How Does a Communicated Vision and Shared Values Affect the General Level of Interpersonal Trust in a Company?

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Abstract

Vision and values can be organizational factors that affects the general level of interpersonal trust in a company, and this paper asks: How does a communicated vision and shared values, as organizational factors, affect the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization?

To answer the research question, a case study, with mainly qualitative data, has been conducted. The case company is an e-commerce company that is market-leading in logistics and web development, areas that are of high interest to the maritime industry. Data was collected by mainly semi-structured interviews and systematic observations from several grouped departments, constituting three different units of analysis. The findings identify several ways that the vision and values may affect the general level of interpersonal trust within the company. Some of the identified ways may give rise to further quantitative studies. However, a need for further qualitative studies is also identified.

The study presents new perspectives on existing trust theories and illustrates connections between the research fields of trust and organizational theory. Furthermore, because trust is shown to have potential benefits to maritime safety, the paper contributes to maritime safety research. In addition, the paper may contribute to companies both inside and outside the maritime industry.

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Introduction

Companies often use their vision and values as means to define themselves. The vision and values should by this logic affect the entire organization, and the way members of the organization interact. According to Abrams et al. (2003), organizational factors represent one of the managerial behaviors that promote interpersonal trust in organizations. They further divide these factors into four categories and one of those categories includes two trust builders, namely: “Establishing and ensure a shared vision and language” and “hold people accountable for trust”. In this framework, organizational factors may promote the development of interpersonal trust.

Trust is important for organizations because of its influence on “coordination and control of both institutional (Shapiro, 1987, 1990; Zucker, 1986) and interpersonal levels of organization (Granovetter, 1985; Pennings & Woiceshy, 1987)” (McAllister, 1995, p. 24). Furthermore, trust may lead to increased knowledge exchange and reduce the cost of knowledge exchange (Abrams et al., 2003). Trust may have significant positive benefits for organizations.

Based on a broad variety of literature, Gausdal & Makarova (2017) claim that interpersonal trust from employees to managers may be a prerequisite, and an indirect factor that can affect safety in the maritime industry. Since trust affects safety at sea, and organizational factors affect trust, a focus on organizational factors may give new insight that can benefit maritime safety research.

Having a vision and values that positively affect the general level of interpersonal trust in an organization, could be the organizational factors we are looking for to improve safety at sea from a trust perspective. If we can define a company’s vision and values as organizational factors in the framework of Abrams et al. (2003), we may be able to define a link between vision and values, and interpersonal trust. We may also investigate how the vision and values affect the general level of interpersonal trust in a company.

Vision and values are terms that are interesting for strategic management studies. Interpersonal trust is, likewise, a relevant term in research on transformational leadership. The discussion on how communicated vision and shared values affect the level of interpersonal trust, will therefore illustrate interesting connections between the research field of trust, transformational leadership and strategic management.

This paper asks: How does a communicated vision and shared values, as organizational factors, affect the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization?

To answer this question a case study with mainly qualitative data is proposed. The proposed company is market-leading in logistics and web development, areas that are of high interest to the maritime industry. By focusing on a company outside the maritime market, we may gain new perspectives benefitting the maritime research field. To answer what the company's true values are, as opposed to the advertised values, data is collected from an employee satisfaction questionnaire based on theory developed by Maslach & Leiter (2001). With an idea of the company's vision and values established, interviews are performed, and observations are made in different parts of the company to answer the research question.

The research field of trust is broad and with different perspectives. A thorough treatment is required to fully understand how trust can benefit safety at sea. The paper will therefore be founded on a trust literature review.

Theory

Trust

Mayer et al. (1995) claims that trust research has been hindered by an unclear definition of trust. After considering previous literature, a definition of trust that is widely known is presented: “The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712).

Trust is a highly abstract concept. The many ways of perceiving trust may have limited researchers in fully analyzing the field (Gambetta, 1988b). Trust is apparently not simply explained. To get a better understanding of the concept trust, we should adopt multiple perspectives. Consider a dark room surrounded by a wall filled with small holes. Studying trust is like peeping through the holes with a flashlight. With every attempt, new insights into the concept of trust is gained.

To gain a broader understanding of trust, Möllering (2006) takes on three different perspectives on trust, namely: Reason, Routine and Reflexivity. Based on these three perspectives, Möllering (2006) proposes a framework on how suspension connects the perspectives to trust.

Reason

The trust as reason perspective is interested in “how trustors are able to recognize trustworthiness in potential trustees” (Möllering, 2006, p.14). With this perspective, we have the trustor, who based on reason must decide to trust or not trust the trustee. Researchers in this field tends to focus on what makes the trustee trustworthy in the eyes of the trustor.

One of the most famous and cited model of trust is the one proposed by Mayer et al. (1995, p. 720). “Trust for a trustee will be a function of the trustee’s perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity and of the trustor’s propensity to trust”. This proposition illustrates that the trustor’s tendency to trust must be considered, as well as the trustworthiness of the trustee. A trustor’s propensity to trust can be defined as the general “willingness to trust others”. Factors that affects trustor’s propensity to trust may be personality type, cultural background and experiences from development.

When it comes to the trustee, his skills, competencies and characteristics within a field, known as his abilities, is a factor of perceived trustworthiness. If a trustee is known to achieve results in a specific area, trustors may be inclined to trust the trustee in that specific area. Another factor is benevolence. Benevolence is “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718). If the trustee has an attachment to the trustor, the trustee may be more likely to help the trustor without expecting any rewards. The third factor suggested by Mayer et al. (1995) is integrity. The interesting connection here is if the trustee follows “a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 719). This may indicate that integrity makes the trustee be perceived as consistent in words and actions. The framework of Mayer et al. (1995) illustrates how trust may be based on reason within the context of organizational trust.

Trust may be based on reason. However, in a situation with clear alternatives and a known result, trust becomes meaningless. In its essence, trust is more than a calculation and can therefore not only be explained based on reasoning.

Routine

Trust as routine offers a way to understand another aspect of trust. Most humans face situations every day where they must trust persons they know little or nothing about. In a high trust society reasoning for trusting other people are in many situations not necessary, it is a routine. In other words, “the routine is performed without questioning its underlying assumptions” (Möllering, 2006, p. 52). Trust as a routine greatly simplify our lives. Without such a concept, walking the streets may not be possible since one would have to question the assumption that other people would not harm you. This may be an extreme example; however, it illustrates the importance of trust as a routine.

Over 100 years ago, George Simmel ([1908] 1950) argued that societal factors affect individuals in such a strong way that one with only knowledge of some external factors of another person, could have the confidence to work together. Trust is not just a matter of reason; it is a concept of for-grantedness.

Zucker (1986, p. 54) proposed a definition of trust based on a trust as routine perspective: “Trust is defined as a set of expectations shared by all those involved in an exchange. It includes both broad social rules, (…) and legitimately activated processes, (…)”. Institutionalizing, through acting by societal norms or by adhering to practices in an organization, could by this definition reduce uncertainty and vulnerability. The institutions that our societies are built on may be an important aspect of trust since they adapt for taking routine decisions without questing its underlying assumptions.

Möllering (2006) sees institutions as “promoters of trust”. That means that they may only partly explain trust. Especially in situations where institutions cannot reduce uncertainty and vulnerability. There may also be situations where institutions in themselves are sources of uncertainty.

Reflexivity

The third perspective offered my Möllering (2006) is trust as reflexivity. Here, Möllering asks if it is possible to trust when in situations with a high degree of uncertainty, and where trust cannot depend on available factors as present in the earlier mentioned perspectives. Returning to a theoretical no-trust society. When walking the street, you cannot take it for granted that an unfamiliar person you encounter will not harm you. Here, trust needs to be learned as a gradual process. In other words, trust is the outcome of gradually increasing interactions.

Per Nooteboom (1996), trust is something that must be built up. Working together may result in increased trust; however, trust is at the same time necessary for cooperation. In this sense, trust and cooperation may be steps in a positive spiral.

Reflexivity implies that trust requires some form of initiative from the acting parties. This is somewhat contradictory to trust as routine where trusting can be seen as passively following for-granted routines. The three perspectives presented by Möllering (2006) cannot one by one explain trust. The combined view of the three perspectives does also not adequately capture the essence of trust.

The role of suspension

If the three perspectives cannot explain trust, the question becomes what the missing element could be. Möllering (2006) looks a century into the past to find Simmel's ([1907] 1990, p. 179) statement that trust needs to be "as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof of personal observation for social relationships to endure". Simmel identified a hard to describe element of faith located between knowledge and ignorance. To trust, he suggested a "leap of faith" may be necessary. Möllering (2006) defines this leap of faith as suspension.

The perspectives reason, routine and reflexivity may be viewed as trust bases that enables a trustor to take the “leap of faith”. Per Möllering (2006), this suspension is the very essence of trust. He illustrates this as shown in figure 1.

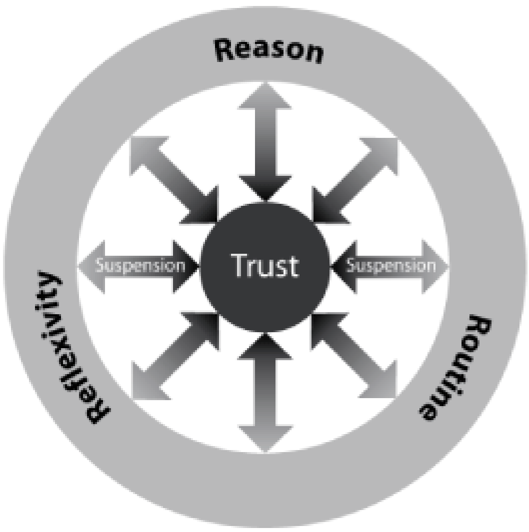

Figure 1: The trust wheel – An integrative framework (Source: Möllering, 2006, p. 110)

Möllering’s work (2006) gives a way of understanding trust that is built on a broad literature review. Furthermore, he illustrates the necessity of adopting a variety of perspectives when studying trust.

Interpersonal Trust and Organizational Factors

Rotter (1967, p. 651) defines interpersonal trust as “an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon”. The term ‘interpersonal’ only limits the definition of trust to be applicable to between-person situations.

Abrams et al. (2003, p. 65) merely says that interpersonal trust is “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable”. Abram’s and Rotter’s definitions may be of less complexity than the thorough description given by Möllering (2006) and may therefore be more conveniently applied to answer the research question. However, knowledge of Möllering's works (2006) may give the essential understanding of trust as a concept, such that less complex definitions may be applied appropriately.

Whiteners Framework

Whitener et al. (1998) gives a description of the term organizational factors. The framework proposes three factors that affect managerial trustworthy behavior: Organizational factors, relational factors and individual factors. Under organizational factors, organizational culture can influence managerial trustworthy behavior through social learning processes (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1985; Thompson & Luthans, 1990). Managers "experience social rewards when they behave in a manner that is consistent with cultural values and norms" (Whitener et al., 1998, p. 520). This may indicate that shared values as part of organizational culture, is an organizational factor.

An individual factor in the framework is values. Indicating that shared values may be an individual factor. Per (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1994), "Individual values consists of definable goals, varying in importance, that motivate and guide people's choices, attitudes, and behavior" (Whitener et al., 1998, p. 522).

However, such a definition indicates that the values of different persons in themselves are individual factors. Defining and maintaining a set of "shared" values would on the other hand be an organizational factor. Per Whitener et al. (1998), shared values may be looked upon as an organizational factor.

Abrams' Framework

Building on the work of Mayer et al. (1995), Abrams et al. (2003) identifies benevolence and competence (abilities) as dimensions of trust that may promote knowledge creation and sharing. This may indicate that Abrams applies a reason-based perspective on trust.

To answer how interpersonal trust develops in knowledge-sharing contexts, Abrams et al. (2003) performed interviews in 20 organizations. Based on the interviews, they identified ten trust builders that were categorized into four groups:

1. Trustworthy Behavior
2. Organizational Factors
3. Relational Factors
4. Individual Factors

For organizational factors, there were identified two trust builders, namely: "Establishing and ensure shared vision and language" and "hold people accountable for trust". These trust builders are managerial behaviors that promote interpersonal trust (Abrams et al., 1995).

An organization, conisisting of a variety of people, will by its nature contain informal networks between subsets of the people that makes up the organization. These informal networks enable employees from different parts of the organization to accomplish complex tasks faster. Having a shared vision may positively affect trust levels in informal networks (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). One way to achieve this is to "look for opportunities to create common terminology and ways of thinking" (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 67). When finding such opportunities, managers will have to communicate a shared vision. By the act of communicating a shared vision, managers helps to establish and ensure the shared vision. A communicated vision may therefore be an organizational factor that can contribute to the development of interpersonal trust in knowledge-sharing networks.

A way to "hold people accountable for trust" is to invest in the company values. Abrams et al. (2003) observed a company that both had invested heavily in a clear set of values, and where the leaders held the entire organization accountable to the values. Because of this investment in the values, all employees in the organization held each other accountable to the values. Through sharing a set of values, trust development in knowledge-sharing networks may be increased. Shared values can be considered an organizational factor in the framework of Abrams et al. (2003). The framework proposed by Abrams et al. (2003) shows how communicated vision and shared values, as organizational factors, may promote the development of interpersonal trust.

Transformational Leadership

Gillespie (2004) Shows how transformational leadership practices contributes to leaders building trust with employees. Per Gillespie (2004, p. 588), three factors were central for building such trust, namely: "consulting team members when making decisions, communicating a collective vision, and sharing common values with the leader". Gillespie argues that it is the communicating and role modeling of the company vision that contributes towards trust. The term 'communicated vision' therefore seem to be a fitting definition to apply to this paper. Gillespie also argues that it is the act of sharing common values that affects trust in leaders. Refining this definition into a term we get 'shared values'.

Idealized influence, as a transformational leadership behavior, contributed to the prediction of trust. Per Gillespie (2004, p. 602), "Idealized influence, the communication and role modeling of a collective vision based on important values, is highly interconnected with the other transformational leadership practices, …". Gillespie (2004) illustrates that a communicated vision may positively affect interpersonal trust and treats interesting connections between trust and leadership research.

A variety of researchers have found that shared values is important for building trust between leaders and followers. Through her research, Gillespie found empirical evidence to claim that shared values do contribute to trust building. Expanding on her research, it may be of interest to study how a communicated vision and shared values affect the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization. By general level, we are merely looking at the level of interpersonal trust between members in an organization with less focus on their hierarchical position.

Kramer (1999, p. 571) treats several ways of conceptualizing trust in organizations. Considering trust as a psychological state, influential definitions look upon trust as a "more general attitude or expectancy about other people and the social systems in which they are embedded". By adopting such a view, the connection between communicated vision and shared values, and the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization can be investigated.

While Gillespie (2004) studied "members' trust in their leaders", Whitener et al. (1998) focused on behaviors managers can employ to initiate trust. Abrams et al. (2003), on the other hand, researched the development in knowledge-sharing networks.

The key concepts of communicated vision and shared values may be viewed as organizational factors, from the angle of both Gillespie (2004), Whitener et al. (1998) and Abrams et al. (2003). The key terms 'communicated vision' and 'shared values' may therefore affect the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization.

Vision and Values as defined by Strategic Management

The research field of strategic management gives another perspective on how to define the terms 'communicated vision' and 'shared values'.

A company's vision is a "statement about what an organization ultimately want to accomplish" (Rothärmel, 2017, p. 35). Through a clearly defined vision, members of an organization may find a common goal. When employees have a shared direction through a vision, room is created for individuals and groups to make their contributions. Rothärmel (2017) argues that visions should be inspiring and motivating rather than designed to measure financial performance. Collins and Porras (1994) and Collins (2001) argue that visionary companies significantly outperform their peers. An appropriate vision seems to be of importance in company strategy making.

On the other hand, an appropriate vision will need guidelines that allows members of the organization to understand the organizations culture and to align with it. Those "guidelines" are called values. Rothärmel (2017, p. 56) states that "core values define the ethical standards and norms that should govern the behavior of individuals within the firm". Shared values may, amongst other applications, be called upon to resolve conflicts within an organization.

An important point concerning organizational values is that they require commitment and involvement from top managers (Rothärmel, 2017). Employees that observe the actions of top managers takes note of the values that are being displayed. Rothärmel argues that if there is a mismatch between organizational values and values displayed by management, then employees may follow the values that is shown in the behavior of the management.

The strategic management perspective illustrates the importance of defining and communicating a vision. Furthermore, defining shared values, such as they are perceived by the employees, may be a complex task.

Vision and Values as Culture

Different frames can be adopted to consider communicated vision and shared values with an organizational perspective. Bolman & Deal (2013) discusses four frames that can be adapted to understand organizations, namely: The structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame and the symbolic frame. The main idea is to use different frames to “think about situations in more than one way, which lets you develop alternative diagnoses and strategies” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 5).

The structure frame sees organizations as factories, emphasizing on “organizational architecture, including planning, goals, structure, (…)” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 15). By this frame, a vision could be considered a policy or rule with the purpose of aligning different activities towards organizational goals. However, seeing vision as a structural element may contradict Rothärmel’s (2017) argument that a vision should be inspiring and motivating rather than designed to measure financial performance. By the same logic, applying she structural frame to understand values, a concept that could be tightly connected to organizational culture, may not be ideal.

From a human resource frame, and organization is a family, “made up of individuals with needs, feelings. prejudices. Skills, and limitations” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16). From this perspective, a key challenge is to “tailor organizations to individuals” (p. 16). Considering the definition derived from Rothärmel (2017), applying the human resource frame to understand vision and values may not be ideal.

The political frame sees organizations as jungles, where different interests compete for power and a limited set of resources. With this frame, values may be considered an expression on what is acceptable or fair when competing for the same resources within an organization. However, different frames may be better applied to the field of trust research.

The symbolic frame may be the most interesting frame to apply on the research question. This frame sees organizations as temples or carnivals, emphasizing on "culture, symbols and spirit as keys to organizational success" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16). Per Bolman & Deal (2013), vision and values may be organizational symbols. This frame harmonizes well with the previously presented argument by Rothärmel (2017). An inspiring and motivating vision is claimed to "turn an organizations' core ideology, or sense of purpose, into an image of the future" by offering "mental pictures linking historical legend and core precepts to future events" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 250). When it comes to values, they help "convey a sense of identity". The cultural frame shows that vision and values are symbols that communicates an organization's culture.

With basis in a short multi frame analysis, the symbolic frame, emphasizing organizational culture, may be the most appropriate to apply on the research question.

Actual Values Rather Than Advertised Values

Argyris & Schon (1974) defined the terms "espoused theory" and "theory in use". Espoused theories can be looked upon as the way a person thinks he or she acts in a situation. Theory in use on the other hand is the way the person did act in the situation. This perspective illustrates a challenge in identifying the actual values shared within an organization.

Advertised values seem to be of little importance when studying the effects of company values. Guiso et al. (2013, p. 11) exemplifies this point. They stated, "with one exception, we find very little evidence that advertised values are correlated with performance". This makes sense since values are easy to claim and display on your company profile page.

Instead of considering the advertised values, this paper aims to consider the values that are perceived as the actual company values by the employees. To determine the actual company values in the case company, we may look to the works of Maslach & Leiter (2001). They have established a framework to understand the topic of job burnout; “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach & Leiter, 2001, p. 397). This paper is the foundation for many questionnaires that measure employee engagement. The framework builds on a model on the “degree of match, or mismatch, between the person and six domains of his or her job environment” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Maslach & Leiter, 2001, p. 413).

One of the domains suggested is Values. Maslach & Leiter (2001) argue that a mismatch between personal values and that of the organization may contribute to job burnout. The study of burnout falls outside the scope of the research question in this study. However, the treatment of match, or mismatch, between personal and organizational values is interesting. Questionnaires based on the research of Maslach & Leiter (2001) includes questions designed to measure to what degree employees adhere to the organizational values. Such a questionnaire may help determine if the case company’s advertised values can be applied as the values such as they are perceived by its employees.

Propositions

Based on the theories reviewed, it is hypothesized that communicated vision and shared values have a positive effect on the general level of interpersonal trust. Possible ways the vision and values can affect trust is illustrated in figure 2.

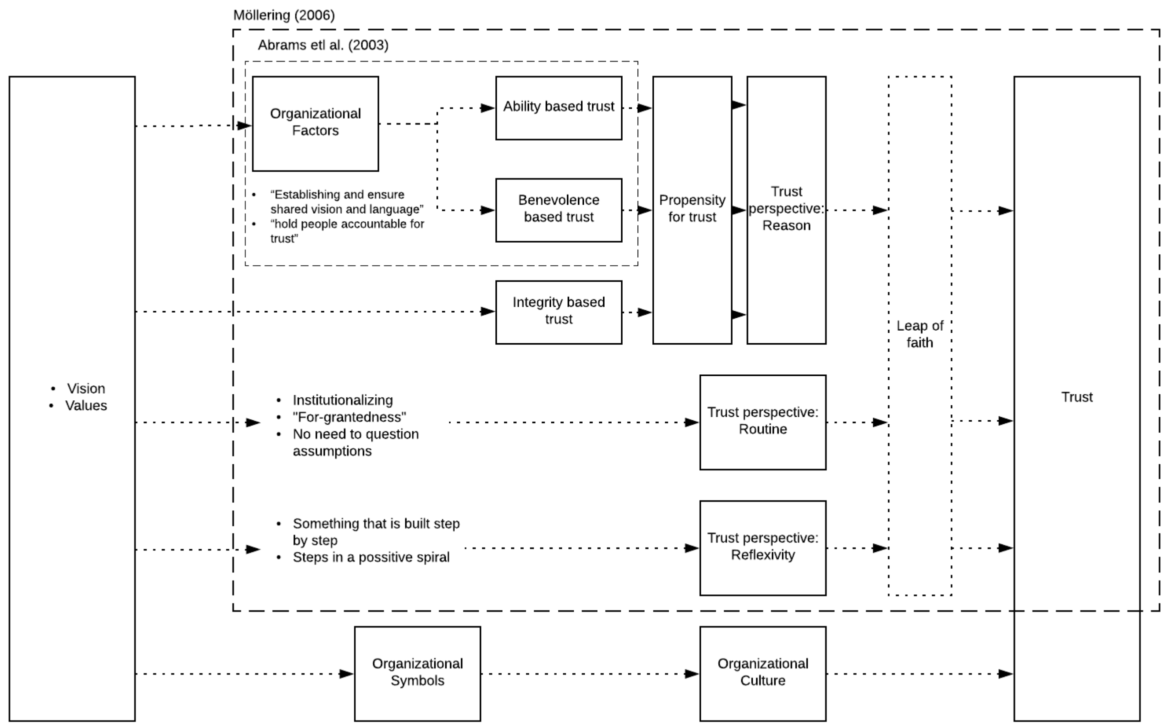

Figure 2: How vision and values can affect trust. (Source: The author)

Propositions on how vision and values affect trust:

P1: The communicated vision establishes and ensures a “common way of thinking”.

P2: Employees hold each other accountable to the company values.

P3: The company vision and values are perceived as symbols of the company culture.

P4: The communicated vision increases the trustee’s perceived ability and benevolence.

P5: A shared set of values increases the trustee’s perceived integrity.

Methodology

Research Method

The research question suggests a qualitative approach. On the other hand the propositions suggest the application of a quantitative method. However, this paper does not use qualitative data to test propositions. The field trust research is broad and there is hard to limit the amount of perspectives that can be applied. Therefore, the propositions should only be considered as guidelines to navigate through the landscape of trust research without continuously increasing the scope. A benefit of such an approach is that this paper, consisting of mainly qualitative data, more conveniently can be applied as a pilot study for later studies using a quantitative method.

To answer the research question, a case study is proposed. Per Yin (2018), traditional definitions of the term case study may be to narrow, majorly focusing on cases of "decisions". Yin further suggests that case studies have been confused with doing field-work. The definition of a case study should be two-folded, with the first part defining scope and the second part defining features. By scope, a case study is "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, (…)" (Yin, 2018, p. 15). The scope of a case study widely differs from that of an experiment, where the context of the situation has less of a focus.

By its features, a case study "copes with the technically distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangular fashion." (Yin, 2018, p. 15). The scope and features illustrate that a case study has its own logic of design, data collection and data analysis, differentiating itself from other research methods.

Other research methods may be experiments, surveys, archival analyses or histories. The question then become when it is appropriate to use a case study approach. Per Yin (2018) the three conditions that determine choice of research method is “the form of research question posed”, the level of control over behavioral events, and “the degree of focus on contemporary (…) events”.

A case study may be used when the form of the research question is of “how” or “why” format, no control over behavioral events are required and the research focuses on contemporary events. This papers’ proposed research question focuses on “how” vision and values affect trust. Its explanatory nature indicates that a case study may be appropriate. Furthermore, in a case study, relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated, and evidence may be collected through “direct observations of the events being studied and interviews of persons who may still be involved in those events” (Yin, 2018, p. 12). The study focuses on the case company from a non-historical perspective where the researcher cannot control the actions of the employees. Considering the three conditions posed by Yin (2018), a case study may appropriately be applied to the research question.

The greatest concern for case studies may be if they are rigorous enough (Yin, 2018). There have been several cases when case study procedures have not been appropriately followed. Also, case studies may be confused with “no research” studies, such as “teaching-practice” case studies or “popular” media case studies. Furthermore, given the low external validity of case studies, generalizing findings to be valid outside the case study may prove difficult. Case studies may also prove to drag out in scope or time, resulting in unreadably long documents.

Being aware of the concerns regarding case studies may help to mitigate drawbacks of the research method in the research design.

Case Study Research Designs

There are several variations of case studies. Yin (2018) argues that there are four types of case studies, namely: Single-case with holistic design, single-case with embedded design, multiple-case with holistic design and multiple-case with embedded design.

A single-case study is applicable in several situations (Yin, 2018). The first one, may be to critically test if some propositions within circumstances defined by theory is true or not. A second reason to use single-case design may be if the case represents an extreme or unusual case. A third reason may be to test a common case, with the objective to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation" (Yin, 2018, p. 50). Fourthly, revelatory cases "observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science inquiry" (p. 50). The fifth reason to apply a single-case study is the longitudinal case where a case is considered at several points in time. Common for all single-case studies is that all units of analyses are considered within the same context. A drawback of single-case studies may be that there may be more than one contextual view which should be applied in analyzing the now "more than one cases".

Within single-case studies, there are differences between holistic and embedded designs. The main difference is that a holistic design only has one unit of analysis while an embedded design has several units of analysis. The main difference between a single-case study with embedded design and multiple-case designs is that the units in the embedded design are considered within the same context. Even though there are several units of analysis, for a single-case study with embedded design, considerable focus is still given to a holistic view of the case.

A case study may contain more than one case. A multiple-case design differs from a single-case design with embedded design in that the cases are considered in different contexts. Evidence from multiple-case designs is considered more compelling than single-case designs (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). However, multiple-case designs may be more difficult to apply (Yin, 2018). Also, multiple-case designs may require significantly more resources than a single-case design.

The Case Company

The suggested company is a Norwegian e-commerce company in which the author is employed. The company has units in many of the Nordic countries. However, the main office is in Norway. Within this office, there are several departments. The departments are grouped in three categories to ensure anonymity: (1) Business Development, (2) IT Development and (3) Logistic Operations.

The company has several online stores that are grouped in divisions based on their market, age, geography and size. However, most stores share a subset of services such as business development, IT development and logistic operations. The company employs over 900 people and around half of those work at the main office in Norway. The first and largest store was founded around 20 years ago and has since then experienced a major growth that is still ongoing. Presently, this store is making a transition to become an online marketplace.

The average age of the employees is quite young, and there has been a focus on hiring highly educated people. Based on the education and by the experience gained, the competence level is high. This is shown in the fact that the company is market-leading in their areas of core competency, such as logistics and inhouse business and it development. The company may be considered multicultural since they own a subsidiary company in Poland that delivers development and operational services to the mother company. In addition, there is several subsidiary companies present in Norway that delivers similar services.

Both internally and externally the case company have a clear vision and values that are being communicated, amongst others, on their internet page. To ensure anonymity, the three values of the company will be referred to as: Value one, Value two and Value three. The referred Value number will be applied consistently to determine which value affect trust in which way.

Presently, the company are restructuring to break the “silo effect”, where each department operates with limited knowledge about and cooperation with other departments. The aim of the restructuring is a common way of working that ensures cooperation and increased flexibility.

Defining and Bounding the case

The applied research method is a single-case study with embedded design, where three units of analysis are corresponding to the three categories of departments. Even though there are three different units of analysis, it is desirable to analyze them under the same context, namely the case company. Therefore, a single-case study with embedded design may be more appropriate than a multiple-case design. Furthermore, with an organizational restructuring in the case company, aiming to more tightly integrate all departments, comparing the different units of analysis within the same context may give interesting data on the success of the restructuring in process.

A multiple-case design could have been applied, focusing on the different “silos” to identify differences in context. However, such a study may require resources out of the scope of a single thesis paper. Another popular methodology is the single-case with holistic design. Since the research question threats the “general level” of interpersonal trust, considering only one unit of analysis may be a suboptimal research design. Applying a single-case study with embedded design may give the most interesting data within the possible scope of the paper.

The units of analysis are: Unit of analysis one (Business Development), Unit of analysis two (IT Development) and Unit of analysis three (Logistic Operations). The grouping of departments into units of analysis is chosen because they represent three major focus areas of the case company that requires high levels of integration to function optimally. Furthermore, the three categories are areas that are of interest to the maritime industry.

The research is bounded by the three units of analysis. To limit the scope, other departments will not be considered. Also, only the effect of the company vision, value one, value two and value three on the general level of interpersonal trust is considered.

Collection Instruments

The qualitative empirical data are collected primarily from interviews. To support the interview data, observations are made, and some quantitative data are collected from a questionnaire based on theories developed by Maslach & Leiter (2001). The interview and observation data are classified as primary data. Data from the questionnaire is classified as secondary data.

Many case study interviews are of shorter length, around one hour, and are more focused than prolonged interviews (Yin, 2018). The form of the interview may be open-ended. However, such interviews tend to have a closer focus on the study protocol or “interview guide”. Per Möllering (2006), semi-structured interviews with open ended questions are common in trust research. Within this field of research, Gausdal (2012) found inspiration in McCracken (1988) and designed an interview guide with “open-ended questions and contrast questions”. The interview guide used in this paper was also constructed with inspiration from McCracken (1988).

The first part of the interview guide contains warm-up questions asking about academic and professional background. In addition to collect such information, the reason for those questions is to get the conversation flowing. The second part asks some broad end general type questions. This part is an exploratory section to get a feel on what parts of the questionnaire may be of higher interest for the different informants. The third and last part uses the propositions as guidelines to collect qualitative data that matches with the research question and applied theories. In this way, scope-creep can be reduced to manageable levels. The questions are designed as open-ended to avoid yes or no type answers, and to get the informants to reflect on their answers. As suggested by McCracken (1988), some contrast questions are included in the interview guide. An example of a contrast question is question ten: “Is the company’s vision a structural tool to align our efforts? Or would you consider it as a symbol of our culture that binds the company together?”. In addition, questions using a Likert scale are included in the interview guide. Informants are asked the following questions (Likert, 1932):

> How would you describe the impact of the company vision/values (asked as two different questions) on the daily work environment? To what degree does it have a significant influence? (On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is no and 5 is to a very high degree).

Questions using the Likert scale enables “large-scale testing of reactions to complex issues” (Lyon et al., 2016, p. 154). A limitation to Likert scale questions is that informants is “restricted to a fixed list of predetermined categories” (p. 154). The inclusion of such questions gives the interview guide some features of a structured interview. However, there are only two such questions that will be applied to give an indication on the informant’s reactions, not to perform any form of quantitative analyses.

The interview guide allows for a semi-structured interview to collect relevant data flexibly. The interview guide allowed for one-hour interviews. The guide was written in English and was then translated to Norwegian by the author. A total of 24 questions is included. The interview guide was not tested in a case setting to reduce the costs for the case company. However, based on the first interview, one additional question was added to the rest of the interviews, raising the total number of questions to 25. The interview guide can be found as Appendix A.

An observation guide was created to collect observation data. The two first hours of each work day in the case company are quite similar with similar types of meetings and similar employees present. The observation guide was made to observe those two hours over a five-day period. The observation guide was designed to study connections between the vision and values, and the different types of trust theories described. The observation guide can be found as Appendix B.

To define the company values, data is drawn from a work environment questionnaire. The questionnaire measures the match or mismatch between personal and organizational values. Based on this data, we can say something about how representative the organizational values are, and to which degree the organizational values can be applied to answer the research question. The questionnaire was designed based on theory by Maslach & Leiter (2001) and was created by a consulting company. The author has, however, access to the data on match/mismatch of personal and organizational values for the departments included in the three units of analysis.

Sampling

To collect the primary research data, a stratified sample of key informants was selected. Three key informants were selected from the Business Development unit of analysis and two key informants were selected in each of the other two units of analysis. To better understand the general level of interpersonal trust in the case company, the key informants vary in employee/management level, age and work experience within the company. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. A summary of the interview sample can be found in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of key informants and interviews performed

Key Informant	Position	Experience in Company	Interview Date
1	Leader in Business	10+ Years	15.03.18
2	Leader in IT	15+ Years	16.03.18
3	Employee in Business	5+ Years	16.03.18
4	Leader in Logistics	5+ Years	19.03.18
5	Leader in Business	5+ Years	20.03.18
6	Employee in IT	5+ Years	20.03.18
7	Leader in Logistics	15+ Years	22.03.18

With such a low sample size, statistical interpretations may be difficult. When summarizing the answers from Likert scale-based questions, it is important to remember that the answers will only give indications and give little room for statistical interpretations.

Data Collection

After the interview guide was constructed, the key informants were contacted on email and requested to participate in the interviews. The informants who then accepted the request were called to a meeting room at the case company using the outlook calendar functionality.

When at the interview, the informants were presented about the case study and asked for permission to record the interview. Furthermore, the informants were asked to sign an “informed consent” form. This form can be found as Appendix C.

The part of the interviews containing the warm-up questions was not recorded to ensure the anonymity of the informants. After this part was finished, the audio recorder was turned on and the interview continued. A challenge in the interviews was to follow the questions tightly enough to get relevant data, but not so tight as to hinder the informants to express themselves freely. This challenge was mitigated by adapting the order of the questions in the interview guide to better suit the flow of conversation with the informants. In addition, improvised follow-up questions based on the theory were asked where appropriate.

The meeting rooms used for the interviews were booked for one-hour sessions. Because of this, close attention had to be made to extract the relevant data in time. For some interviews, this was a challenge. However, for some interviews the opposite challenge presented itself. Some of the informants gave shorter answers leading to a shorter interview. In those interviews, a backup solution was followed in which the informants were asked exploratory questions. These questions were selected based on indications collected earlier in the interview on what the informant could provide useful data on.

The observations were made from 8am to 10am each day throughout one week. This time of day was chosen due to fact that this period is relatively similar each day. Every morning there is a set of “stand-up” meetings were employees working together shares their progress and plan for today, and coordinate efforts. These meetings gave a unique opportunity to observe group behaviors that had high potential to give interesting data for trust research. Four of the days the observer was present on the meetings. However, on one of the days the author had to travel by train to a meeting and had to attend the stand-ups through skype. On the Friday before the observation week, all the employees that were going to be observed was informed. This day was chosen to comply with research ethics and at the same time to get some distance between the information day and the observation days, to minimize the opportunity for people to change their behavior while being observed.

The work environment questionnaire provided secondary data. This questionnaire made by a third party was distributed to all employees in the case company via the emails. The responses were sent by the case company to the third party for analysis. After a meeting with the case company, access to the data on match/mismatch between personal and organizational values for the three units of analysis were negotiated. The scale of match/mismatch goes from -2 to +2, where -2 indicates a high degree of mismatch and +2 a high degree of match. The questionnaire is based on academic research literate, and the analysis was done by a professional party, somewhat mitigating the drawbacks of not controlling the analysis process. This was deemed acceptable since the data from this questionnaire is playing a minor role in the overall analysis in the paper.

Data Analysis

After all the interviews were performed, the author transcribed the Norwegian audio files into English text. Both the transcription and the translation of the data was done manually by the author. The translation may be a minor drawback to the internal validity of the paper. However, the author focused on translating the informant's meanings rather than copying word for word, to mitigate the drawback of translation data losses. After the interviews were transcribed and translated, pieces of the text were copied into one of the eight themes in the main findings by theme table. Then the observation data were added where appropriate in the table. All the data was then cleaned and unnecessary sentences from the interviews were removed. The table was then analyzed and used to write the results chapter of the paper. Temporary codes were memorized for each theme to structure and group the results as part of the analyzing processes. After each theme section was written, the main findings were summarized in a results table.

Research Ethics Remarks

In addition to the ethical considerations in designing the case, designing the interview and observation guide, and in the collection of the data, ethical issues have been thoroughly treated to ensure the rights of both the informants and the case company. The author has on several occasions spoken with the case company on how to deal with their anonymity. As an employee in the case company, the author discussed with both the company and with the university on how to balance the different needs. At the research interviews, the author made agreements with the informants to delete all audio files and documents that can be used to identify any informants after the submission of the paper. All informants were presented and willingly signed the informed consent from.

Research Quality

There are four tests that can be considered to judge the quality of a research design (Yin, 2018, p. 47), namely: Construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

Construct validity concerns how to "identify correct operational measures for the concepts being studied" (Yin, 2018, p. 42). This test may be challenging for a case study. However, there are some tactics that can be used to increase the construct validity. This paper uses "multiple sources of evidence" and establishes "a chain of evidence to increase the construct validity (Yin, 2018, p. 44). In addition to interviewing informants from different units of analysis, the author did observation exercises and collected data from an ongoing questionnaire to attain data from multiple sources. To establish a chain of evidence, the author has saved all audio files from the interviews and all the notes from the observations. At every step of processing the data, new files were made, such that each step is available for analysis. The one weakness in this chain is that in the document with the table of the themes where all the data from the interviews and observations are, the data are connected to the individual informants. However, to ensure anonymity, in the paper only references to informants "from the unit of analysis" is made. This weakness does not totally break the chain of evidence, but increases the effort needed to analyze the chain. Another tactic that could have been used is to have the draft paper reviewed by the informants. Due to time constraints in the case company, this tactic was not applied.

Internal validity may be the most important test for case studies. Internal validity discusses if causal relationships can be established if “certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions” (Yin, 2018, p. 42). The author applies an explanatory case study that compares empirical data attained in the study, with patterns that is predicted based on the theory. To increase internal validity, several patterns are predicted that may or may not rival each other. The theories that the patterns are based on combines leading theories on trust research to build an explanation of the studied phenomenon. The explanation takes form of a logic model that the author designed based on combining theories. The author has taken several measures to ensure a high internal validity of the case study. However, the fact that the author is an employee in the case company, may have affected the internal validity by altering how the author perceive and interpret the collected data. On the other side, the internal validity may increase since the author may be able to interpret the data more precisely by interpreting indirect speech in interviews with informants.

External validity asks if the findings “are generalizable beyond the immediate study” (Yin, 2018, p. 45). With a high focus on the contemporary events surrounding the case, generalizing from case studies has often been a challenge. To increase the external validity of the case study, an embedded design with multiple units of analysis was used. Also, the case study relied upon a broad review of trust theories. However, the author acknowledges that there may be challenges with the external validity of the case study. The aim of this paper is to show how vision and values affect trust in one case. Further research on the topic may be of interest for both researchers and organizations.

Reliability discusses if the case study can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2018, p. 42). There may always be challenges in attaining “the same results” in qualitative research. People change over time and doing the same interview in different sets of time is highly likely to produce differences in the answers. Some measures are, however, done to increase the reliability of study. Protocols were developed in form of an interview guide and an observation guide. There was also established a clear chain of evidence.

Results

Introductory Findings

The key informants were presented with questions about their propensity to trust and asked the following questions:

> How would you describe the impact of the company [vision/values] on your daily work? To what degree does it have a significant influence? (On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is no and 5 is to a very high degree)

The responses on propensity to trust and to the questions are summarized by unit of analysis in table 2.

Table 2: Propensity to trust and impact of vision and values (N=7)

Unit of Analysis	Propensity to Trust	Impact of Vision	Impact of Values
U1 (Business informants)	Relatively High	3,25	4,00
U2 (IT informants)	High	2,50	3,50
U3 (Logistics informants)	High	4,00	4,50

The findings indicate that values seem to have a higher impact on the daily work than the vision. Also, the impact of the values seems to vary less. The reported impact of the vision fluctuates heavily. Some interpretation was needed to classify the informants reported propensity to trust. One of the business informants did not give any clear number as asked to the impact of the vision and the values. It was not tried to force an answer to avoid receiving an arbitrary number. The numbers in table 2 are the average of only two answers and are only presented to give an indication to the impact of the vision and values. This presentation displays less of the fluctuations in the impact of the vision. However, it was necessary to group the answer related to the unit of analysis, to maintain anonymity.

The match/mismatch between personal and organizational values per unit of analysis are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Match/mismatch between personal and organizational values (N=140)

Unit of Analysis	U1 (Business Development)	U2 (IT Development)	U3 (Logistics Development)
Match between values	0,84	0,41	0,69
Participation	87,0 %	63,3 %	87,1 %

The match between personal values are high for unit one and three. For these units, it may be assumed that the communicated values are the actual values. However, for unit two, there is a higher need to describe the mismatch between personal and organizational values when analyzing the empirical data.

The main results are categorized under eight different themes according to the propositions on how vision and values can affect trust. The seven first categories are part of a Möllering (2006) based theory. Within these categories, the five first themes represent a reason base for trust, inspired by the theory given by Abrams et al. (2003). The sixth and seventh category adapts a routine and reflexivity base for trust. The eight category uses a non-Möllering based approach to consider trust as organizational symbols and culture.

Establishing and Ensuring a Common Way of Thinking

When asked about how the vision and values are communicated from the management, the informants had varied answers. One of the business informants stated that “there are many posters hanging around. Also, the vision and values are used a lot in oral communication. I experience that the vision is not communicated as much as the values. The values are more used in daily life”. Another business informant feels that the top management communicates the vision well through the intranet and in common meetings. IT informants mentioned that employees receive a book explaining the vision and values, that the vision and values are found on posters in hallways, and that the vision and values are repeated in common meetings. IT informants also mentioned that the values are communicated well, but the vision is communicated half-heartedly. A logistics informant told that the management are doing effort to communicate the vision. It seems that the vision and values are easily accessible through different mediums. However, the values may be more actively communicated than the vision.

The informants were asked how the communicated vision help to ensure a “common way of thinking”. An IT informant believed we are not following the vision now, but if we had, it would have made it easier to prioritize and take decisions. This view is shared by informants in business who states that a more specific vision would help people to work in the same direction, and that having a vision helps people to cooperate on an overall level. A logistics informant gave the following quote:

> It is a clear connection between knowing what we are supposed to do and knowing our goal, and the trust level. It is easier to trust when knowing that everybody works in the same direction. There are several aspects in the vision that create trust.

One of the IT informants does not believe that the vision helps to ensure a “common way of thinking”. Instead believing that it is the strategy which does this. A logistics informant discussed how a lower focus on vision can break routines and cause frustration:

> (Have there been periods with less focus on the vision and have you then noticed negative consequences?): Yes, I feel that then we don’t pull in the same direction. We have examples where the purchasing departments had their KPI’s and logistics had different KPI’s, and the two departments have pulled in different directions. They were measured on the opposite of us. (In such situations, is it difficult to assume that one can trust each

other?): Maybe not that one doesn't trust each other, more like that we don't understand each other. Some frustrations may arise. The routines are broken.

Several informants from different units of analysis indicates that a properly communicated vision may be a structural tool that enables cooperation and helps the different parts of the company to move in the same direction. An IT informant clearly says that the vision "doesn't describe something we are, it describes something we must become". Similarly, a logistics informant expresses trust in that everybody works towards a common goal.

A business informant provided an example where a shared value helped to identify in which way to go. An Informant from IT identified the same value, value two, as a value that helps to choose between alternatives. Another business informant further states that the values, especially value two, contributes to a "common work environment". A logistics informant agrees that even if the values are interpreted differently, it is something the employees share and that brings people together. The other logistics informant agrees that the values help to create a bond and to feel connected to a team, and to give a "common direction". The values, and particularly value two seems to help ensure a common way of thinking. In the observations, value two could also be seen affecting how people communicated in solving problems.

Hold People Accountable to Trust

When it comes to holding people accountable to trust, value one seems to be of significance. Six out of seven informants used the same example to illustrate how employees use this value to hold each other accountable to trust. A business informant stated the following quote:

> We have a meeting culture that we are accurate on meeting times, really on the minute. We are looking at the watch when people are coming late to a meeting. Value one is deeply embedded in our culture. In a way, we keep each other accountable to this value.

By observing, the importance of value one was reinforced. The author noticed how people used this value to hold people accountable to trust. It therefore seems clear that value one is used to hold people accountable to trust in the case company.

In addition, value two seem to be important. Two informants demonstrated how this value could be used to hold people accountable to trust. Other statements on the theme is that the values are shared, and that in the case company it is acceptable to correct people who does not follow the values.

Ability-Based Trust

One of the business informants had the impression that trust in each other's abilities is high. This is because it is a necessity because different people in different departments have specific knowledge and expertise that is needed to solve tasks together. The informant then discussed how the different values are needed for the different departments to have the ability to solve their tasks. Based on this discussion, it seems like the perceived abilities of coworkers are positively affected by the company values.

Another business informant stated that without trust in each other's abilities "then everything becomes a little difficult". This matches well with what the former business informant stated about the necessity of trust in each other's abilities. Furthermore, the observations also indicated that there is a level of "for-grantedness" in each other's abilities. Even though ability-based trust adapts a reason perspective to trust, there seem to be a coupling to a routine perspective on trust.

Another interesting coupling is between ability-based trust and a reflexivity perspective on trust, and a third business employee stated the following quote:

> When spending a lot of time together we get to know each other's strength and weaknesses and trust increases. Complex tasks are quite simple since I have someone to talk about the tasks with. To go to someone, you know is good at something helps. I have high trust to the people I work with and help them seamlessly. We have some trust when first meeting and that can be built up or down.

This illustrates that trust in each other's abilities may be something that is built up over time through experiences. Ability-based trust may be analyzed not only with a reason-based perspective, but also with a routine and reflexivity perspective. It is also interesting to notice that the main empirical data on ability-based trust comes from one unit of analysis, the business development unit.

Benevolence-Based Trust

When asked: "Can people share their problems with each other and expect a constructive and caring response?", all business informants answered that constructive and caring response can be expected. One of the informants described it as:

> Generally, people can ask help from each other and receive constructive and caring response. It is very safe to ask for help. People are encouraged to ask for help, it is safer to ask than to not doing it. We are open with each other and want to help each other.

Another business informant indicated that value three increased the benevolence-based trust level.

The IT informants agreed that constructive and caring response can be expected. One informant stated the following: “I believe that value three helps increase the trust level. There is some connection between this value and trust.” When followed up by the question if in an environment with such a value makes it easier to trust each other’s good-will, the informant answered with: “Yes, an enthusiastic environment counteracts formation of different agendas.”.

The other IT informant was, however, not sure that people wanted each other well due to a recent event. The informant did see the organization as flat and said that it is acceptable to state disagreements out loud. The informant further mentioned that the top management does not always communicate their plan clearly and claims that the values are shared but are interpreted differently. This contributes to a state where departments are pulling in different directions. The statements of these informants may indicate a link between “establishing and ensuring a common way of thinking” and “holding people accountable to trust”, and benevolence-based trust.

The Logistics informants also agreed that constructive and caring responses can be expected. Such a common agreement between all informants on this question may indicate a level of “for-grantedness”.

One of the informants from logistics stated that “value three makes it easier for people to trust that we want well for each other”. Informants from all three units of analysis indicate a connection between value three and benevolence-based trust. The observation data also clearly shows this connection to be present. This may constitute one of the clearest connections found in the primary data. It seems like the perceived benevolence of coworkers are positively affected by value three.

Integrity-Based Trust

The business informants experienced that the stated values are the actual values of the company. One of them also states that there is a common understanding of the different values, indicating a connection to "establishing and ensuring a common way of thinking". This informant provides an example on how value one can increase integrity-based trust. A view that is shared by another business informant.

One of the IT informants experienced that the communicated values are not the actual values of the company. Some decisions that have been made lately have reduced the presence of value three. This informant did, however, state that value one positively affects integrity-based trust, and of the vision and values, value one is the one that affects trust the most.

Logistics informants experienced a high level of integrity and that the communicated values constitute the actual values of the company. By using an example, one of the logistics informants indicated a connection between value one and integrity-based trust. The example cannot be quoted due to anonymity of the values. It seems like the perceived integrity of coworkers are positively affected by values one. A "for-grantedness" in value one was observed that may indicate that this value is highly embedded in the work environments of the units of analysis.

Trust as Routine

The business informants had some interesting quotes on how the vision and values are like a routine, and one informant states the following:

> The vision, and more the values are included in many presentations and in talks. It is something we are feeling on. Most people that work here should know what the vision and values are. It is not something that the management has made and then put in a binder and stored where nobody knows where it is. It is living in the organization.

Another business informant said this: “People gets to be part of a culture, maybe like institutionalizing. We rarely hear the value as words, but they are part of the culture and are used subconsciously”. One of the informants believed that it can be taken for-granted that people are good at what they do and that there are a lot of good-will present. This “for-grantedness” may come from a common understanding that is gained by consistent work on the company values. Especially for value one, it contributes to a state of “for-grantedness”. According to business informants, it can be taken for-granted that people in the company have the same values and culture. Taking this for-granted may increase the ability-based trust.

When one of the IT informants was asked to mention an example where trust in each other’s abilities between colleagues made it easier to accomplish a task, the informant answered that it happened frequently but that it was hard to give an example. Furthermore, the informant stated that it is taken for-granted that challenges are solved and that there is no need to ask questions about that. This again indicates that there may be a high level of “for-grantedness” in each other’s abilities.

A logistics informant took it for-granted that the ability level in the company is high, and that it is a good culture for pushing good ideas to higher management. Another, logistics informant couldn’t think of an example where the company values helped resolve a conflict. The informant stated the following: “The values are used and is with us all the time, but no specific examples come to mind. I just feel like it is there all the time and it is well worked in in most departments.”. When asked about if the vision and values can be taken for granted, the informant answered the following: “Yes, in that way the vision and values can be hard to talk about. It is a part of the daily work and an expectation”.

It seems like the vision and values has a degree of “for-grantedness” in them, and that this may increase trust by a routine perspective. A “for-grantedness” in the vision and values was also seen in the observations, especially for ability-based trust. The company focus on vision and values may be institutionalizing.

Trust as Reflexivity

It was hard to collect interesting data on trust as reflexivity. One business informant said that new people may have more to prove and that “I don’t have super trust form the start, but I gain it quickly”. A logistics informant said “It is easier to talk to people I know. Trust is something that is built up incrementally. The more experience people have together the more trust there is”. This indicates that trust is something that is built up over time. Based on observations and understanding gained in the interviews, it may be that value three can help to establish and ensure an environment where it is easier to build trust between each other.

The lack of data on this perspective may either be that the author didn’t focus enough on gathering such data, or that it is hard to gather. Due to the lack of data, the paper will emphasize less on this perspective.

Vision and Values as Organizational Symbols

One of the business informants saw the vision and values as something that symbolizes what we want to be and what we want to do. The informant stated that the vision is something abstract, more like a feeling. However, the values are more concrete. The informant also stated the following quote: “We are living closely by those values in the company, they are clear values that strongly affects our culture. The vision and values are a huge part of who we are, our DNA”. Another business informants agree that the vision doesn’t say how we are supposed to work and that is more like a symbol, a part of our culture. A third business informant stated that: “I don’t think about the values since they are part of the culture. I don’t ask questions about the culture”. This may indicate similarities to a routine perspective on trust (Möllering, 2006).

According to one of the IT informants, the vision is a symbol of our culture. However, the IT informants mainly discussed the vision in structural terms throughout the interviews.

One of the logistics informants experienced the vision and values as symbols on who we are, since they affect our culture and mindset in the daily work. The informant stated that even if the vision is less concrete than the values it helps to remind which way that is right. For the values, the informant said that it helps employees to fit into the company’s collaborative environment by establishing a culture and by illustrating a common goal. The other logistics informant agreed that the vision is part of the culture, something “that binds us together” and stated the following:

> I feel like in the process we had with the vision and values, it is something that defines us and what we are supposed to be out there. For my part it is what defines us and lays the foundation for us. It means how we talk with each other and how we operate in the daily work.

The vision may be less concrete than the values. However, it is still something that defines our culture by saying something about “who we are” and reminding which way is right.

The values seem to establish a more concrete culture that may help employees to “fit in”. Both the vision and the values seem to act as organizational symbols.

Summary

The eight theme-categories illustrates different ways of analyzing how the vision and values can influence interpersonal trust. The different themes may be connected, some stronger than other. This is natural for a subject so complex as trust. However, the themes may give a way to enable a discussion of the data that is founded on the literature.

There are both similarities and differences between the units of analysis and within the units. The clearest similarities are the possible connections between value three and benevolence-based trust, and between value one and integrity-based trust. Here, it was found a high degree of agreements between the units of analysis. When it comes to differences, there are different views on if the company is following its vision. Also, there are different views on if the vision is a structural tool or a symbol of the company culture, not just between the units of analysis but also within them. Furthermore, it is interesting that ability-based trust is mainly discussed in unit of analysis one.

Table 4 summarizes the findings from the empirical data.

Table 4: Main findings by theme

Themes	Main Findings
Establishing and ensuring a “common way of thinking”	• Values are more actively communicated than the vision • A properly communicated vision can be a structural tool that describes “something we must become” • Values, particularly value two, seems to ensure a “common way of thinking”
Hold people accountable to trust	• Value one seems to be commonly used to hold people accountable to trust • Value two seems to some extent to be used to hold people accountable to trust • It seems acceptable to correct people who don’t follow the values • People in the company seem to share the values
Ability-based trust	• All values seem to positively affect the perceived abilities of coworkers • Ability based trust may be coupled to a routine trust perspective • Ability-based trust may be coupled to a reflexivity trust perspective • Empirical data on ability-based trust is mainly found in interviews within the business development unit of analysis

Benevolence-based trust	• Constrictive and caring responses seem to be taken "for-granted" when sharing a problem • Value three seem to positively affect the perceived benevolence of coworkers • The vision may not always be communicated clearly, and local interpretation of shared values may contribute to departments pulling in different directions
Integrity-based trust	• Value one seems to positively affect the perceived integrity of coworkers • Value one seems to be taken "for-granted" • The communicated values seem to be the actual company values
Trust as routine	• The vision and values seem to have a degree of "for-grantedness" in them that positively affect trust as routine • The focus on vision and values in the company may be seen as institutionalizing
Trust as reflexivity	• It seems that trust is something that is built up incrementally • Value three may help establish and ensure an environment to build trust
Vision and values as organizational symbols	• The vision seems to be less concrete than the values • The vision seems to say something about "who we are" and reminds us which way is right • The values seem to help employees to fit into the company's collaborative environment by establishing a culture and common goal • The vision and values seem to act as organizational symbols

Discussion

Introductory discussions

IT informants reported the lowest impact of the company vision and values on their daily work. At the same time, the work environment questionnaire shows that the match between personal and organizational values is considerably lower in unit of analysis two (IT Development) than in the other units. This harmonizes well with Guiso et al. (2013), who found little evidence to a connection between advertised values and performance. The questionnaire results indicate, however, that the advertised values can be considered as actual values for unit of analysis one and three. However, since it is harder to see the advertised values as actual values for unit of analysis two, it makes sense that they will have less impact on the daily work of employees in this unit of analysis.

In interviews with the IT informants, questions about the effect of the vision were formulated in a more theoretical fashion, focusing on effects "if the vision had been followed". This enabled collecting broader data about the vision. However, this formulation may to some extent have reduced the internal validity of the data. The benefit is that the discussion can be significantly more streamlined when talking about effects of the vision. The impact of the values was higher than for the vision in unit of analysis two, and examples illustrating the effects of the values were given. It may therefore be possible to discuss the effects of vision and values on interpersonal trust based on the themes established earlier. The remainder of the discussion will be structured based on the eight themes.

Establishing and Ensuring a Common Way of Thinking

Abrams et al. (2003) indicates that ensuring a shared vision and language affect interpersonal trust. Based on this view, a communicated vision is the factor that contributes to interpersonal trust. However, the data indicates that the values, to a higher degree than the vision, helps to ensure a Common way of thinking". Especially value two, helps in this regard. The values seem to be more important than the vision to ensure a "common way of thinking." As suggested by several of the informants, the values may be more concrete than the vision. When ensuring that employees think about work related issues in a common way, the values can more clearly be applied as guidelines. On the other hand, the vision may be a more abstract concept, that is not actively used in the daily work. This "passive presence" may reduce the efficiency of the vision as a structural tool.

However, the vision may to some extent ensure a common way of thinking as a structural tool. By describing "something we must become", the vision can inspire employees to work together towards a common goal. The vision gives a more general direction for the company, and in that way helps the entire organization move towards a goal. In this way, the vision may have a broader reach than the values in creating a common way of thinking. The values may be more concrete and have a stronger impact on ensuring a common way of thinking in the daily work.

For unit of analysis two, the empirical data on the impact of the vision is not as strong as for the other units of analysis This may indicate that the vision is not ensuring a common way of thinking within the case company as a whole. Even if the data within this unit of analysis is not as strong as in the other units, the vision may to some extent ensure a common way of thinking within the case company.

However, the values seem to ensure a common way of thinking, at a higher degree than the communicated vision. This may indicate a contradiction to the framework of Abrams et al. (2003).

Hold People Accountable to Trust

By investing heavily in the values, an organization studied by Abrams et al. (2003) achieved significant positive results. When the leaders reinforced the practice of holding each other accountable to the values, the entire organization became skilled in doing so. A prerequisite for holding each other accountable to trust may then be a shared set of values.

Employees in the case company seem to a high extent to be sharing the company values. Especially value one, seems to be used in holding each other accountable to trust. In addition, value two is to some extent used in the same way. By holding each other accountable to these values, employees may experience a higher degree of predictability in each other's actions, indicating that this organizational trust factor may contribute to an integrity-based trust perspective. On the other hand, one of the informants stated that it is acceptable to correct people who don't follow the values. From this viewpoint, it seems that it feels safe to correct each other and to hold each other accountable to the company values. This may indicate that holding people accountable to trust contributes to a benevolence-based trust perspective.

An informant in unit of analysis two suggested some values that could replace the existing ones. However, he agreed with the other informants on the way the existing values are used to hold each other accountable to trust. Employees in the case company seem to hold each other accountable to value one and to some extent value two. However, the employees seem to not hold each other accountable to value three. It seems that some values are more commonly used to hold each other accountable to trust. This may suggest that different values have different characteristics.

Ability-Based Trust

Having abilities within a domain makes a trustee trustworthy in the eyes of a trustor within the specific domain in which the trustee has abilities (Mayer et al., 1995). Ability-based trust can also be known as competence-based trust “that allows one to feel confident that a person sought out knows what s/he is talking about and is worth listening to and learning from” (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 65). The empirical data from the case company suggests that the values may positively affect the perceived abilities of coworkers. The values enable employees within different ability domains to have a common understanding when solving complex tasks. The values are something that is shared across all ability domains and can make it easier for trustors to evaluate the ability level of trustees outside the trustor’s ability domain.

Trust in each other’s abilities within the different employee’s specific domains may be a necessity for the company to function at all. It is impossible for any one employee to have sufficient abilities to perform complex tasks alone. Such a necessity to trust each other’s abilities may indicate that ability-based trust contributes to a ‘routine’ perspective on trust. On the other hand, abilities are something that is built up over time and so may trust in each other’s abilities be. Therefore, a ‘reflexivity’ perspective can also be applied to ability-based trust. The existing theories connect ability-based trust mainly to a trust as ‘reason’ perspective. The data gives some indications that this may be a narrow interpretation. However, more research is needed to say anything more concerning this.

Ability-based trust is mainly discussed by informants in unit of analysis one. This could mean that either the level of trust in each other’s abilities are higher or lower than in other units of analysis. The data could indicate a higher awareness of ability-based trust within the business development unit. This could suggest that it is easier to practice ability-based trust within this unit. However, it could also mean that it is a lower level of for-grantedness in each other's abilities within unit of analysis one.

No support was found for the communicated vision to increase the trustee's perceived abilities. However, based on data from unit of analysis one, the values seem to have a potential to increase the trustee's perceived abilities. This finding seems to harmonize well with the research done by Mayer et at. (1995) and Abrams et al. (2003).

Benevolence-Based Trust

Benevolence is "the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor" (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718). Abrams et al. (2003, p. 65) states that benevolence-based trust "allows one to query a colleague in depth without fear of damage to self-esteem or reputation". In the case company, value three seem to have a strong connection to benevolence-based trust. The nature of this value, and the way it was perceived by the employees, seems to contribute to trust in each other's benevolence by affecting the atmosphere in the work environment. Employees in the case company can on a general level trust that other people want to do good, and they can query colleagues without fear of damage to self-esteem or reputation.

The case company vision may not always be communicated clearly. This can contribute to uncertainty and that different departments are pulling in different directions. This may again negatively affect the general level of benevolence-based trust through a negative effect on the working atmosphere. A clearer vision could help to create an atmosphere where it is safer to query each other in the work environment. However, this is outside the scope of this paper.

On the other side, the general level of benevolence-based trust in the case company is seen as high. Constructive and caring responses are taken for-granted by several of the informants, indicating a connection to a trust as routine perspective. No evidence for a supporting effect of the vision on trustees perceived benevolence were identified. However, value three does seem to increase the perceived benevolence of trustees in the company. Values seem, however, to have the potential to positively affect the perceived benevolence of coworkers. Again, the finings harmonize with the research of Mayer et al. (1995) and Abrams et al. (2003).

Integrity-Based Trust

Integrity is connected to trust in that “the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 719). Value one seems to have a positive effect on integrity-based trust. Several of the informants exemplified how employees were held accountable to this value. Based on the interviews and observations it is clear that this value is about adhering to a shared principle. The informants expressed that value one is taken for-granted inside the organization, and when dealing with external partners and customers. Most informants stated that the communicated values are the actual values of the company. Even though there were some mismatches between personal values and organizational values, and that other values were mentioned, on a general level it seems to be a high level of integrity in the communicated values. Value one specifically seems to contribute to increasing the trustee’s perceived integrity within the case company. Values therefore seem to have a potential to positively affect the perceived integrity of coworkers, and to be taken “for-granted”, indicating a possible connection between integrity-based trust and a routine perspective on trust.

Trust as Routine

Möllering (2006, p. 10) sees institutions as promoters of trust and states the following: “Trusting and being trustful appear to resemble a routine that people follow habitually, rather than a conscious choice”. This can be observed in the case company on numerous occasions. Several of the informants had a hard time to think of specific examples, but at the same time they seem to be sure of connections between the vision or a value, and trust. In this way, the vision and values have a level of “for-grantedness” that makes it easier to trust each other. The vision and values may be seen as instruments for institutionalizing. By having a for-granted set of a vison and values, the company as an institution promotes a trusting environment and adapts for people to follow routines habitually.

The process of institutionalizing is a process that takes time. The effect of a vision may not be high just after it have been implemented. But over time, as the leaders reinforce the vision, it becomes more and more part of the company and the habits of the employees. The high level of “for-grantedness” in the vision of the case company can with this perspective indicate that the vision has evolved over a long period. This again means that a vision may be a promoter of trust as an institutionalizing instrument. This paper does, however, not have enough data to conclude on such a connection between the vision and trust as routine due to scope constraints. However, vision and values seem to have a degree of “for-grantedness” in them that positively affect trust as routine.

Trust as Reflexivity

Both from the theory by Möllering (2006) and from the empirical data it is clear that trust is something that is built up over time. The only findings of interest for trust as reflexivity is that value three may help to establish and ensure an environment to build trust incrementally. The lack of data could be because all the informants had worked for a sufficient amount of time in the company to have finished building a high level of trust to surrounding employees. It could also be that the interview guide did not have enough questions to properly highlight this area of trust.

However, it seems that values may have a potential to help establish and ensure an environment in which to build trust.

Vision and Values as Organizational Symbols

Where in a Möllering (2006) based approach, the vision can be seen as describing "something we must become", the vision may be seen as saying "something about who we are" when using a different approach. This approach may be more appropriate to use on the vision that is less concrete than the values. If we think about the vision as who we are and something that reminds us which way is right, the vision can more easily be seen as something that positively affects the level of interpersonal trust. By being a symbol of who we are, the vision can affect the culture in which all employees are a member of. Bolman & Deal (2013) states that an inspiring vision can turn a sense of purpose into an image of the future.

The company values seem to help employees to fit into the company's collaborative environment by establishing a culture and a common goal. The part with the common goal harmonies well with the theme "establishing and ensuring a common way of thinking". However, by establishing a common culture, the values act as organizational symbols as to doing that. Whitener et al. (1998) also indicates that shared values may be a part of organizational culture. This view is especially applicable using the 'symbolic frame' posed by Bolman & Deal (2013). The empirical data supports existing theories in that shared values may be seen as organizational symbols. By this non-Möllering based approach, both the communicated vision and the values can be perceived as symbols of the company culture, and in his way contribute to interpersonal trust.

Values seem to help employees to fit into a company's collaborative environment by establishing a culture and a common goal. This finding matches with the 'symbolic frame' (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Summary

After reviewing the empirical data and discussing the findings, updates can be made to the proposition figure on how vision and value may affect trust. The visualization on how vision and values may affect trust is show in figure 3.

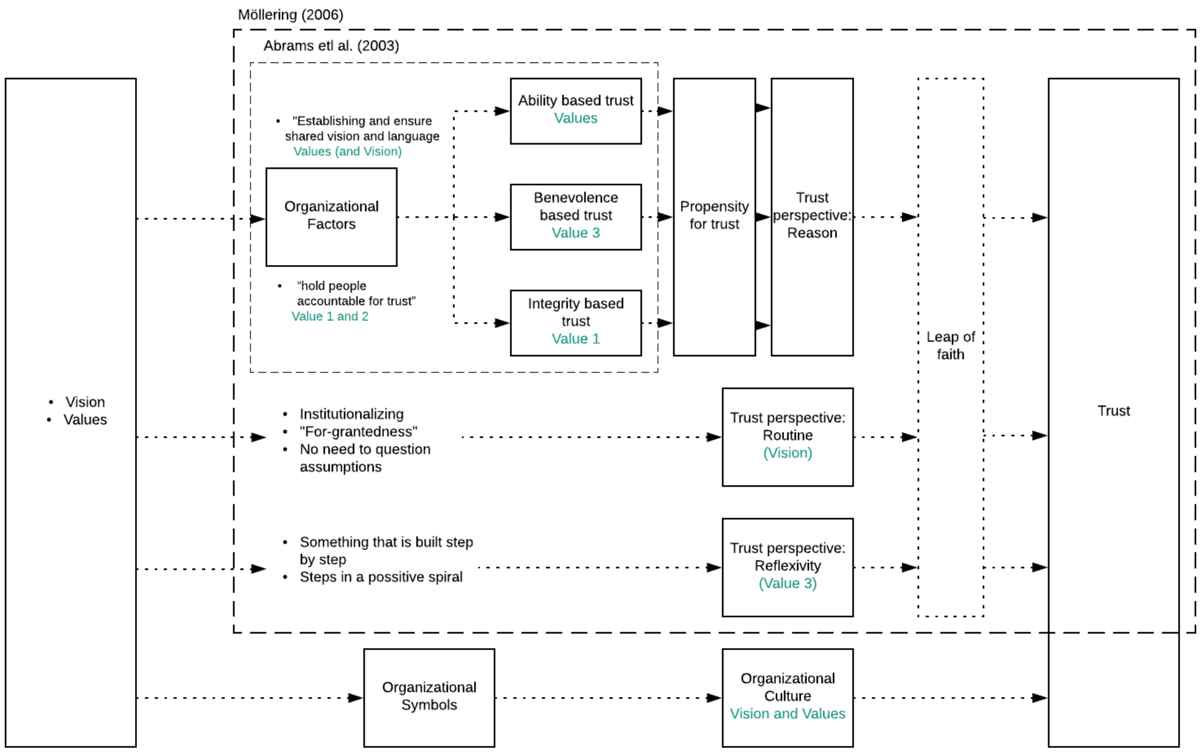

Figure 3: How vision and values may affect trust. (Source: The author)

The main change in the flow is that Integrity-based trust is now included in the framework based on Abrams et al. (2003) and organizational factors. The green text represents in which way the vision or values were thought to effect trust in the suggested flow. Green text in brackets represent less clear connections and suggests that further qualitative studies may be required.

The findings that some values influence trust and some does not tells ut that values have a potential to influence trust. The reason that some values affect trust and some does not may be that different values have different characteristics. This suggests that it is not the values but the characteristics of the values that affects trust. Further implications may be that ‘types of values’ can be identidied and grouped based on characteristics. Table 5 summarizes the connections that is found between the findings and existing theories. Findings that may represent a newness or contribution to existing literature are marked in bold.

Table 5: Main findings by theme coupled with supporting literature.

Themes	Main Findings	Supporting Literature
Establishing and ensuring a "common way of thinking"	• Values are more actively communicated than the vision • A properly communicated vision can be a structural tool that describes "something we must become" • **Values seems to have a potential to ensure a "common way of thinking"**	• (Abrams et al., 2003) • (Gillespie, 2004) • (Möllering, 2006) • (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1985; Thomson & Luthans, 1990) • (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1994) • (Rothärmel, 2017) • (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998) • (Whitener et al., 1998)
Hold people accountable to trust	• Some values seem to be commonly used to hold people accountable to trust • It seems acceptable to correct people who don't follow the values • People in one organization may share the values	• (Abrams et al., 2003) • (Gillespie, 2004) • (Möllering, 2006) • (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1985; Thomson & Luthans, 1990) • (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1994) • (Rothärmel, 2017) • (Whitener et al., 1998)
Ability-based trust	• Values seem to positively affect the perceived abilities of coworkers • **Ability-based trust may be coupled to a routine trust perspective** • **Ability-based trust may be coupled to a reflexivity trust perspective**	• (Abrams et al., 2003) • (Mayer et al., 1995) • (Möllering, 2006)
Benevolence-based trust	• Constructive and caring responses seem to be taken "for-granted" when sharing a problem • Values seem to have the potential to positively affect the perceived benevolence of coworkers • The vision may not always be communicated clearly, and local interpretation of shared values may contribute to departments pulling in different directions	• (Abrams et al., 2003) • (Mayer et al., 1995) • (Möllering, 2006)

Integrity-based trust	• Values seem to have a potential to positively affect the perceived integrity of coworkers, and to be taken "for-granted" • The communicated values seem to be the actual company values • **Integrity-based trust may be coupled to a routine trust perspective**	• (Guiso et al., 2013) • (Maslach & Leiter, 1997) • (Maslach & Leiter, 2001) • (Mayer et al., 1995) • (Möllering, 2006)
Trust as routine	• The vision and values seem to have a degree of "for-grantedness" in them that positively affect trust as routine • The focus on vision and values may be seen as institutionalizing • The vision may be a 'promoter of trust'	• (Möllering, 2006) • (Simmel, [1908] 1950) • (Zucker, 1986)
Trust as reflexivity	• It seems that trust is something that is built up incrementally • Values may have a potential to help establish and ensure an environment to build trust	• (Möllering, 2006) • (Nooteboom, 1996)
Vision and values as organizational symbols	• The vision seems to be less concrete than the values • The vision seems to say something about "who we are" and reminds us which way is right • The values seem to help employees to fit into a company's collaborative environment by establishing a culture and a common goal • Shared values may be organizational symbols	• (Bolman & Deal, 2013) • (Rothärmel, 2017) • (Whitener et al., 1998)

Conclusion

This paper asks: How does a communicated vision and shared values, as organizational factors, affect the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization? It seems that some values have a potential to influence the general level of interpersonal trust within an organization. The reason that some values have the potential to affect trust and some does not, may be that values have different characteristics, implying that it is the characteristics of the values that affect trust.

The paper identifies possible ways to study the connection between vision and values, and trust, using a reason, a routine and a reflexivity perspective (Möllering, 2006). However, the empirical data using a routine or reflexivity trust perspective is at this stage limited. This limitation may be due to the fact that a complete analysis using all three perspectives on trust, as suggested by Möllering (2006), would have exceeded the scope of a single paper. Further studies applying trust as routine and trust as reflexivity perspectives may address these limitations. Studying the characteristics of company values may help to identify which characteristics of values that affect trust and define different types of values. This paper facilitates further studies on the effect of vision and values on trust. The paper also suggests a connection between organizational factors (Abrams et al., 2003) and integrity-based trust, and illustrates connections between trust research and organizational theory.

Existing research unveil that trust has a broad variety of benefits, in particular for knowledge sharing, which is crucial in the knowledge society. Trust also has potential benefits to maritime safety. This study on how vision and values, as organizational factors, may affect trust is therefore of interest for leaders and organizations within and outside the maritime industry.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction

- Meet and great
- Inform about anonymity and confidentiality
- Present consent form and ask permission to record.

Warm-up questions

1. What are you working with in the company?
2. How long have you been working in the company?
3. What is your academic and professional background?

General / Exploratory Questions

4. What can you tell me about our company's vision and values?
5. Thinking of the company generally, how do you consider the trust-level to be?
6. How about for your department?

Questions About the Propositions

7. What is the vision of the company?
8. In your opinion, how does the company vision and values influence how you do things here? Can you please give me an example?
9. In what way can the vision and values be seen as symbols? Can you please give me an example?

Vision

10. Is the company's vision a structural tool to align our efforts? Or would you consider it as symbol of our culture that binds the company together?
    a. Why is the vision a structural tool / symbol, not a structural tool / symbol?

11. How is the vision communicated from the management? Example? How does this (the vision that is communicated from management) help to ensure a "common way of thinking"?
12. Do you have any examples where the company vision helped resolve a conflict of interests?
13. How would you describe the impact of the company vision on your daily work? Examples? To what degree does it have a significant influence? (On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is no and 5 is to a very high degree)
14. What connections are there between the company vision and the general trust level in the company?

Values

15. What is the company's values (or your interpretation of them)?
16. How well does your own values match the company values?
17. How do these (the company values) help you to fit into the company's collaborative environment? Can you please give any examples?
18. How do the employees hold each other accountable to the company values? Can you please give any examples?
19. How do the values that is shared between employees affect the way people trust each other? Do they help people to believe in each other's abilities? Or do they help them believe in each other's goodwill?
20. Do you have any examples where the company values helped resolve a conflict of interests?

21. How would you describe the impact of the company values on the daily work? Examples? To what degree does it have a significant influence? (On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is no and 5 is to a very high degree)

Trust and Integrity

22. Can people share their problems with each other and expect a constructive and caring response?
23. Do you have an example where trust in each other's abilities between colleagues made it easier to accomplish a task?
24. Thinking of the company as a whole, how consistent is the work practice to the company values?
25. Is it easy for you as a person to trust others?

Appendix B: Observation Guide

General Observations to be made

How is the general atmosphere?

Is there a common way of thinking and communicating at the morning meetings?

Do any value conflicts arise, and how will they be treated?

Is the company culture discussed?

Do participants display signs of belief or disbelief in the success of a task?

How Are challenges/problems handled?

Observations on the Vision and the Values

Vision:

Value 1:

Value 2:

Value 3:

Observations on Trust

Ability based Trust:

Benevolence based Trust:

Integrity based Trust:

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Request for participation in research interview

" How does a communicated vision and shared values affect the general level of interpersonal trust in a company?"

Background and Purpose

The background of the interview is to collect data for a master's thesis.

Interview participants have been selected based on a strategic choice to include different parts of the company.

What does participation in the interview imply?

The interviewer will ask open ended questions that the participant may answer at his or her own discretion.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the interviewer will have access to a recording. Phrases from the interview may be included in the thesis paper. On request, all participants may review the paraphrasing before thesis submission. All data will be anonymized. Should the participants agree to being recorded, the recording will be deleted as soon as it is not required to be stored by the university college.

The project is scheduled for completion by 01.07.18.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aleksander S. Solberg, 46929795, aleks.s.solberg@gmail.com or Anne Haugen Gausdal, anne.h.gausdal@usn.no.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

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(Signed by participant, date)