

## **The Nordic Conference on Experience**

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Title of paper: Development and integration of brand promises in the backstage experience room. A case study of Norrgavel

Suggested session: Innovative experience management

This paper reports from a case study which investigates how Norrgavel, a Swedish furniture company, works with developing and integrating its company values in the organization. The problem of inquiry was constructed by combining the theoretical concepts "development and integration of promises within a company brand" with "experience room". The theoretical frame of reference builds upon experience production theory and relationship marketing theory. The perspective holds that positive and lasting customer experiences can be created when the company explicitly regards its organization as a backstage experience room, where promises to the customers and other stakeholders need to be developed and integrated among all participants in the room. Relationships at all levels are judged to be critical aspects for success. The empirical findings are analyzed through the theoretical perspective.

Norrgavel was selected due to its explicit company values that can be interpreted as promises and its outspoken aim to create relationships to its customers. The company founder has built the company brand on the grounds of explicit company values that are divided into humanistic, ecological and existential values. These are guidelines for everything the company does and constitutes the brand. The empirical material consists of transcripts and company documents. Managers and employees, as well as franchisees were interviewed. Company documents were studied and a few meetings were attended for observation.

The study focused on how Norrgavel works in developing and integrating the explicit company values. The findings show that some of the employees have been attracted to the company by the company values, since they find them rather unique. Herein is a possibility - but also a challenge - of holistic integration of brand promises in the employee as a holistic person.

The material indicates that the processes under study are highly complex. It seems that the values of Norrgavel require careful and systematic processes in order to develop and integrate them as brand promises. There are organized meetings. One meeting aims at informing new participants. Another kind of meeting aims at enlightening the participants of Norrgavel. This kind - a meditation retreat - is highly interesting and seems innovative for experience management. Through meditation, the company wants each and everyone to know who he/she is and what he/she longs for. An existential value as a guideline seems to require innovative management in order to be able to fulfil the promise.