Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The theme of this research is an exploration of the relationship between internal and external marketing, based on the case of a travel company as a service organisation. An exploratory qualitative case study methodology is adopted in order to achieve the research objectives and address the research questions. The research is based on a subjective and socially constructed ontology under the umbrella of an interpretivist epistemology. This chapter discusses and seeks to justify these methodological choices based on the philosophical stance of the researcher. Therefore, this chapter commences by examining the two traditional philosophical positions. The choice of a qualitative approach and the research design are presented. The decision to employ a case study approach to generate data is considered, involving decision –making in relation to criteria for case and participant selection. The background to the case company is outlined. Then, the chapter will give insights into data collection, analysis and reporting issues (regarding the trustworthiness of the data, ethical issues as well as the research limitations). At the end of this chapter, some personal reflections on the research journey are addressed.

5.2. Research paradigm

It is very important how well we are able to reflect upon our philosophical choices and defend them in relation to the alternatives we could have been adopted

(Johnson and Clark, 2006)

The research philosophy a researcher adopts contains important assumptions about the way in which he/she views the world. These assumptions underpin the research strategy and the methods the researcher will choose as part of that strategy (Saunders et al, 2009). Firstly, it helps to clarify the research design. This involves deciding upon the evidence that is required and the ways of gathering and analysing it in order to reach appropriate answers to the research questions. Secondly, it helps to identify a suitable research approach which may be new to the researcher (Easterby-Smith, et al, 2008).

5.2.1. Why an interpretivist paradigm?

A paradigm or world view is ''a basic set of beliefs that guide action''

(Guba, 1990.p.17)

One research philosophy cannot be described as "better" than another. Research philosophies are better at doing different things. As to which is better depends on the research question (s) that need to be answered (Saunders et al, 2009). Both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately within any research paradigm. Therefore questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which is defined as a basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).Therefore, philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology) (Creswell, 2007).

Table 5.1 Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology and Method

Ontology	Philosophical assumptions about the nature of the reality.
Epistemology	General assumptions about the best ways of inquiry into the nature of the world.
Methodology	Combination of techniques used to enquire into a specific situation.
Methods	Individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.

Source: adopted from Easterby-Smith et al, 2008

Unfortunately, some philosophical terms are used interchangeably. Accordingly, there is confusion about their meaning (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). Thus, it is evident that the terminology within the social science texts and research literature is far from consistent and it is not uncommon to find the same term used in a number of different, even contradictory ways (Crotty, 1998). The researcher will retain a broad distinction between the two paradigms, namely, positivist and interpretivist, in order to present the rationale of choosing the interpretivist position.

The key idea that underpins positivism is that the social world exists externally and its properties should be measured through objective methods rather than being inferred subjectively through feeling, indication or perception (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). The assumption is that the researcher is independent of and neither affects nor is affected by the subject of the research (Remenyiet al,1998). It is frequently advocated that the positivist researcher will be likely to use a highly structured methodology in order to facilitate replication (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Additionally the emphasis will be on quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis The positivist researcher prefers " working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalizations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists" (Remenyi et al.1998 p.32). Another important component of the positivist approach to research is that research is undertaken in a value free way. The researcher would claim to be external to the process of data collection in the sense that there is little that can be done to alter the substance of the data collected (Saunders et al, 2009). Overall, it can be summed up that the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the positivist paradigm have a number of implications which present a collection of points that have come to be associated with the positivist approach to research;

Independence: the observer is independent of what is being observed.

Value-free: the choice of what to study and how to study it can be determined by objective criteria rather than by human beliefs and interests (this does not mean that the researcher does not like the topic of the study but the researcher will put aside his/ her own beliefs to be objective).

Causality: the aim of social sciences should be to identify causal explanations and fundamental laws to explain regularities in human social behaviour.

Hypothesis and deduction: science proceeds through a process of hypothesising fundamental laws and then deducing what kinds of observations will demonstrate the truth or falsehood of these hypotheses.

Operationalization: concepts need to be operationalized in a way which enables facts to be measured quantitatively.

Reductionism: problems as a whole are better understood if they are reduced into the simplest possible elements.

Generalizations: in order to be able to generalize about regularities in human and social behaviour it is necessary to select samples of sufficient size.

Cross-sectional analysis: such regularities can most easily be identified by making comparisons of variations across samples (Easterby- Smith et al, 2006 P. 28; 29).

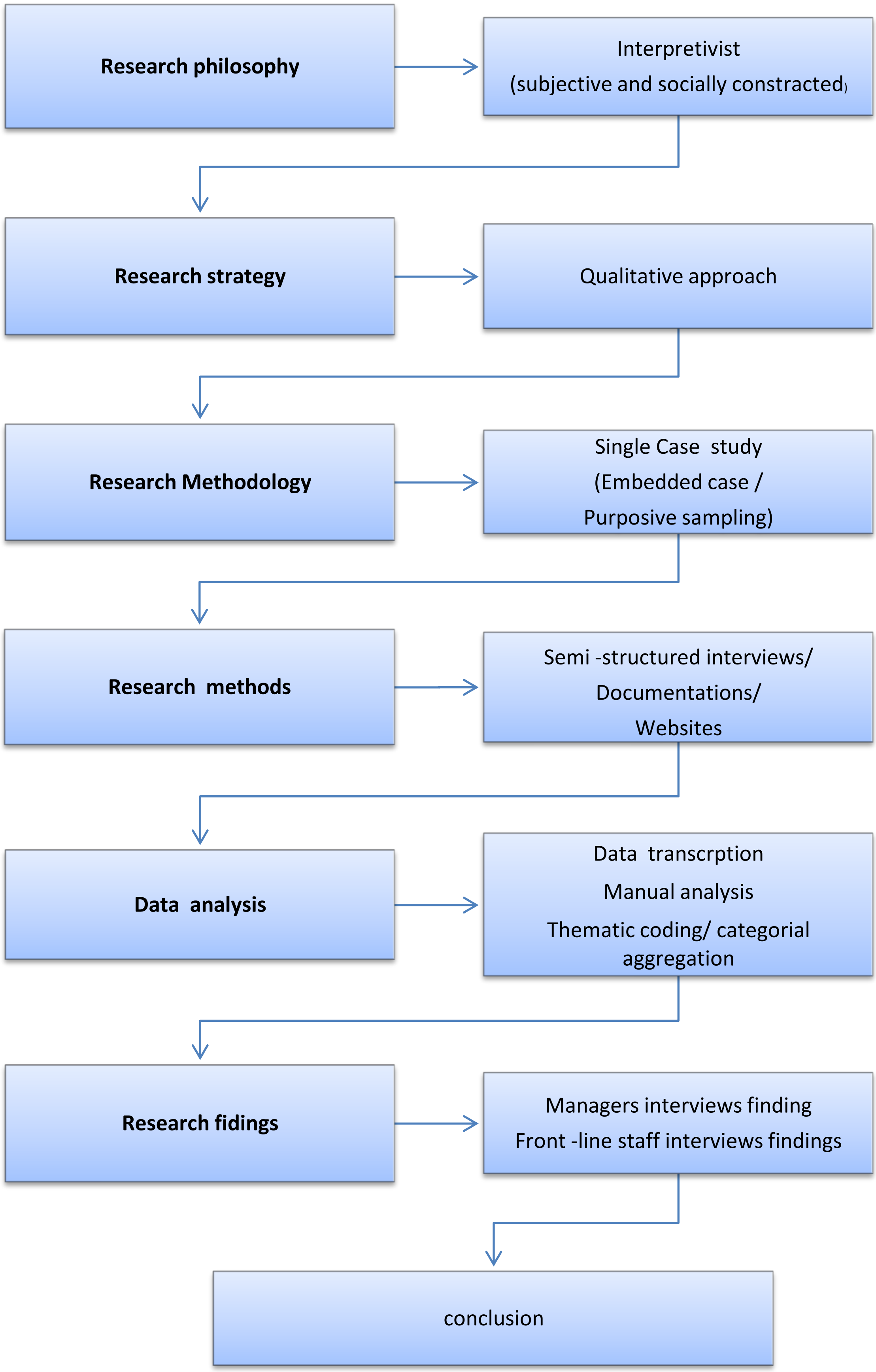
Alternatively, the interpretivist paradigm (generally associated with social constructionism) advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors. This emphasises the differences between conducting research among people rather than objects. Reality is subjective and socially constructed and given meaning by people (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006). Thus, interpretivist focus their attention on understanding what is happening in the social world and on the meanings which people attach to their experiences (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders et al, 2009). This is a continual process through the process of social interaction; social phenomena are in constant state of revision. The heritage of this strand of interpretivism comes from two intellectual traditions: phenomenology and symbolic interactioism. The former refers to the way by which humans make sense of the world around them. The latter is about the continual process of interpreting the social world around us. According to this interpretation we adjust our own meaning and actions (Saunders et al, 2009). Therefore, Remenyi et al. (1998, p.35) stress the necessity to study the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps accept that this reality works behind them. This is often associated with the term constructionism or social constructionism. This follows from the interpretivist philosophy that is necessary to explore the subjective meanings motivating the actions of social actors in order for the researcher to be able to understand these actions. It is fundamental to the interpretivist philosophy that the researcher has to adopt an empathetic stance (Patton, 2002). It is very challenging to enter the social world of our research subjects and understand their world from their point of view. However, an interpretivist perspective can be appropriate in the case of business and management research, particularly in subjects such as organisational behaviour, marketing and human resource management. Business situations are complex and unique. They are a function of a particular set of circumstances and individuals coming together at a specific time. For example, the subjectivist view is that there is no ultimate entity called “customer-service” as it is continually changing. Customer service is produced through the social interaction between service providers and customers so it cannot be constant. This is the same as what Simirich (1983) argues in describing the subjectivist’s view of the organisational culture as something that the organisation “is” as a result as of process of continual social enactment. The subjectivist would reject the perhaps simplest view of what the management theorists which leans towards treating the organisational culture as variable, something that the organisation “has” (something that can be manipulated and changed to produce the state desired by management). The subjectivist would argue that culture is something the organisation and which is created and recreated through a complex array of phenomenon which includes social interactions and physical factors such as office lay out to which individuals attach certain meanings, rituals and myths.It is the meanings that are attached to these phenomena by social actors within the organisation which need to be comprehended in order for the culture to be understood. Because of the continual creation and recreation of an organisation’s culture, it is difficult for it to be isolated, understood and then manipulated (Saunders et al, 2009).

5.3. Research design

Based on the philosophical stance of the research under an interpretivist philosophy, this study adopted a qualitative case study to explore the internal marketing practices within an organisation (as shown in figure 5.1). The research objectives and questions are considered the departure point for the research design. As mentioned earlier, the researcher aims to explore how organisational culture affects the internal marketing practices of the organisation and how do these practices affects both the internal and external aspects of the organisation as well as the external marketing efforts of the organisation. The research objectives are

- To explore the way internal marketing practices are working in reality from the point of view of employees and managers in a successful organisation.
- To identify the organisational factors that underpin such practices.
- To explore how internal marketing practices cross the boundaries between marketing and human resource management functions.
- To address the internal and external consequences of internal marketing practices, especially the development of a customer oriented culture within front-line staff, and how these affect the external marketing activities of the organisation.

Figure 5.1 Research design and process


Research philosophy
Interpretivist
(subjective and socially constracted)
Research strategy
Qualitative approach
Research Methodology
Single Case study
(Embedded case /
Purposive sampling)
Research methods
Semi -structured interviews/
Documentations/
Websites
Data analysis
Data transcrption
Manual analysis
Thematic coding/ categorial
aggregation
Research fidings
Managers interviews finding
Front -line staff interviews findings
conclusion

The research design starts by recognising the role of the researcher to show how various claims for truth and reality become constructed in everyday life (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008).Thus, the researcher tries to get as close as possible to the phenomenon being studied by conducting a qualitative study means. In practice, qualitative researchers frequently carry out their research in the ''field'' where the participants live and work, these are important contexts for understanding what the participants' voices and perceptions (Creswell, 2007). This was the case with this study. Qualitative research is less codified than quantitative research because it is less influenced by strict guidelines and directions about how to approach data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2004). Table (5.2) shows the different criteria for qualitative and quantitative studies.

Table 5.2 Quantitative versus Qualitative research

Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Points of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

Source: adopted from Bryman, 2004 p. 287

Adopting qualitative research leads to different researchers embracing different realities, in the same way that the individuals being studied and the readers of study do. Therefore, evidence of multiple realities includes representation of the actual words of different actors and presenting different perspectives of individuals (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research has been utilised here as the researcher wanted to explore the internal marketing subject. The researcher seeks to understand the contexts (settings) in which participants in a study address a problem or issue (Creswell, 2007).Finally, thinking qualitatively means rejecting the idea of a research design as a single document which is an entire advance blueprint for a piece of research. This is because the nature of this study is exploratory (fluid and flexible), data-driven and context-sensitive. Given that, it would be both undesirable and difficult to write an entire advance blueprint (Mason, 2009). This will be reflected in the next section.

5.3.1. The case study as a methodological approach

Case study research is generally a qualitative approach (although quantitative data may also support the building of the case) in which a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems are explored through in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). Robson (2002 p.178) defines case study research as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. The researcher follows the argument that considers the case study as a strategy of inquiry (methodology) or in other words a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003; Gillham, 2004; Creswell, 2007). Therefore, a case study strategy can enable the researcher to challenge existing theory and provide sources for new research questions. (Saunders et al, 2009). A case study strategy is important if the aim is to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the process being enacted (Morris and Wood, 1991).Yin (2003) highlights that the context of the case is very important. This is because the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly apparent. This study is primary aimed at answering “how” type questions. According to Yin (2009) the case study strategy has considerable ability to generate “why?” answers to the questions as well as addressing “what?” and “how?” questions. In addition, a case study approach is suitable for both explanatory and exploratory researches. (Saunders et al, 2009).

In this study, a single case has been employed. This provides an opportunity to observe and analyse internal marketing practices as well as defining the actual case (travel company). The data collection techniques within the case were combination of interviews (semi-structured), documentary analysis and review of company's surveys as well as the company websites.

Concerning the unit of analysis within the case, Yin (2003) refers to the holistic case as opposed to the embedded one. This study involves more than one group within the organisation- senior managers, operational managers and front-line employees- each of which are important groups for exploring the research subject. So the case can be considered embedded as it includes specific analysis units (Yin, 2009). This helps to establish comparison between the three groups of respondents.

In some instances when an investigation is based exclusively upon qualitative research, it can be difficult to determine whether it is better described as a case study or as cross sectional research design (Bryman, 2004). The researcher sought access to Fun Travel as a service organisation because, as a company, it is widely known as successful organisation which implements special policies and practices towards its employees and that was of interest to the research theme. Therefore, for the researcher, it seems as suitable setting to understand what the impacts of these practices have on internal and external aspects of the organisation. What distinguishes a case study is that the researcher is usually concerned to clarify the unique feature of the case. This is known as an ideographic approach. On the other hand, research designs like the cross-sectional design are known as nomothetic in that they are concerned with generating statements that apply regardless of time and place. The organisation here for example is the location that forms a backdrop to the findings (Bryman, 2004). The importance of what (Travel company), as a unique case exemplifies, became apparent after the study was carried out. As Radley and Chamberlain (2001) highlights that it may be that it is only at a very late stage that the singularity and significance of the case becomes apparent. This is due to the unique and strong culture that has been declared through the respondents' language and values.

5.3.1.1 Case study selection

“The key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about the end of the study” *(Patton, 2002 p.229)*

Selecting the case requires that the researcher establishes a rationale for her purposeful sampling strategy in selecting the case and for gathering information about the case (Creswell, 2007). The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. Sites or individuals are selected as they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem or the central phenomenon of the study (Saunders et al, 2009). Purposive or judgemental sampling enables the researcher to use his/her judgement to select cases that will enable the answers to the research question to emerge and thus, to meet the research objectives. This approach is often used when working with very small samples such as in case study research and when the researcher wishes to select cases that are particularly informative (Neuman, 2005). Patton (2002) emphasizes this point by contrasting the need to select information-rich cases in purposive sampling with the need to be statistically representative in probability sampling.

In order to answer the research questions and to meet the research objectives, the requirements were to undertake an in depth study that focuses on one selected case (Fun Travel). The aim was to provide an information- rich case study in which the researcher explores the research questions and gains theoretical insights. The case has been selected intentionally as successful one. Two main reasons underline this choice;

- As shown within the literature review, the meaning and implementation of internal marketing has taken different forms. The development and the antecedents of internal marketing programs’ effectiveness remain puzzling (Gounaris et al, 2009). Getting closer to successful model could give answers to how things are working and giving positive outcomes.
- According to the socially –constructed nature of the internal marketing concept as reported by Ahmed and Rafiq (2003 p.1186), the field research will try to explore the antecedents and consequences of the concept through a successful

case, thus, generalisation concerning the best practice " a model" can be obtained. Comparison with different contexts in future can help to obtain comprehensive and better understanding of the area of internal marketing.

The case that has been selected is an organisation with a well established reputation, achieving a recognized status within the travel industry and represents a workplace where employees are in direct contact with their customers. According to the initial information reviewed, employees were seen to be well recognized by the company as well as customers. First contact with the "gatekeeper" (one of the corporate human resource managers) was made by the researcher's supervisor. Then, the researcher made direct contact with the same manager to explain the research and how it could be of benefit to the company. Correspondence, via telephones and e-mails, continued for about 4 months until the final approval of the managing director had been received. At the commencement of the study, the "gatekeeper" contacted all Fun Travel branches telling them about the study and that the company had agreed to participate in it and that the researcher will contact them directly. After this, the researcher was provided with a list of branches including the name of the team leader and their telephone numbers. The researcher then contacted each personally to obtain their agreement. The approval with the team leader was that he or she will participate along with some of the team as well. The study took place in three main centres in Scotland and England (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London) as the study could not cover all the branches in the UK for practical reasons of time and the cost involved. Interviews with managers from headquarters also took place art headquarters.

5.3.1.2 Sampling within the case

Sampling focused on the groups whose perspectives on the research subject were seen to be most valuable (Flick, 2009). According to the requirements identified to answer the research questions. The sample consists of three main groups within the company namely; front –line staff, operational managers (branch managers), and senior managers. This will help gaining deep understanding of how practices are formulated at the top level of the organisation and implemented throughout as well as the underpinning philosophy of the practices. Front-line staff are the main targeted segment of the practices, consequently, interviewing them will give insight into the consequences of the practices and how they affect the internal and external aspects of the organisation. In other words, "how" and "why" things are happening that way. In addition, the research aims to allow a comparison of the views and opinions on internal marketing practices (its antecedents and consequences) of senior managers and operational managers on the one side and front-line staff on the other. This should give three embedded units of analysis within the context of the one case situation. Therefore, what Brotherton (2008) calls as type two (single embedded case) is used to facilitate "intra-case" comparison.

In non probability sampling techniques, the issue of sample size is unclear as there are no rules for purposive sample (Silverman, 2005). The sample size is dependent on the research questions and objectives, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be achieved within available resources (Patton, 2002). Overall, the validity and the insights will be gained from the data and its analysis rather than through the size of the sample (Patton, 2002). However the sample size can give insight of the adequacy of the number of the interviews conducted. In continuing to collect qualitative data, in this research interviews were conducted until data saturation is reached (Saunders et al, 2009). The key idea in the concept of theoretical saturation is to carry on with the process of sampling, and in this case, interviews continue until a category has been saturated with data (Bryman, 2004). A category is saturated with data when 'a) no new or relevant data seem to be emerging regarding a category, b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 212).In addition, Guest et al (2006) highlights that the size of the sample depends on whether it is within heterogeneous or homogeneous population. It may be enough to conduct 12 in- depth interviews within a homogeneous population. As this study contains heterogeneous population, very small sample was inadequate with these heterogeneous three groups. Creswell (2007) suggests that for general study, it would be expected to undertake 25 to 30 interviews. A heterogeneous sample (Creswell, 2007; Saunders et al, 2009) was required to address the key themes of the topic and to capture the organisation's view. In this study, all managerial layers were included in order to compare views. Therefore, 32 interviews were conducted within the three main categories. The researcher interviewed 4 senior managers (the two human resource managers, the marketing manager as well as one of the area leaders), 13 operational managers (team leaders) and finally 15 front-line staff.

5.3.1.3 Methods within the case study methodology

5.3.1.3.1 Semi structured interviews

Semi –structured interviews suit the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher and the research questions in order to explore respondents’ perceptions, views, understanding, interpretation and experiences of the phenomenon of internal marketing. Interviewing was also chosen for ethical reasons to give the freedom to the interviewees as well as to enable some level of control over the interviews. The interviews enables the generation of a fair and full representation of the interviewees’ perspectives (Mason, 2009).

It was found that respondents had to count the cost of their time very carefully and therefore short interviews, fitted into busy schedules, were more feasible than unstructured observations and discussion which can take a lot of time (Easterby-Smith et al. 2006). It was indicated in advance by the “gatekeeper” (again, one of the corporate human resource managers) that long interviews would not be acceptable because of the work load as well the nature of the jobs at branches. Thus, it was agreed that they would take a maximum of 30 minutes interviews at branch level. However, some interviews exceeded this time. It was important at the interviews stage to set up a form of reciprocity. It is the basic principle of exchange with interviewees. Informants, in the research, provide their valuable time, stories and perspectives of their world. The researcher shows that he/she values this by offering something in exchange (Patton, 2002 p.415). It was agreed with the “gatekeeper” that the result of the study will be available to them so that they may benefit from them. Most of the senior managers showed interested in the results of the study and they have been informed by the researcher that the results will be available to the company. The researcher presented souvenirs from her home country in thanks to the participants for their time and corporation. This helped in creating a friendly nice atmosphere as well as providing an interesting topic before starting the interview.

Interviews were grounded in an interview guide, which provided a focus on the issues and the direction that the investigation aimed to follow. The same guide was applied to managers and employees in order to establish whether there were any similarities or differences between the two groups in relation to the key issues explored. The guide was not followed strictly and it was revised based on the ideas that emerged (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). Within semi-structured interviews, the researcher “probes” answers where the researcher wants the interviewee to explain or build on their responses. This is important within the interpretivist epistemology. It was adopted as the researcher was concerned to understand the meaning that the participants ascribe to the studied phenomenon. The interviewee used words or ideas in certain way and probing these meanings adds significance and depth to the obtained data (Saunders et al, 2009).As a qualitative study, the researcher used sub questions that addressed issues on the topic being explored and use terms that encode the work. Also, procedural sub questions “how questions” were used that anticipate the steps taken in the procedures for data collection, analysis and theme format construction (see example of the interviews guide in Appendix A).

5.3.1.3.2 Documentations

In addition to primary research, secondary data relating to the case company was also collected. This was in form of documentation as well as access to websites. Secondary information is an important raw data sources in its own right as well as a storage medium for compiled data (Saunders et al, 2009). The documentation included the training and recruitment plans of the company as well as the company policies of the employees. The researcher utilise from the company website. The researcher obtained electronic version of the Sunday Times surveys of the company. The results of these surveys were of great value as complementary and comparability information. For instance, the results of these studies gave the researcher an overview of the full picture of the organisation. Documents obtained from the organisation provide the researcher with full details of the steps of the practices. These details used to complement the interviews' data within the analysis and discussion phase of the research.

5.4. Description of the case organisation

It is important for the researcher to have contextual material available to describe the setting for the case (Creswell, 2007p.73)

Describing the case study in this section is aims to give general information about the case organisation. This information can be considered background for the data findings chapters. It also helps as well in justifying the choice of the case.

<u>**Fun Travel**</u>

Fun Travel is an autonomous; Australian travel company that was founded in 1981.It is considered one the world's largest and most successful independent travel retailers. It has more than 1,700 stores around the globe. The stores are based in countries that include the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Hong Kong, the USA and Canada. Throughout the information gathered on the company, it was emphasised how different is the company from the common travel companies.

In the UK, the company was founded in 1995 as a subsidiary of Fun Travel in Brisbane, Australia. It has approximately 100 high street stores. In addition, it has another two brands within the main brand which are Round the World and First and Business Class. Those two brands are not based in high street locations. Some of them are back offices to high street branches. Others are independent branches. That means that each market segment is served by a special branch in order to give the maximum level of service. In addition, this means that front-line service is not face to face all the time. All the back office branches use telephones and e-mails as communication tools with customers.

Globally, The Company has only 4 to 5 layers of management.

1. The teams (called the family) at branches including the operational manager who is called the team leader. Teams include from 3 to 7 members.
2. The area (tribe) includes 10 to 20 teams.
3. Nations include 8 to 15 tribes.
4. Regions include 4 to 8 nations.
5. The Global Executive Team/Board

The company’s purpose and vision evolve around presenting value for employees (professionally and personally), customers (customer service) and stakeholders (return on their investments).

Fun Travel is perceived as one of the best employers internationally. The company, for more than seven years, has been placed in the “Sunday Times” top one hundreds companies to work for. In the Sunday Time’s list, Fun Travel occupied an advanced position. The result of a recent study of (Sunday Times top best companies to work for) report includes the following company’s attributes

Annual Sales:	£205,716,000
Average Age:	32
Earning £35,000+:	28%
Male : Female:	33% / 67%
Number of Staff:	1334

Typical Job: Travel consultant

Staff Turnover: 21%

According to (Llep report covered by the Sector Skills Council People1st, 2011; People1st Recruitment and Retention Survey, 2005) Labour turnover in the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sector stands at 31% in England. Therefore, the company turnover rate is considerably lower than the industry average. The company is expanding in the UK. Annual growth is 20% per year. So recruitment is continuing throughout the year due to expansion rather than staff turnover. To be considered for a front-line role candidate needs to meet the following minimum criteria; graduate calibre, the ability to sell, personal travel to at least two continents outside of Europe, self-motivation with a desire to succeed (the recruitment criteria on the company's career website).

The company has a distinctive payment system for front-line staff which is based on basic salary for all in addition to uncapped earning through commission on sales. Front-line staff are rewarded financially with the highest salary in the travel industry due to an incentivised pay structure with unlimited earning potential. For example, new staff earn a salary of no less than £18,000 in their first year, which includes uncapped commission – so the more they sell, the more money they make. Top trainee front-line staff often earn twice their guaranteed salary in their first year (as reported by the company website). On top of this, Team Leaders have the opportunity to earn significant bonuses and incentive payments in addition to their commission.

According to the Sunday Times study, the company ranks highly in the Fair Deal for Staff survey (63%, 29th). Employees feel they are fairly paid for the work they do compared with people in similar positions in other firms (63%), are paid in line with their responsibilities (62%) and treated fairly compared with others in the organisation (63%, a top 20 score). Staff feel their managers regularly express their appreciation for a job well done (76%), motivate them to give their best every day (70%), talk to them openly and honestly (79%) and share important knowledge and information (76%).Employees feel their managers help them to fulfil their potential

(72%) and feel that he or she cares about how satisfied they are in their job (73%) both top 25 rankings.

Fun Travel was chosen for this research, therefore, because it is a case study which represents business and human resource management success within the travel sector. The purpose of this research is to explore this success in terms of the role which internal marketing plays in contributing to the creation of the identified success attributes.

5.5. Interviews analysis and presentation

The researcher used thematic coding as a tool for analyzing the interviews within the case. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). For Miles and Huberman (1994), it is a method for thinking about the meaning of the data that are faced.
Boyatzis (1998) characterises it not as a specific method but as a tool to use across different methods. Similarly, Ryan and Bernard (2000) locate thematic coding as a process performed *within ''major''* analytic traditions (such as grounded theory), rather than a specific approach in its own right.

One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. It is one of those methods which are essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied *across* a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data.
Any one item or slice of data can and should be coded in more than one way. There is no one correct approach to coding the data (Bryman, 2004 p.409). This keeps the researcher more flexible throughout the process.

First of all, all interviews were transcribed into written format in order to start the thematic analysis. The process was time-consuming and frustrating however as (Bird, 2005 p.227) mentioned it is a key phase of analysis with interpretive qualitative methodology. All transcripts were checked back against the original audio recording for “accuracy”. Because the researcher collected the data herself, the analysis phase started with prior knowledge of the data. Repeated reading has been done to search for meanings and patterns. This accompanied the generation of ideas for coding. The state of the process of coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) is where the data have been organized into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). The interpretive stage starts where the analysis has allowed development of broader level of themes and involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. Finally, themes were revised (King, 2004). This includes, insertion of new codes under themes, reclassifying codes to a different category and eventually, deleting some codes which were not needed. The subject of internal marketing could be considered an under-researched one. Therefore, the researcher aimed to provide a rich thematic description of the entire data. Attention was paid to ensure that the themes the researcher identified, coded, and analysed were an accurate reflection of the content of the *entire* data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Stake (1995) referred to the idea of “categorical aggregation”. According to this the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data to allow relevant and meanings to the issues appear. During data analysis, the researcher established patterns and looked for correspondence between two or more categories. In addition, this enables generalization about the case in terms of the themes and how they compare and contrast with published literature on the studied subject (Creswell, 2007).

The analysis was undertaken manually. Several reasons were behind this choice. First of all, evaluation of data is always dependent on the judgement of the researcher and computer software cannot be a substitute for this (Easterby-Smith et al, 2006). Using a computer programme requires that the researcher learn how to run the programme. This is sometimes a daunting task that is above and beyond learning required for understanding the procedures of qualitative research. A computer programme may put a machine between the researcher and the actual data. This causes an uncomfortable distance between the researcher and the data (Creswell, 2007). In addition, a computer programme may not have the features or capability the researcher needs. Finally, there is a possibility that the availability of computer analysis may lead to an emphasis on counting the frequency of categories at the expanse of understanding the quality of ideas and experiences (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008).

5.6. Trustworthiness of data in qualitative methodologies

As mentioned before, interpretivism does not suggest separation but rather an interaction and co-operation with the object of the investigation (Decrop, 2005). Interpretivism strives to understand naturally occurring phenomenon in their naturally occurring states (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).The research phenomenon is investigated as a whole and the theoretical propositions are generated from the empirical field (Decrop, 2005).

The qualitative approach may be criticized as subjective, exploratory and unscientific because of a lack of objectivity and generalizability associated with it. Therefore, addressing the trustworthiness issue is important in making interpretive research more rigorous and acceptable. Trustworthiness refers to scientific inquiry that is able to “demonstrate truth value, provide the basis for applying it and allow for external judgement to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions’ (Erlandson et al, 1993 p.29).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four basic criteria of trustworthiness (i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) which parallel positivists’ reliability and validity constructs. Credibility (validity) refers to how truthful particular findings are. Dependability (reliability) refers to whether the results are consistent and reproducible. Transferability (generalizability) is concerned with the extent to which the research findings are applicable to another setting or group. Finally, confirmability (objectivity) pertains to how neutral the findings are. This research was evaluated according to Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) criteria. For example, the research could be considered credible as the study clearly gained access to the experiences of those in the research setting (Senior and operational managers of the organisation as well as the front-line staff). Interview quotes were used in order to support the theory generation process and to give the reader the opportunity to interpret the data. For more credibility, the researcher tried to be a neutral investigator and adopt “empathic neutrality” (Patton, 2002 p.50-53). That means simply being understandable, interested and caring with the interviewees, at the same being non-judgemental (without seeking predetermined results).

Research dependability appears within the details mentioned in the data collection techniques as well as the data analysis (the transparency in how sense was made from the raw data).

Concerning transferability, it must be argued here that generalizability is analytical and not statistical. In other words, do the concepts and constructs derived from this study have any relevance to other settings?

It has to be clear that generalizability is a term that holds little meaning for most qualitative researchers (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). The findings of qualitative research are to generalize to theory rather than to populations (Bryman, 2004: Hartly, 1994). It is “the cogency of the theoretical reasoning” (Mitchell, 1983 p.207) rather than statistical criteria that is decisive in considering the generalizability of the findings of qualitative research. In other words, it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that can be drawn from the qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization. This is why the researcher gives details about the context of the study (see section 5.4). In the chapter nine (discussion), findings are integrated with the existing literature to show how related elements are similar (Hartley, 1994). This is why the term transferability is more suitable here (Decrop, 2005).

Finally, objectivity or confirmability is overcome within the analysis process by looking for different explanations about the themes without prejudice about observations. Therefore, the researcher tries to retain a distance from the data and explain the themes from the respondents’ point of view. The researcher tried as much as possible to avoid the bias of “going native” in reporting the data (Creswell, 2007 p.72). In particular, the researcher was aware of the difficulties of undertaking qualitative research for the first time, and in a different culture from her home.

5.7. Ethical issues of the research

Qualitative researchers face many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. The principles underlying “research ethics” are worldwide and they concern issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals (Veal, 2006 p.70).

The researcher protects the anonymity of the informants by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals (Creswell, 2007). In reporting findings, a pseudo name is used to identify the organisation as well as numbers with the job titles to identify individuals.

Ethically, the researcher is committed to present the results of the study to the company. The company showed great interest in the type of study as it may help them understand the emotions and perceptions of their employees.

5.8. Research limitations

The first limitation concerns the choice of the case itself. Choosing organisation that is clearly identified as “successful” within private sector affects the type of data generated. This can result from interviewing satisfied employees who can give extreme responses in regard to the organisation. The data seem to be pointing in the one direction. This raises the question whether the respondents were “telling the truth” or trying to present artificial picture of their organisation. However, the researcher was introduced to most front-line staff “on the spot” so that there was minimum opportunity to prepare themselves for certain responses. For the research, the data emerged in certain direction as a reflection of strong organisational culture which will appear in next chapters.

Concerning the sample within the case, the focus on was the front-line employees and their managers. However internal marketing can be seen to relate to all the employees (Naude et al, 2003; Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003). This is due to the prime concern of the research to explore the effect of these practices on performance towards customers. Secondly, due to the time and resource constraints of a PhD study, the study took place in just three cities (Edinburgh, Glasgow and London). In addition, all interviews were conducted with employees. Even the customer orientation and customer satisfactions topics were investigated indirectly via questioning employees (from their viewpoint). Future research may give the researcher opportunity to interview some of the company’s customers for more exploration of the theme and more comparisons.

Using qualitative approach provides a wide –ranging, rich and detailed data. As an exploratory study, the researcher seek new insights and to clarify the understanding of the studied phenomenon. However, taking this approach constrained the number of respondents. Quantitative methods would have been providing larger scale of respondents (survey to be distributed within the company).

Regarding data analysis, the data was coded and themes identified by the researcher with revisions by the supervisor. This hinders presenting different interpretations of the data. This is due to the nature of the PhD study and time limits.

5.9 Reflections on a personal research journey

This section addresses the development of the research over the four years as well as the challenges that were faced by the researcher throughout the research process. The start of this journey was in the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality in Alexandria University where the researcher graduated and secured an academic post. The researcher was been offered a PhD scholarship to the study in the UK. This was the beginning of the journey to transfer to a completely new world.

Within the original proposal of the research, the researcher initially thought of the research as a straightforward process of setting hypotheses, collecting data to test these hypotheses and generating results using a quantitative methodology) without even considering philosophical issues.

This is the dominant researcher methodology within tourism studies (Veal, 2006). In addition, quantitative methods are the dominant methodological approach within the university from where the researcher came. There is not even any awareness of philosophical stance or the qualitative approach to research. However, the researcher’s transition to a different academic community opened up new insights for research. Getting training on new research methods, getting more understanding of the research topic to identify the research gap clearly and focusing on certain objectives changed the researcher’s approach towards the research subject. This was the first development in the process.

One of the main original objectives of the research was to test the western literature within a different cultural context. That was thought to add a valuable dimension to the research. Therefore, the original plan was to undertake the fieldwork in Egypt from where the researcher came. The primary case was intended to be the major airline in Egypt.

Attempts to gain access continued for more than ten months by contacting several gate keepers through a social network of the researcher and colleagues in the Tourism Faculty at Alexandria University. The attempt to gain access failed without clearer reasons as no one could take decisions relating to access. Tackling the research within this organisation would have given some advantages at this time; there were no language and culture barriers; the cost of accommodation and transportation to do the interviews would have been less; and there would have been a direct contribution to tourism research in Egypt. The failure to achieve this objective led to a search for an alternative. This was to try to gain access to a successful UK- based travel company. After being recommended by my supervisor to the Human Resource Manager (gate keeper) of Fun Travel, a new experience started for the researcher. Communications took place in order to explain what is the research about; what the researcher needed from the company; and to what extent the company intended to participate in the research. Gaining the access within four months was just the beginning of another new challenge as contacting the individuals and getting their approval to participate was completely the responsibility of the researcher. At the end, access was gained to thirteen branches. It was the first step towards facing the second challenge. Is interviewing people with different culture and accents, as the fieldwork took place in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh, a manageable task?

At the beginning, in Glasgow, however, people were helpful and understandable but to gain their trust and let them speak freely was not an easy task. Therefore, the first interviews were short. The researcher tried to overcome this obstacle and tried to ask the questions in different forms to get as much information as possible. Step by step, the researcher gained more trust in herself and speaking to more people led to modifying questions, adding others and exploring more areas.

The fieldwork practice was rich. Different characteristics with varying responses add to the researcher experience and skills. For example, as all the appointments were made in advance over the telephone, some team leaders forgot completely about the interview appointment. The researcher had to be calm and needed to explain the situation again with a smile. Overall, people were nice and cooperated except in a very few individual cases.

Transcribing 32 interviews was the next step, for the researcher as English is not her first language and accents was sometimes very difficult to be understood, the process continued for four months with gaps for more reading to learn about data analysis methods.

Evaluating the quantity and the quality of the data (the respondents answers), it becomes clear to the researcher that the original plan of the field work would not have produced this quality of data. People in Fun Travel explained themselves and addressed company issues openly, especially as the interviews were anonymous. The researcher realised that gaining the same level of trust of respondents in Egypt to talk about their managers and the management system of the organisation would have been much more of an obstacle. However, the researcher is still interested in the case of the airline in Egypt to allow for cross-cultural comparison because this will raise questions about whether internal marketing can be applicable within a governmental “bureaucratic” management style.

Revising the whole process starting from the proposal and ending with writing the current chapter, for the researcher the PhD journey was not a straight forward process. It has been a continuous learning process with lots of ups and downs.