, 2002, Ind, 2007, Wallace and de Chernatony, 2007, Wallace and De Chernatony, 2008, Wallace and de Chernatony, 2009b, Wallace and De Chernatony, 2009a). This aspect warrants further investigation.

5.5 Limitations

The research in this thesis is limited in that the empirical data was collected in South African contact centers (except for the data from Dr. Matthew Porricelli). It is necessary to explore other geographic locations and other frontline customer service environments.

The research mainly uses existing measures for the constructs in the models, particularly those of internal brand management and brand citizenship behavior. The models tested also rely heavily on the concepts developed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Burmann et al. (2009b).

Future research should address these shortcomings.

5.6 UN Sustainability goals

In this thesis the following UN sustainability goals and targets are addressed:

**Sustainable Development Goal 8** - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The target is to achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors.

**Sustainable Development Goal 10** – ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

This is achieved by focusing on contact centers in a developing economy.

5.7 Author contribution

This compilation thesis comprises four research papers. Paper 1 is my solo research paper. Paper 2 is a collaborative research effort between Professor Mike Bendixen and me. In this paper I was

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10 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, #envision2030.
responsible for the literature review and the collection of the data, while Professor Mike Bendixen was involved in the research design and statistical analysis. We collaborated on the interpretation and writing up of the results. Paper 3 is a collaborative research effort. I was responsible for the literature review, with initial assistance from Professor Russell Abratt, and the collection of the data. Professor Mike Bendixen was involved in the research design and statistical analysis. We all collaborated on the interpretation and writing up of the results. Paper 4 is a collaborative research effort between Professor Mike Bendixen and me. I was responsible for the data collection and analysis, we collaborated to select appropriate literature and in interpreting and writing up the results.
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## Glossary of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAcc</td>
<td>Brand acceptance (willingness to help)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Brand commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCB</td>
<td>Brand citizenship behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Business to business</td>
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<tr>
<td>B2C</td>
<td>Business to consumer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCom</td>
<td>Brand communications (internal and external)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDev</td>
<td>Brand development</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPro</td>
<td>Brand proselytization (word of mouth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Contact center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief executive officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Customer relationship management</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>Internal brand management</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Intention to stay</td>
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<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLS</td>
<td>Partial least squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Structural equation modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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