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Employer Branding

A case study of B2B and B2C

Bachelor Thesis

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Abstract

Title	Employer Branding – A case study of B2B and B2C
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Purpose	The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the differences and/or similarities in Swedish B2C and B2B companies use of employer branding whilst striving towards the same ultimate goal and hereby provide a basis for understanding of the complexity of the subject.
Method	The paper is based upon the usage of a qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews with key individuals for our study.
Conclusions	Many of the differences between these two business types in their work with employer branding can be attributed to their focus, i.e. whether B2C or B2B, but some differences are due to the organisational culture and other factors. However, we did find that a B2C company appears to work more naturally with their corporate brand than the similar sized B2B company, leading to a more natural work with the employer brand. Overall, we believe that B2B companies have much to learn regarding the work with employer branding.

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Sincerely,

Daniel Foogel

Elisa Stuart

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, we intend to describe how employer branding has emerged into an established brand theory. Initially, we present a brief background and a problem formulation followed by the purpose of this thesis. Finally, we present a discussion of concepts and the limitations of the thesis.

1.1 Background

In the past, the main focus of a company was to rationalise production and it could set its own demands on the workforce. Today, companies face completely new challenges when a new generation of qualified workers are entering the market. The new workforce generation has high demands on employers and is not afraid of questioning but it is also highly focused and driven. For a company, it is now necessary to compete for this qualified workforce, to know what it takes and how to do it. This thesis concerns employer branding as a means of attracting, motivating and keeping the qualified workforce.

Schön (2012) states that in the early years of the 20th century when the Swedish industrial growth peaked, there was ample supply of low-skilled workers from the rural areas. The main industries at the time were goods producers and their foci were on rationalising their production. The author suggests that the employees to a large extent were considered interchangeable and that they had mainly simple and monotonous work tasks. During the latter part of the 20th century, there were three main developments leading to the emergence and formation of employer branding into an important strategy for many companies (Parment & Dyhre, 2009).

The first development came in the form of a change in the Swedish demographic structure, which according to Rauhut (2002), depended on a combination on fewer newborn children and an increase in the general life expectancy. As a result, a growing proportion of the Swedish population today are old age pensioners (above 65) , while a diminishing proportion

are members of the active workforce (16-74 years of age) (SCB, 2012). This development is estimated to continue until at least 2030 (SCB, 2012). Rauhut (2002) further states that the imbalance in the demographic structure has led to a continuing increase in the demand for qualified workers, while at the same time supply is decreasing.

The second major development according to Schön (2012) that took place during the 20th century was the shift from pure production of goods into a knowledge based service and goods production. According to Parment and Dyhre (2009), the increased globalisation has led to an increase in trade resulting in a tougher foreign competition. They also conclude that this development has increased the demand for a more qualified workforce, required to keep up with the increased competition (Parment & Dyhre, 2009).

Finally, the third and possibly most important development is according to Parment and Dyhre (2009) the current generation shift in the workforce. The so called “Y-Generation” consisting of people born between 1977 and 1995 are according to the authors, international, well-educated and demanding in terms of work and politics. The authors further mean that the members of the Y-Generation are not afraid of quitting their job and move back to their parents if the job is not sufficiently rewarding or enjoyable. At the same time, the Y-Generation knows how to contribute within an organisation and is also well trained in critical thinking. This generation is constantly connected to the Internet and uses social networks like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, which results in new demands on employers but which also opens up new opportunities for companies. The Y-Generation is the most maintenance-intensive, but it will also be the generation that performs best (Parment & Dyhre, 2009).

These changes have according to Rauhut (2002) and Parment and Dyhre (2009) resulted in an increase in competition for the qualified workforce, which in turn has led to the emergence of employer branding as a means of competing for this workforce.

1.2 Problem discussion

Due to a number of developments in society, employer branding has become a hot topic, but there is some ambiguity regarding the practical implementation. Research within this

subject is limited and focuses primarily on companies in general. However, companies have different conditions in terms of different strategies and target groups, which affect their willingness and ability to work with Employer Branding.

Companies can be grouped into two main categories, depending on their type of sales; companies with mainly sales to consumers (B2C) and those with mainly sales to other companies (B2B). Both these types have the same need to find, motivate and retain a qualified workforce but their different approaches give them different opportunities to build their employer brand. The B2C companies often have a well-known corporate brand to support their employer brand but this can also create a problem where the qualified workforce they want to attract cannot distinguish between the two brands, which could possibly convey the wrong employer image. B2B companies on the other hand, often have a relatively unknown corporate brand amongst the general public, which could make it more difficult to find the qualified workforce they need. This is a result of the new generation's preference of known brands over the lesser known (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

As research into this aspect of Employer Branding is still limited, differences and similarities between these two types of companies are not clearly defined and it becomes difficult for a company to understand how its business focus affects its abilities to use employer branding and how to learn from other companies work in this field (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the differences and/or similarities in Swedish B2C and B2B companies use of employer branding whilst striving towards the same ultimate goal and hereby provide a basis for understanding of the complexity of the subject.

As our thesis is based on merely two case studies, we cannot draw any general conclusions but nevertheless we hope that it will provide some understanding of how the business focus of a company can affect its implementation of employer branding.

More specifically, we set out to investigate how two Swedish companies – one with consumers as customers (B2C) and the other with sales to other companies (B2B) – are using

employer branding, how their different target groups affect the choices of strategy in employer branding and what the main strategic differences are in this respect.

1.4 Research questions

In order to achieve our purpose with this thesis, we set out to find the answers to the following questions:

- How do the two companies – B2C and B2B – work with employer branding?
- In what way does the corporate brand affect the work with employer branding?
- What are the differences and similarities in employer branding between the B2B company and the B2C company?

1.5 Discussion of concepts

In this section, we present and define the most frequently used terms and concepts within the thesis.

Employer brand and employer branding:

Within this thesis, we have chosen to use the somewhat simplified definition of employer brand as: *The brand created by a company as employer in order to attract, motivate and retain a qualified workforce. Employer branding is then defined as the process used to build this brand.* The theoretical definition of the term is discussed in more detail in section 3.2.1.

Corporate brand:

A corporate brand is the brand a company builds up across all its products and operations, in order to create an image and identity.

Qualified workers/workforce:

The qualified workforce consists of workers with talents, skills, merits or competence which will create added value for the company. This can also be described as workers holding key skills, important for the company and its survival.

B2B and B2C

B2B is the abbreviation of "Business to Business". Companies within this group have other companies as their main customers. Typical members of the B2B group are wholesalers and manufacturers. B2C is then as expected the abbreviation of "Business to Consumer".

1.6 Limitations

As previously mentioned, we have chosen to limit our study to include one Swedish B2C company and one Swedish B2B company. We decided to use two companies similar in turnover and size of qualified workforce. Both companies were also to have a substantial presence in Sweden and not found on Universum'sⁱ top lists of the most attractive employers in Sweden. We have chosen these limitations in order to avoid that the above-mentioned factors would affect the outcome of our study. We also believe that this will facilitate our comparison between the two companies. We also do not want any of the companies to have too much of an edge on the other in terms of their Employer Brand, hence the restriction regarding Universum's top lists.

The limitation to the qualified workforce only is there as we have assumed this to be the intended target group for the employer branding.

We have also made a decision not to focus on how other brands than the corporate brand affects the employer brand. This is a limitation drawn due to limited amount of time and we also believe that in the comparison between B2B and B2C this is the brand that gives us the fairest result based on our purpose. This limitation is also based on the fact that we do not want one or the other company to have too much of an advantage on the other since B2C usually have several well-known product brands and B2B do not. Still it is likely to assume that other brands, such as a company's product brand also have an effect on the employer brand but as said, this is not something we are going to study in this thesis.

2. Method

In this chapter, we intend to describe how the study was conducted and to justify the choices we have made during the process. Firstly, we present our scientific view and the choice of method. Secondly, we present the choice of companies as case studies and the interview subjects. Lastly, we describe collection and processing of data, alternative methods and the study's credibility and reference criticism.

2.1 Scientific view and choice of method

The purpose of the thesis is to study how companies perceive their employer brand and how their business focus affects the process of employer branding. The concept of employer branding is based on how people perceive themselves as employees and at the same time how companies perceive themselves as employers. These perceptions can be assumed to be subjective and influenced by people's different backgrounds, ambitions, visions and desires. For this reason, our intention herein is to find similarities and differences and to provide an understanding of how these may affect the companies' work with employer branding. Our scientific approach can thus be described as of hermeneutic origin (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 1994).

Throughout this thesis, we intend to compare, analyse and interpret the theory and the empirical data, with the intention to find both similarities and differences. We have chosen an abductive approach for this study in order to see whether the theory of employer branding is consistent with our empirical data but we also expect to find differences and similarities in addition to the theory since the subject to some extent is still rather limited and unexplored (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 1994),

Our scientific view and approach led us early on to use a qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews with key individuals. Our intention was to capture the respondents' perceptions of employer branding, which would have been more difficult to do by use of quantitative data collection (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 1994).

2.2 Selection of companies as case studies

When selecting companies, we applied the limitations described in section 1.6. We also preferred companies with their headquarters located in or near Gothenburg as this would simplify any personal interviews. We could have widened this geographical restriction and made use of telephone interviews or written questionnaires but we decided that personal interviewing would provide better quality results as this would allow us to use follow up questions and clarify where required.

For the B2C company, we chose one of the largest clothing companies in Sweden. Their products are clothes and accessories, sold in several European countries and the current workforce amounts to around 5000, of which approximately 200 can be described as qualified workforceⁱⁱ. We chose this company as it fell well within our limitations set out in section 1.6 and we found the clothing industry interesting as it is very competitive and also of a very changing nature. As this company has asked to remain anonymous, we are unable to publish any information which could lead to their identification.

For the B2C company, the choice fell on Ekman & Co AB (hereafter called Ekman). This is a company within the paper industry, buying and selling pulp across the whole world. According to their annual report (2011), the 2010 net turnover was SEK 11.3bn and they employed a workforce of approximately 200 in total, most of which can be described as qualified workforce. FY2010 net profit was SEK 76mn. We chose Ekman as they were well within our limitations set out in section 1.6 and their business is suitably different from the B2C clothing company.

Overall, we believe these two companies to be good choices as case studies as we believe comparisons between the two will help us find answers to the research questions outlined in section 1.4. We also assumed that these two companies would look at employer branding in rather different ways.

2.3 Selection of interview subjects

We wanted primarily to interview a HR manager, or someone in a leading position within the HR department. An alternative choice could also be managers within the marketing

department. These are the two departments mainly involved in the daily tasks concerning issues related to employer branding, so managers here would be best suited as interview subjects.

At the Swedish clothing company, we interviewed the HR manager, who is the person mainly responsible for the recruiting within the company. For this reason, she was well acquainted with matters relating to employer branding.

At Ekman, we were able to interview both the vice president, Hans Tidebrant, and the HR manager, Linda Johnsson. As the company has a very small organisation in Sweden, there is no HR department. Linda Johnsson handles all matters regarding staff, benefits, payroll, health care etc. As the CEO is stationed in Miami, Hans is also responsible for the Gothenburg headquarter. Together, we believe that Hans and Linda are well-suited interview subjects as they are familiar with the company's strategies, brands and recruitment process.

2.4 Data collection and processing

2.4.1 Collection of secondary data and processing of the theory section

To get an understanding of current research on the subject and create a good basis for our interview questions, we collected data from secondary sources and compiled into a theory section, which also constitutes our frame of reference.

Our intention was to use several types of sources, in order to display both similarities and differences. Our secondary data consist primarily of scientific papers, printed scientific literature and databases. We have obtained these via the various search functions available at the Gothenburg University and at the Gothenburg Library. We have also used the search functions within Google Scholars. Keywords used in searching include: "employer branding", branding, "employee branding", "B2B branding" and "corporate branding". Academic articles were sorted by the number of times quoted in other academic texts, in order to find the theories considered "important" or most established within the subject. As a basis for description of the two companies, we have used their official websites, different publications and their annual reports.

2.4.2 Collection of primary data and processing of the empirical section

Primary data in this thesis consist of qualitative interviews with our two chosen case study companies. The interview questionnaire contains 30 questions (see appendix 1), divided into blocks conforming to the theory chapter of the thesis. The number of questions was adapted to produce an in-depth interview of around one hour in time. Most questions are not of the type where the subject can answer simply yes or no, this is by design in order to produce more in-depth answers and to give us the opportunity to ask follow up questions. We have at the same time aimed at creating questions which give our subject an opportunity to respond freely and in a reflective manner.

The interview questions are designed to create an image and a deeper understanding of how the company looks at its employer brand and its corporate brand and also how these are communicated internally and externally. We have also designed questions concerning the organisational culture and how this affects the employer brand. We believe that the comprehensive information we received, has helped us to understand why the two companies act in a certain way and what the reasons are for any differences and similarities between the two.

It is of course important to point out that the image conveyed by a company's HR department is the image they wish to project and not necessarily the image they de facto do project, so it cannot be presumed objective. We have analysed our primary and secondary data by comparing the empirical section with the theory with data split into several parts in order to simplify the analysis of the differences and similarities between the two companies and differences and similarities to the theory.

Since both we and the respondents speak Swedish as our native language, the interviews were conducted in Swedish. In appendix 1, we have attached the questionnaire, but not in the language it was conducted in but in English. This is because we wanted to be consistent throughout our paper. We do not believe, however, that this in any way blackens the results or credibility of the interviews since we have been profound in our translation and carefully monitored it to make sure not to reproduce the information received incorrectly.

2.5 Alternative methods

During the process of working with this thesis, we have had to make several choices which affect the end result. In this section we briefly introduce some alternative methods and comment on why we chose not to use these.

Quantitative data collection

As an alternative to our qualitative data collection, it would have been possible to use quantitative data collection instead. We would then typically have sent questionnaires to a number of companies within the B2C and the B2B groups. The reason we chose not to follow this path was that we believe this method would not give us the profound answers we were looking for and it would not give us the opportunity to ask any follow up questions. If the purpose of our thesis had been different, it might have been more suitable to use a quantitative method and thereby statistically validate the study. As our study is based on qualitative data collection and subjective opinions from our interview subjects, we feel that it is important to point out that the results of our study cannot be assumed to apply to any and every company fitting within our limitations. We suggest that the reader view the result of our study as an indication of how the phenomenon may appear, whilst bearing in mind that any specific results only apply to the two companies in question.

Case study

In our thesis, we have chosen to study two specific companies and to make a comparative analysis between them. It would have been possible instead to make a study of only one company, a case study, wherein we would have conducted more interviews and more in-depth interviews at different levels in the corporate hierarchy. We chose not to follow this path as there is already some research in the area whereby either B2C or B2B companies have been studied in-depth. We took the view that a comparative analysis would add more of interest to the field.

Alternative or supplementary interview subjects

A further possible approach would be to interview people outside of the top management, not involved in the recruiting process but who nevertheless are affected by the employer brand. Such people could be current, potential or previous employees who could give their

view of the company's work with their employer brand. Another choice of interview subjects could be amongst the general public to obtain an external image of the company. Using any of these choices of interview subjects, it might be possible to compare the company's desired and projected image with the target group's perceived image. We believe that this would have been a very interesting approach but with our limited time resources we felt it would be impossible to conduct a large enough number of interviews.

2.6 The study's credibility and source criticism

To provide greater legitimacy, we have deliberately chosen to use several sources and thereby create a wider spread of theories. The authors are of different national origin and the texts originate mainly from the twenty-first century. We have also tried to find sources which partially contradict each other, which proved to be difficult as it seems that researchers in the subject mostly seem to agree on its purpose, cause and effect. The differences lie in the implementation of Employer Branding in an organisation, which is not part of the purpose of our study and hence not addressed within the thesis.

We are aware that in the academic world, it is common that articles refer to and validate each other, something that can lead to difficulties in finding the original source and to maintain a critical attitude towards the text. We have deliberately tried to choose sources frequently quoted and referred to, although this might lead to recursive quotations. Nevertheless, we consider it important to use these sources as they are the most established within the subject. When summing up the pro's and con's, we believe that the positive effects outweigh the negative. For different numerical ratios obtained from government reports, newspaper articles etc., we believe that credibility is high as these sources are very well known and respected.

3. Theory

This chapter explains the theory behind Employer Branding. Initially, background information on brands and branding is presented with a focus on Corporate Branding. Then, definitions of Employer Branding are presented, its similarities and differences with branding, internal and external factors and who should manage the company's Employer Brand. This is followed by the described theories on Corporate Branding and Employer Branding, specialising in B2C and B2B. Finally, a section on the difficulties and criticism of Employer Branding and a summary of the chapter is given.

3.1 Brands

3.1.1 Introduction

According to Bains et al. (2008), most companies use some kind of branding to position themselves on the market. This positioning is meant to create advantages, particularly in the form of greater customer recognition and a more effective marketing (Gustafsson & Lindberg, 2012). There are several types of brands, including those of the products of the company and also the company itself, the so called "Corporate Brand" (Baines et al, 2008) as discussed further in section 3.1.3.

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) argue that branding is about communicating the benefits of the product (or the company). This is what costumers see, hear, feel and think; a brand is an attribute and a promise. Kapferer (2004) discusses the concept in similar terms and believes that a brand is a name that inspires and creates positive associations. It is not a static, independent experience, but rather the brand is driven by a cumulative experience of the product / service, price, location, and communication. The author argues that one should talk about brands as a living system, rather than being attach to the idea that a brand is only a name, a logo or similar.

With this view of the brand as something non-static, Kapferer (2004) argues that a brand requires long term commitment, resources and knowledge from the organisation in order to thrive and develop. The author also argues that brands are a direct result of an organisations approach to market segmentation. From this follows that an organisation can influence its brand to some extent but there are parts beyond its control such as the customer brand perception. Kapferer also states that organisations often overlook the importance of their brand and treat it as of secondary importance compared to their products/services, with the result that these issues are often forgotten.

3.1.2 Brand as a competitive and strategic means and the corporate identity

Melin (1997) argues that many organisations have moved from viewing their brand as a tool in marketing to seeing it as a strategic competitive and strategic agent.

According to Melin (1997), a brand needs to be in our (the customers) mind, albeit subconscious, in order to be effective. The brand should be what comes first to one's mind when asked about the associations to a certain product. The author further discusses the importance of creating a distinctive identity in the brand in order to raise above the general media noise. Hatch and Schultz (1997) claims that the corporate identity can be described as a mental representation of a certain concept, what the company represents and what their values are. The corporate image can be seen as the external identity. This is not what the company itself believes it is conveying but rather the thoughts and feelings in the minds of people outside of the company. The authors also argue that there is an internal identity called the "organisational identity", which is comprised of the organisational culture and the internal perceptions of the brand identity.

Aaker (1996) believes that the brand identity consists of the core values representing the very essence of the brand and containing the associations most likely to be constant across geography and time. The author claims that the core values should for this reason be able to explain the soul of the brand, its fundamentals and its valuations as well as what the organisation behind it represents. He also states that the identity also consists of the extended identity which creates an overall image of the organisation. Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as:

"...a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organisation members." (p. 68)

3.1.3 Corporate branding

The corporate brand represents, as previously mentioned, both the company itself but also their products and services (Baines et al. 2008). Wallström et al. (2008) claim that this brand, in many cases, is the main brand used by a company to convey the corporate identity and values to its stakeholders. Furthermore, the authors argue that in recent years it has become more common so use this concept and to actually invest in the corporate brand. They also claim that there has been a shift from the product branding of the past to today's corporate branding.

Wallström et al. (2008) define a corporate brand as:

"a cluster of functional and emotional values, which promises stakeholders a particular experience" (p. 42).

According to Wallström et al., it is a set of values making promises to the stakeholders of the company. Their view is that the corporate brand is a very valuable resource, which if used properly can create a competitive advantage and other strategic advantages. Henceforth in this thesis, when we refer to the brand of a company, it is the corporate brand unless stated otherwise.

Managers viewing branding as a projected image towards the public and not something that is used internally within the organisation is very common according to Tavassoli (2008). He also argues that this is a major problem for many companies. He believes that in order for a corporate brand to become part of the strategy of the company and to be used as a competitive tool, it must also be used internally or it will never become an integrated part of the business. Building a corporate brand from the inside can be compared to sowing grass; it is important to maintain and nourish the brand internally or its true meaning could be lost.

Tavassoli (2008) claims that in order to build a strong corporate brand, it is important to recruit people with the “right” attitude and with valuations matching those of the company. This can be achieved by, for example, differentiating the job adverts in order to create a selection of applicants matching the brand values. He also claims that the company should publish documents that express the values of the company, its mission and vision, in order to differentiate the company from the inside out.

3.2 Employer branding

3.2.1 Definition of employer branding

The concept of employer branding emerged in the 1990’s and is said to originate from two separate theories: recruitment communicationsⁱⁱⁱ / branding and work psychology^{iv}, especially the so called psychological contract which is presented in section 3.2.4. The two theories have later merged into what is today known as employer branding (Rosethorn, 2009).

Within the employer branding research, there are several different definitions. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) claim that this is due to the fact that the theory is relatively young and the amount of available research is there for till limited. In order to give the reader of this thesis an idea of what employer branding is we present three often quoted definitions below. Furthermore, these authors also constitute the basis of this section of the theory chapter.

Ambler and Barrow, author of the Employer Brand (1996), which is one of the most authoritative articles on the subject and also one of the first, defines Employer Branding as follows:

” We define the Employer Brand as the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employer company.

The main role of the employer brand is to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment.” (p. 187)

Ambler and Barrow claims that an employer brand is the sum of the functional, economic and psychological benefits that the employee perceives to gain by being employed by the company. They also argue that the main purpose of employer branding is to create a management framework, facilitating the process of prioritising, increasing productivity, improving the recruitment processes whilst at the same time it assists in retaining the qualified workforce and increasing their engagement in the company.

Backhaus and Tikoos' definition given in the article "Conceptualizing and researching Employer Branding" (2004) reads:

"(...) we define employer branding as the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors." (p. 502)

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) define employer branding as the process of building a unique identity for the company in its role as employer. The employer brand is, according to the authors, the concept that sets the company apart from its competitors.

Finally, Rosethorn's definition from the article: "*The Employer Brand: Keeping Faith with the Deal*" (2009):

"An employer brand is in essence the two-way deal between an organisation and its people - the reason they choose to join and the reason they choose - and are permitted - to stay. The art of employer branding is to articulate this deal in a way this is distinctive, compelling and relevant to the individual, and to ensure that it is delivered throughout the lifecycle of the employee within that organisation." (pp. 19-20)

Rosethorn believes that an employer brand includes both the organisation and its people, the reasons people are attracted to this company and the reasons they remain, or are allowed to remain employees. The author further argues that employer branding is a process with the purpose to communicate the employer brand in a way both compelling and relevant to the employee or to the potential employee, thereby distinguishing the company

from its competitors. It also aims to ensure that this is conveyed continuously throughout the employment.

Rosethorn, as well as Backhaus and Tikoo view Employer Branding as a competitive advantage whilst Ambler and Barrow, in their definition, focuses on Employer Branding rather as a tool to streamline the management and the executives. Rosethorn and Ambler and Barrow describes the employer brand as something that creates an impression of the company as an employer while Rosethorn sees it as an identity maker for the company in its role as employer. Evidently, there are a number of different views on how to use employer branding and what results to expect but there is not yet one specific, accepted definition of the term.

3.2.2 Employer branding versus corporate branding

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), there are many similarities between a corporate brand and an employer brand which has the natural consequences that the two often work together and that in many cases it can be difficult to distinguish between them. The authors argue however that there are two essential differences between the two, important to consider in order to understand their cooperation and how to keep the two terms apart. The first of these differences is that the employer brand has as its sole purpose to communicate the identity of the company as employer and is not used at all in the communication with the customers. The second difference is that the employer brand has an internal as well as an external part, both equally important, whilst the corporate brand has its main focus externally towards the customers, with some internal support from the employees.

Barrow and Mosley (2005) claim that the reason the two types of brand often cooperates is that they both have emerged from the core values of the company, the goals and the ambitions. The authors further state that positive effects of collaborating employer and corporate brands are that this assists the work with both the types of branding and it creates a larger recognition factor as well as a unity within the company.

According to Barrow and Mosley (2005), the two types of brand support each other. They conclude that the corporate brand of a company requires qualified employees to build and support it as brands are fundamentally created by people. At the same time, the authors claim that a strong corporate brand can help building the employer brand and thereby attracting more and higher quality employees.

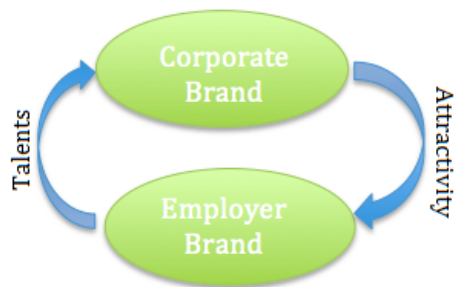


Image 1:

A descriptive image showing how the corporate and employer brands cooperate and strengthen each other.

Source: Foogel & Stuart (2012)

Barrow and Mosley (2005) also claim that even though in most cases it is natural to let the corporate and employer brands cooperate, there are cases when it is desirable to keep them apart. According to the authors this is common in larger corporations with many subsidiaries containing a plethora of brands and many different considerations. They argue further that in such cases, there is a delicate balance between creating images relating to the mother company or to the subsidiaries and it is not always the case that it is best to let the different brands cooperate.

3.2.3 Why employer branding?

The background and the problem discussion described above has according to Parment and Dyhre (2009), created a complex situation for companies where both consumers and stakeholders ask more of them, and of the employees, than just to be a producer of goods. This in turn has had as result that companies now use more resources in the quest for a qualified employees, so called talents, which they believe will give them a competitive edge on the market (Barry & Mosley, 2005; Rosethorn, 2009). What is considered to be a talent, according to Parment and Dyhre (2009) and to Barrow and Mosley (2005), is specific for the situation and context and is therefore naturally different between companies depending on what type of talent they are looking for. The authors further mean that employer branding

in itself can be a means to identify and specify talents, which can create an understanding for what group to target and thereby make the search process more effective.

To find, retain and motivate talents is an external task as well as an internal one and for this reason, employer branding is often divided into an internal part and an external part, something we will discuss further in section 3.2.4 and 3.2.5. The internal part concerns mainly the efforts to retain key competence within the company, whilst the external part has as its focus on attracting new talents (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Parment & Dyhre, 2009).

3.2.4 Internal employer branding and the psychological contract

The purpose of internal employer branding is as mentioned above, to retain, motivate and stimulate the key competence already present within the company. This is done by raising up to the expectations from the employees and by maintaining a beneficial organisational culture, thereby creating loyal and motivated employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004); Rosethorn, 2009). Sartain (2005) claims that a company should use employer branding in order to localise, identify and supply the values manifested in the organisational culture and to communicate this to the employees and to any potential employees. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Rosethorn (2009) and Sartain (2005) all agree that by creating an internal employer brand, the company can create a unique competitive advantage, very difficult for competitors to copy. These are arguments previously touched upon in the section on internal branding, as the ideas surrounding internal branding – corporate as well as employee – revolves mainly around the employees. The difference between the two is as previously discussed, that the corporate brand has as its purpose to reach customers and other external stakeholders, whilst the employer brand is focusing solely on the employees.

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), the organisational culture can be said to contain the direct and indirect fundamentals, norms and values of the company and it is in constant development due to the interaction between different internal and external groups. This culture affects the way employees interact with each other and with their work tasks and it helps creating an organisational unity. A perceived positive organisational culture can, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), positively influence the employer brand of the company by creating loyal employees. The loyalty creates an acceptance of the company

goals and valuations and this motivates the employees to do a better job and increases the desire to stay with the company.

The organisational culture and the employer brand together, can be said to create a so called psychological contract between the employer and the employee (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Miles & Mangold, 2004; Rosethorn, 2009). Backhaus and Tikoo describe the psychological contract as an unspoken agreement between the employer and the employee, resulting in a loyal employee happily working for the organisation in exchange for a fair treatment, a career development and an employer caring about the employee. The authors point out that the attributes of the psychological contract is in a constant flux of change due to the changes in the workforce and revaluations of the corporate vision and goal. From this follows that the psychological contract must be constantly reevaluated by both parties.

3.2.5 External employer branding and principles of recruitment

The external part of employer branding aims to reach the qualified workforce outside of the company but which the company wishes to attract. Through the employer brand, it is possible for the company, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), to communicate the advantages of becoming an employee. Essential parts of this are the type of organisational culture, the leadership and the type of employees that are already present, or what career development the company has to offer.

Just as with the other brands of the company, the purpose is to create a positive image for the employer brand. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) claims that this can be done by efficient communication of functional and symbolic advantages of becoming an employee. The functional advantages can be things like salary, benefits and internal training. The symbolic advantages are immaterial and consist mainly of the perceptions of the prestige and status involved in being employed by the company.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) further imply that to potential employees, the symbolic advantages are often of greater importance than the functional. This is according to the authors because the potential employees compare their own needs and valuations with

those of the company and look for employment where they find the best match. The authors believe that employer branding could be an efficient method to create and convey symbolic advantages in order to attract the right qualified workforce.

3.2.5.1 Principles of recruitment

An important part of the task to find qualified employees is to use a well-planned process of recruitment. Different companies use different principles here. Alvesson (2004) notes that there are three common approaches used by knowledge based companies; “best people”, system and procedures and organisational culture. The difference between these lies in the way the company views its employees. Alvesson (2004) argues that knowledge based companies view their employees as a resource but there is a difference in how to use and protect this resource.

According to Alvesson (2004), the “best people” approach means that a company actively tries to find the best and most qualified persons in the recruitment process. The effect of this is that a large amount of resources must be used in the recruitment process and the selection. There is therefore a considerable investment in the current workforce and a desire to retain them within the organisation. To achieve this, Alvesson (2004) concludes that it is important to offer career possibilities and interesting work tasks. The principle is that the best company has the best employees, which makes it the best on the market.

Alvesson (2004) second approach is to focus on systems and procedures. In this approach, the employee is less important in comparison to the activities that take place in the value adding parts of the company. The employees, current and potential, must be adaptive in order to subordinate into the procedural system.

The third approach in recruitment, suggested by Alvesson (2004), is to neither focus on the employees, nor the processes, but instead on the development of a culture. A company with a strong company culture needs employees who can conform to this culture. For this reason the recruitment process must contain an element of selective screening to find the persons who share the company values. With this approach, personality and person chemistry are as important as the academic merits and references from the past career.

3.2.6 Other effects of a corporate brand

Employer branding has not only a positive effect on the ability of the company to compete for the qualified workforce, but there are also other areas affected.

The individual: A strong employer brand can help creating more satisfied and happy employees as they enjoy their job, enjoy working for this employer and are motivated to perform well (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This has been shown to increase productivity and the quality of customer service and in the longer term it has been shown to produce more satisfied customers (Barrow & Mosley, 2005, Miles & Mangold, 2004).

The organisation: Barrow and Mosley (2005) claims that a well-functioning employer brand also affects other organisational functions positively. The authors state that the cooperation between marketing and HR is improved as the market communication penetrates deeper into the organisation. According to the authors, this also affects the internal marketing positively and to some extent it improves the general communication within the organisation.

The result: According to Barrow and Mosley (2005), a strong employer brand has the potential to lower the company costs, such as the costs for sickness absence, waste, stock errors and recruitment. This is due to the fact that psychologically well balanced employees are less stressed and the risk of overloading is lower. It is also more likely that an employee satisfied with his work tasks performs well, the staff rotation is lower and the cost of recruiting is lower. The sum of this can, according to Barrow and Mosley, result in a positive effect on the bottom line.

The society: Parment and Dyhre (2009) states that employer branding can have a positive influence on society as a whole. When companies determine what type of talent they are looking for, people's choices are concretised and a clearer picture of the supply is formed. This increases the probability that the workforce as a whole is better positioned, more satisfied with their jobs and the risk of psychological and physical unhealth decreases. The authors also suggest that it would be beneficial for society as a whole as this might lead to a lower workforce emigration.

3.2.7 Who should be responsible for the implementation of the employers brand

Barrow and Mosley (2005) claims that the role of the management is crucial for the existence of an employer brand and that the management should be the driving force behind the development and communication of the employer brand. They further conclude that employer branding should be a part of the overall corporate strategy and penetrate the whole organisation.

Several authors, including Miles and Mangold (2004), states that the HR and/or the marketing departments should, and indeed normally do take a large responsibility for the creation and communication of the employer brand as HR is the department closest to the employees and the recruitment process. Sartain (2005) also states that they (HR) are the department most suited to communicate the organisational culture in a consistent manner. Davies (2008) points out that the marketing department of a company should be involved in the process, together with the HR department, as they have the necessary experience required to conduct the internal marketing of the employer brand.

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), the responsibility is often delegated from the HR and marketing departments to the section managers, who take an important part in the maintenance of the corporate brand. The authors state that managers can do this by spreading the positive organisational culture together with HR and monitor any changes, such as rumours spreading etc., which could have a negative influence on the workforce attitude. Such negative changes can thereby be followed up more rapidly and countermeasures can be put in place.

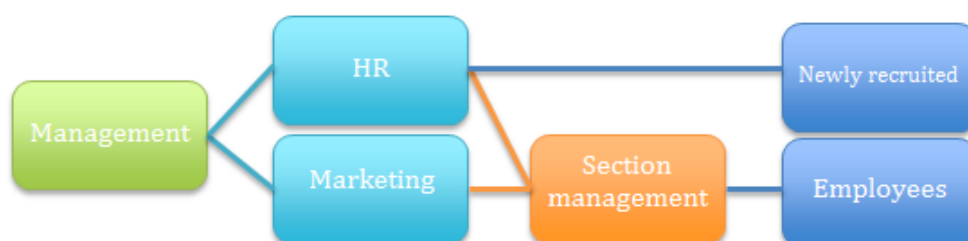


Image 2:

A descriptive image, intended to explain how the employer brand can be spread in the organisation. The image is composed from the content of section 3.2.7.

Source: Foogel & Stuart (2012)

3.3 B2C and B2B

Research in the field of employer branding, focusing on comparisons between B2B and B2C has turned out to be very limited. There is considerably more research performed on the subject of branding and the differences and similarities between B2B and B2C. For this reason, we will in this section discuss the theories of both branding and employer branding with a special focus on the comparison between B2C and B2B.

3.3.1 Corporate branding: B2C versus B2B

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) point out that the largest differences between B2B and B2C markets lie in the complexity of the products and the service. According to the authors, this is due to the fact that within B2B, customers are fewer but considerably larger. As a company sells larger volumes per customer, it becomes important to build long term relationships with suppliers and customers, whilst in the B2C segment, quite the opposite is often the case. The authors also conclude that within B2B, each customer is more valuable, in monetary terms, to the company than in the B2C segment and for this reason it becomes more important to deliver on promises. They also notice that it is common within B2B to underestimate the importance of a well built brand. The brand of a company should be the main guiding principle throughout the organisation, not only within the marketing department or in the marketing.

3.3.2 Employer branding: B2C versus B2B

Parment and Dyhre (2009) state that there are differences between B2B and B2C companies in the way they construct a strong employer brand. The authors suggest that the strong correlation between the corporate and the employer brands is especially noticeable within the B2C group of companies where the brand is well known amongst the consumers who are at the same time potential employees. They further conclude that this might lead in some B2C cases to the merger of the two brands which might ultimately make it more difficult for the company to create a unique image for its employer brand and thereby show its “true self” as an employer.

Furthermore, Parment and Dyhre (2009), highlights other effects a strong corporate brand could have on the employer brand. They state that a B2C company with a strong brand often receives a lot of spontaneous job applications from people wishing to enrol as employees. In

many cases this is people with a strong interest in the actual trade and the business itself and thus who are also important customers. An obvious problem with this is that since not all spontaneous applications are relevant, there is a risk of badwill spreading through turned down job applications, something which could potentially have a negative impact on both the brands in the longer term. In order to avoid or at least minimise this problem, Parker and Dyhre (2009) takes the view that it is important to separate the corporate brand from the employer brand.

Parment and Dyhre (2009) also notice that B2B companies, as opposed to companies in the B2C group, focus less on the employer brand and are more concerned about the perception of their products amongst the customers. In the cases where a B2B company wishes to work with its employer brand, it is often conducted basically in the same way as a B2C company would do it, however with a slightly different angle. Their target group often has less knowledge of the company as they do not possess a corporate brand that is well known within the general public. This calls for a broader communication of the employer brand as potential new employees often have no prior knowledge or perception about the company. According to the authors, it is therefore important to be very clear in the communication of the employer brand, to give a clear understanding of what the company does and what their values are in order to make the information interesting to the recipient. Further, they recommend keeping the communication on a personal level, such as via personal meetings or social networks.

Traditionally, a lot of the B2B focus has been on promoting functional advantages with their brand but Roper and Davies (2010) state that just as within the B2C group, a B2B company can gain advantages from focusing on emotional advantages. This would lead to a brand harder to copy. They also conclude that a strong B2B brand is useful not only in relation to customers but also in the relation to other stakeholders such as employees. To a B2B company, it can be important with clear values, shared with the employees, in order to create a stronger brand. Roper and Davies (2010) therefore promotes the idea that employer branding is important to all companies and they particularly stress the importance of education or training as an important means of influencing the view of the employer

brand amongst the employees. The authors also claim that through this training, the psychological contract between employer and employee is strengthened.

3.4 Difficulties and criticism

As previously mentioned, employer branding depends on the ability of the company to convey its positive properties as an employer, to the current and the potential workforce. This concept is not straightforward though and some criticism has been directed at the employer branding as a theory.

In all market communication whereby a sender wishes to send a message to a recipient with the information that a certain brand exists, there is always the risk that the recipient reads this message in a way not intended by the sender (Bains et al., 2008). This is also the case when an employer brand needs communicating both internally and externally. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Rosethorn (2009) claims that when a message communicating the employer brand contains enough information and correct information, it is possible to achieve the positive effects previously described. In the case, though that the message contains incorrect information, it could create a negative image of the employer and of the employer brand. Furthermore, the authors point out that messages should be balanced, i.e. contain any potential negative aspects as well which might affect the employee's conception of the company. At the same time, Miles and Mangold (2004) claim that it is important that messages sent out, internally as well as externally, must be consistent. Within the company, the different departments such as the management, HR and market must also be consistent and most importantly, convey the same information. The authors take the view that it is important with communication and cooperation in this respect between the different departments and that employer branding is a deliberate strategy, coordinated by the management.

This means that even though the company believes that it is conveying the employer brand correctly, it cannot be safely assumed that employees and potential employees interpret this brand in the intended manner. According to Miles and Mangold (2004), the interpretation of a brand is something very personal and which is affected by a person's background as well as his previous experiences of, or information about the company. The authors believe that it is

for this reason difficult to predict all scenarios when the message is received and interpreted even though the company believes itself to do everything right with the employer brand.

3.5 Summary

The theory chapter begins with a presentation of branding, what a brand is and how it affects the company and its customers and stakeholders, and that it is in the minds of the company's costumers and stakeholders both consciously and unconsciously. Then, the corporate brand is presented which is also a central part in the continued presentation of the theory.

Next employer branding is presented, the definition and its relation to the company's corporate brand; that the corporate brand supports the employer brand and makes it more attractive and the employer brand support the corporate brand with talented workers. Who benefits from an employer brand is also discussed and the conclusion is that not only the company itself benefits from it but also the employees and the nation. Lastly, who should be responsible for implementing and supporting the company's employer brand is discussed. The research is ambiguous; some point to the corporate management, some to the HR function and/or the marketing function. Also the role of head of department is discussed.

Finally, the research within the field of corporate branding and employer branding versus B2B and B2C is presented. Research show that B2C usually have a strong corporate brand due to their close relation to the general public. This has also a positive effect on the company's employer brand. On the contrary, B2B is usually not well known among the public, which make their work with their employer brand more difficult. Lastly, a section about difficulties and criticism towards the subject is discussed; where the problem with foreseeing how a brand is viewed is one of the largest challenges.

What does the relationship between the corporate brand and employer brand look like in reality? At the same time it is possible to question whether there are any differences between the internal and the external parts of employer branding in the practical work at the company. Are these brands kept separate, or are they treated as one unified brand?

4. Empirical section

Our empirical section contains the qualitative interviews we conducted and material from various publications which have been made available to us. Our purpose in this section is to describe how the two case study companies work with their employer branding, with particular connection to the background and theory described in the previous chapters. Initially, we present the two companies' own view of their brand and later in the chapter we present their views on communication, organisational culture and responsibilities for building and maintaining the employer brand. Finally we present the results within employer branding including discussions on the internal and external parts and principles of recruitment.

4.1 Brands, competitive edge and image

Our interview subject from the clothing company believes that their brand is perceived differently depending on target group. She believes that if the person asked about their view belongs to the main target group (females aged 30 to 50), it is more likely that they have a positive perception than persons outside of this target group. She further believes that most of the Swedish population is aware of the company and its corporate brand, something she bases on the fact that she has never met anyone who did not know about her company and what they do. From this she concluded that they have a very high recognition factor.

Regarding the competitive edge of the brand, she believes that this has improved during the last few years. Competition with other similar companies is very hard; the main goal is to fulfil the rapidly changing needs of their customers. Having qualified staff is a key factor behind the success of the company as the business to a large extent depends on their knowledge and motivation. Finally, our subject believes that their brand does not in any way interfere with their ability to attract qualified employees. The company is generally known as a good place to work.

At the other company, Ekman, our two interview subjects Hans and Linda believe that the name itself is the brand. They stress that it is not about communicating certain values

externally, it is the name in itself that is valuable to the company. The name represents according to Hans and Linda, long and stable relationships, flexibility and experience. As Ekman was founded in 1802, it is now one of the oldest trading houses in the world^v and they have a very solid background. Within the forestry business where the company is active, it is a very well-known brand and there is little need to communicate it outwards. There is virtually no active work going into any such communication. According to our interview subjects, the company is not particularly concerned with the general public and their view of the company, if any. They do however have some interest in students within areas of interest to the company. They do not perceive any difference between their corporate brand and their employer brand, both of which they really consider to be the same. They also believe that the brand has no effect on the process of attracting the right employees.

4.2 Internal communication and responsibilities

Within the clothing company, there is a constant communication of the corporate goals from the management to the workforce. This is conducted via brochures, miscellaneous publications and via internal means of communication. The company makes extensive use of staff appraisals on a regular basis in which personal goals are set up. These meetings are documented in writing and signed by both parties and followed up during the next appraisal. This is so the employee can follow his development over time and compare his goals with the actual turnout. The company uses all sorts of communication; telephone, e-mail, and personal meetings. The choice of communication method depends on what it is that needs communications and how urgently it needs to get there. The company also makes extensive use of its intranet to convey important information to all the employees and for general communication.

At Ekman, the corporate goals and strategies are formulated by the so called "management group", currently consisting of eight people. These are both administrative managers and divisional managers. The goals and strategies arrived at are not actively communicated to the rest of the workforce but there is a strategic plan which is revised and updated on an annual basis. This does not affect the overall strategy as this is very long term. Regarding development and goals for the employees, there are no clear guidelines from the

management. The Gothenburg office holds annual appraisals with the Swedish employees and according to Hans and Linda; they are convinced it is done in the same way in the other offices worldwide. This has never been formally requested, there are no general guidelines for how these appraisals should be conducted or how they should be documented. It is all down to the manager responsible for the appraisal.

As Ekman have relatively few employees and the HR department is limited to one person, most of the communication between HR and staff is verbal. The work is organised in open office blocks and it is easy to discuss any questions arising, it is generally done verbally as it feels more familiar and works well with the organisational culture. In some cases it may be required to communicate in writing; it depends on the matter in question.

4.3 The responsibilities of the HR department and the organisational culture

The organisational culture in the clothing company is described by themselves as "a winning team". This is communicated to all employees including the newly employed through brochures and other publications. The company stresses that the organisational culture is built by the employees and that everyone takes part, it draws its strength from the employees, who they are and how they interact with each other and others. The "winning team" is something that is created together. The company has coined four keywords intended to penetrate the whole organisation and guide the employees in everything they do. These keywords are intended to give the employees a guide to what to expect of their workplace but also what the company expects of them. Every new employee is given a brochure which briefly describes the keywords and the corporate vision. The official website is an important tool in the external communication of the organisational culture towards both the general public and to potential new employees. The website contains information on the valuations, the vision and the business idea behind the company, as well as a description of what it is like to work for the company. This is a good source of information for anyone interested in applying for a job at the company. The organisational culture is not normally conveyed in detail in job adverts, but rather hinted subtly through the way they are formulated.

At Ekman, our interview subjects Hans and Linda told us about the importance of relationships in their organisational culture. The company is very concerned about maintaining these relationships, with employees, suppliers and customers. The company is mainly the employees and it is felt as very important to look after each other. The staff care is the organisational culture and the Ekman spirit. Both Hans and Linda agreed that there is a particular Ekman spirit within the company although it is difficult to state exactly what it is.

4.4 Employer branding

Neither of our two case study companies are listed amongst the most attractive employers in Sweden. We asked the question what it could have meant to have a very strong employer brand like IKEA or H&M^{vi}. Our subject from the clothing company believes that such a strong employer brand would likely lead to more spontaneous job applications which in turn would increase the choices for the company and improve the outcome of the recruitment process. She also believes that it would have made it easier to find qualified staff for the jobs where it is normally difficult to find employees of the right qualifications, such as designers of male clothing who are very difficult to find in Sweden. Ekman on the other hand, considers itself to already possess a very strong employer brand so strengthening it would make little difference.

4.4.1 Internal employer branding

Our clothing company has a relatively low staff turnover, around 5-7% annually within the organisation as a whole. This applies across the organisation; as well headquarter jobs as jobs in the stores. The company has a particular focus on training and offers all employees education within several areas. The employees are also given a chance to “wish for” education within relevant areas where they feel they would like to develop further. There is also internal career possibilities and development, such as a possibility to work upwards from a position like purchase assistant to a purchaser. Our interview subject states that the company to a large extent uses internal recruitment and as an example she states that 70% of the store managers are internal recruits. She believes this great potential to develop both attracts new employees and helps retaining satisfied employees. Because of this system, the company prefers employees with potential for and interest in developing further, people who believe they have a future in this company. She also says that the company is not primarily using salary as a means to motivate and retain staff, but rather put the weight on

other activities. In order to create satisfied and loyal employees there are “team building activities” such as kick-off’s and similar events. These are constantly recurring activities. In order to follow up how the employees view the company and the managers there are annual attitude surveys in which the company monitors the job satisfaction and whether any problems such as mobbing are present. The company has a zero tolerance level in these cases. When some employees still chose to leave the company, it is our respondent’s view that they probably feel they haven’t developed as much as, or as fast as they would have wanted. She assumes that many of these leave the company in order to move quicker upwards in their careers. She did mention though that it is not uncommon with previous employees coming back after some time and reapplying for a job.

At Ekman, they could not quantify the staff rotation; it could be three leaving one year and nobody at all the following. They did state though that the average time in employment is eleven years. They have a general feeling that their staff rotation is very low and in the few cases where someone chooses to leave, they believed the reason could be that this person might not feel they fit in with the Ekman organisational culture. A job here means a lot of freedom but also responsibilities to perform without a lot of control. A person requiring firm rules and regulations will probably not fit in so well at Ekman. The organisational structure is also very flat, leaving little possibility to “climb the career ladder”. Hans and Linda believe that this could also be a reason some employees choose to leave the company.

At Ekman, a lot of work goes into staff benefits in order to make employees feel appreciated and enjoy their job. There is also a bonus system which if the company produces a certain profit level, will pay out a bonus to all employees regardless of their position. Ekman also offers all employees things such as massage and other body care, the possibility to book the company summerhouse in the Gothenburg archipelago, free fruit and coffee daily. There are also training possibilities from time to time, such as the 2012 internal training where all employees were educated in each other’s work tasks and the business of the company.

4.4.2 External employer branding

For employer branding, the clothing company uses mainly their official website which promotes attributes such as multiculturalism, ethical responsibility, a good work

environment and excellent career opportunities. It is important for this company to find employees who share their values, who wants to develop with the company and who are looking for a long term relationship. For this to work, it is important that the employee accepts the organisational culture. Our interview subject does not believe that the view of the company as an employer differs to any greater extent between current employees and potential employees. The main difference, according to our respondent, she believes to be that current employees have a de facto knowledge about the company whilst the potential employees have only an idea, or a feeling for what it might be like.

She also states that the company has certain problems in finding qualified employees for some jobs. This is mainly due to very small supply and a hard competition for the best employees, something she naturally assumes to be the case also for their competitors. When asked what she believes the effect of their consumer oriented business might be on their attraction as employer, she says that she thinks of this as an advantage. She also believes that people in general like to work for a large, well known company and that this adds to the feeling of contributing and being a part of a larger whole.

We asked Ekman what they believe might be the reasons people come to them for a job. Our respondents both believe that it could be because Ekman is an interesting, international company with career possibilities and also a possibility to work abroad. They also believe the age and stability of the company has a certain attraction.

Ekman claims to conduct a serious business and stay very clear of any business which might border to the dubious. The company therefore has high demands on the employees when it comes to conducting ethical and honest business. It is generally very important to share the corporate values and goals to fit into the organisation. If an employee is not striving towards the common goal, it simply will not work. Hans and Linda believe that the view of the company from the current employees and from potential new employees is very different. As the company is fairly unknown amongst the general public, they assume that once employed the view changes a lot. Potential employees should come in with a view of Ekman as an exciting company and a desire to be a part of its development, full of expectations and ambition to work for the company.

4.4.2.1 The process and principles of recruitment

When looking for employees with training and education in fabrics, the main source is Borås Högskola. Other qualified jobs such as within logistics and finance are advertised via different channels including social media such as Facebook and via the official website. They also have agreements with some of the online job agencies for adverts. The job advert is also always placed with the government agency, Arbetsförmedlingen. The exact channels used depend on what type of job it is. Some specialised jobs are advertised via similarly specialised online agencies. The company stopped several years ago to use printed job adverts. All adverts for qualified staff are composed by the HR department, including our interview subject herself.

The clothing company has had no difficulties in finding the qualified workforce it needs, according to our respondent probably because its strong and well-known brand. They receive a fair number of spontaneous job applicants and have today around 4500 CV's registered in the internal recruitment database, 2500 of which applies for Swedish jobs. The spontaneous applications span across the range from shop staff to financial specialists. For obvious reasons, all applications are not read by a human and the company uses automatic emailing to relevant candidates when marketing available jobs. It is possible to perform free text searches in the database in the cases where there is urgent need for staff.

The recruitment process at the clothing company differs somewhat between hiring qualified and non-qualified workers. For jobs at the head office, selections are made according to present criteria. These criteria obviously differ between different jobs. For these jobs the company also apply personality profiling to find the right person for the job. For less qualified jobs, the selection is not criteria based. Everyone called to a job interview will receive a personal feedback and those applying for a job but who are not called to an interview will be notified. The company also has as a goal that everyone contacting the company should receive a reply, whether it is an application for a summer job or a customer with a query.

In order to pass through the selection process and be called to an interview, it is important to have the right background. It is necessary to have the qualifications stated in the job

advert, or there is no chance to get to the interview stage. Something of less importance is to have top grades from school. It is important to have an exam within the right subject but the actual grades are much less important than having top notch references and experience from the area in question.

When asked why she thinks so many people are coming to this company for a job, our interview subject says it is probably because there is a general view of the company as a good employer. She also believes that the company is perceived as a nice place to work. She also believes what when people are not interested in working for the company, it could be that they do not appreciate the products or relate well to the target group.

Hans and Linda at Ekman said that it is difficult to find exactly those qualified employees who would fit in well with the company. There is an abundance of qualified financial staff available, but it is more difficult to find exactly that person who would fit in well with this particular company. They receive around two or so spontaneous applications per week. Linda will look through these and if anyone looks interesting, the application is passed on to the management group. The aim is to reply to everyone who contacts the company.

When they actively look for qualified employees, Ekman uses only recruitment companies. They no longer handle the recruitment themselves as they consider it too time consuming. Different recruitment companies are used for different jobs; as an example, Manpower is the preference when hiring administrative, sales and other qualified staff but for executives they prefer to use personal contacts and networking. Ekman has never used social media or headhunting and have no intention to do so in the future either. They do use social media though to follow the development within the forestry competition.

In 2011, Ekman chose to be present at the annual labour market fair, Gadden, in order to get closer contacts with students. This was the first time the company had participated in anything like this. Ekman has also plans to instigate a scholarship for students at the Gothenburg School of Economics (Handelshögskolan i Göteborg). These efforts are not intended as direct parts of the recruitment process but rather as raising the awareness of Ekman as an employer, for future needs.

According to our two interview subjects at Ekman, they never use job adverts to communicate the organisational culture. Adverts only contain a small standard lead text with a short description of the company and its business. Normally, the recruitment companies will design the job adverts according to Ekman's desires and guidelines. In the selection process it is more important to find people who would fit into the organisational culture than to find those with the best grades and references. As the vice president, Mr Hans Tidebrant stated it, "you can always acquire knowledge, but it is impossible to change your personality". At Ekman, the personality is the most important attribute when it comes to finding the right person for the job. The only exception from this would be if someone comes straight from school, without any references or job background. Finally, Hans and Linda at Ekman reflected that as a B2B company, less known amongst the general public, they probably are at a slight disadvantage compared to B2C companies with well-known brands to which people already relate.

5. Analysis

In this chapter we intend, on the basis of our referential framework and empirical evidence, to analyse the differences and similarities that emerged when studying the two case studies. The chapter has the same disposition as the previous; first we analyse the companies from a brand perspective and then focus on employer branding, internal and external.

5.1 Branding, organisational culture and corporate branding

Both Ekman and the clothing company seem to agree that the brand is an important part of business success. With regard to the brand, the most obvious difference between Ekman and the clothing company lies in how important they consider it to be to work continuously to maintain the brand, but also to whom they address it to. The clothing company is very active in its efforts to convey the corporate brand and uses a variety of tools to communicate it to customers, employees and other stakeholders. The clothing company perceives this work as somewhat difficult when the competition is fierce and margins are small. The brand is seen as a strategic and competitive advantage, which is in line with what Melin (1997) argues that a brand should be considered as. We do not find this particularly surprising, since a company with a B2C focus must constantly work with their brand when trends and fashion are constantly changing, in order to maintain consumer interest.

Ekman, on the other hand, state that they do not work at all with communicating their brand to the public and that they do not care much about what the public thinks about the company. They feel that they rely on the name they have built in the industry and they do not perceive it as difficult to maintain a strong brand; on the contrary they see their brand as something that just "is". We find this statement partly contradictory since Ekman obviously value the relationship with both customers and employees, which can be viewed as long-term efforts to maintain a strong brand. Kapfer (2004) argues that companies should look at their brand as a living system and not as something static, which we agree with. A brand is built on an interpretation, which in turn is influenced by what a company does, and the decisions that are made, which do not leave the world unaffected.

The clothing company appears to be well aware that their brand is affected by how the company acts and how it portrays itself, and they are also actively trying to influence it. Ekman, however, seem to view the brand as something static, but they do not act accordingly. One question we ask ourselves is if it would make any difference if Ekman instead would view their brand as a living system? We think that this would make a difference since it would enable them to be aware of the changes that their brand is exposed to and thereby align their strategic plans accordingly. Furthermore, we think that the view of the brand as something static is common among B2B companies because they do not depend on the public in the same way as B2C companies do. If following Kapfers (2004) example it seems like the clothing company manages to preserve their brand since they have chosen to actively engage in it, which in turn lead to a strong profile of both their corporate and employer brand. Ekman, however, do not seem to view their brand in the same way and neither do they work with it according to Kapfers example.

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) suggest that B2B companies often underestimate the effect a strong brand can have on other external stakeholders than customers. We have found that this seems to apply on our B2B company, and that it is something that they can work extensively with to strengthen the company's employer brand. However, we believe that it is important not to be too quick to say that B2B companies are doing wrong and B2C right, it must be pointed out that different types of companies have completely different target groups and thereby different focuses and goals. For a B2B company to work with their brand the same way as a B2C company had probably helped them strengthen their employer brand, and thus facilitate the recruitment, but it could also be assumed to cost both time and resources. It is possible that the benefits would not exceed the costs. This does not, however, mean that we believe that our B2B company cannot learn from the B2C company. We believe that they, through fairly simple means, can profile their brand to external stakeholders and thereby strengthen their employer brand and thus take advantage of the benefits it brings. This is also something that Aaker (1996) refers to when he states that often it is companies themselves that stands in the way of their own successful branding. That is, that many of the difficulties and problems that are experienced are caused by the company itself and can be remedied. If we apply this to Ekman with the purpose to

strengthen their employer brand, they are, as they themselves state, an old, genuine business with heritage, knowledge and worldwide connections. Had this been used to create visibility and awareness among the public, we think that they, with relatively small funds, would be able to build a strong employer brand. We base this statement on the fact that Ekman's brand has the attributes that are valued by the Y-generation.

5.2 Responsibilities and Communication

Tavassoli (2008) discusses the fact that many managers and organisations are looking at branding as something that is only used to convey a message to the public. He believes this to be wrong because he claims that, as a strategy tool, it could also be used internally. The clothing company seem to have seized this theory, and chosen to work hard to communicate their corporate brand internally with the help of their organisational culture. This organisational culture is mediated through actions, on both long and short term; to create a sense of cohesion and loyalty among employees and between the employees and the company. The clothing company give new employees brochures which read the company's values and how they look at their employees to give the employee an insight and a sense of what to expect of the company as employer and in return, what the company expect of the employee. The clothing company have, in a very active way, chosen to incorporate their brand into their organisational culture and thereby created a strong corporate brand. They have chosen to encourage the employees to live up to the same brand as they want to convey to the public and thus succeeded in linking the external and internal brand together. We think that the company, through its involvement in this matter, reaches what we would define as the goal of an organisational culture; incorporating the company's brand and values among employees in order to gain competitive and strategic advantages of their brand.

Ekman, like the clothing company, have a strong organisational culture that focuses on nurturing relationships and take care of the staff. The company has opted not to work with communicating the organisational culture as a standardised product to be implemented in the organisation in the way that clothing company has done, but rather opted for a fairly "laissez faire" approach focused on allowing employees to create the culture that they want to work in. In other words, there is an "Ekman spirit," but it is something that the staff has

developed together by having shared values and nurture their relationships. We believe both approaches are effective but fit differently in different environments. Ekman, with a relatively small organisation with few management levels, are able to work in an informal setting, while the clothing company, which has a much more dispersed organisation, including several shops, needs a more well-thought out approach when it comes to communicating the organisational culture. We have therefore found that the way one chooses to work with the organisational culture rather depends on the size of the organisation than the focus on B2B or B2C.

The way a company communicates with its employees and how to allocate communication responsibilities affect how the company manage to convey its organisational culture. This result in how effectively one can work with the internal parts of employer branding. Regarding the communication, there seem to be great similarities between Ekman and the clothing company where they both make great use of personal contact. We believe this can be traced back to each company's organisational culture and where there is a desire to have close contact with employees. However, we have observed one difference and that is that the clothing company, to a large extent, uses its intranet to communicate with employees, which Ekman cannot do since they do not have an intranet. This is probably because the clothing company has such a widespread organisation, which forces them to have a way to communicate in an efficient and simple manner. Again, it seems that company's size has a greater impact on its means of communication than its business approach.

When it comes to the responsibility of communicating with the employees, this also seems to depend on this size of organisation. The clothing company has a Human Resources department whose responsibility is to communicate with the employees regarding information concerning their daily work. At Ekman they do not have a Human Resources department; instead, the company has a specific person who is responsible for personnel matters and therefore also responsible for communication relating to this area.

5.3 Employer Branding

5.3.1 Interaction between the company's corporate and employer brand

Barrow and Mosley (2005) argue that a company's employer brand and corporate brand are strongly linked. This is something that the clothing company seems to agree on. It is believed that the two brands, in many cases, supports and interact with one another. The clothing company believes that they, to some extent, seem to have a stronger employer brand than corporate brand. They experience that many of those who send spontaneous applications are not regular customers, but are drawn to them because they have a reputation for being a good employer. Ekman claim to see no difference between the corporate and employer brand and do therefore not subject to the relation between the two nor the difference it may cause in their search for qualified workers. We think that this, again, might be linked to the fact that their corporate brand is relatively unknown among the public and therefore they have chosen not to work with their brands in a strategic way.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) points out that there are two important differences between a corporate brand and an employer brand, and that it is vital that the companies are aware of this. The clothing company appears to be aware of the differences and similarities, and do also seem to work with them strategically. Ekman, on the other hand, does not seem to put much focus on these differences. We are hesitant whether it can indeed be regarded as "important" that a B2B company like Ekman is aware, and focusing, at these differences. We base this statement on that Ekman has not got a wide range of brands that have to be decoupled from the company's employer brand neither do they have a strong corporate brand among the public that may affect their employer brand negatively. We believe that Backhaus and Tikoos statement rather addresses B2C companies than B2B companies.

5.3.2 Internal Employer Branding

Both of the companies we have studied have been very aware of the internal part of employer branding, and add resources to retain and engage their staff. Ekman's focus, for example, lie to a great extent on their relationships with customers and employees; which is dependent on active work with internal employer branding. Yet this does not mean that the

company acts or “thinks” in the terms of employer branding when they decided on the benefits they offer employees but rather, because they rely on what they think would make the employees satisfied. In other words, Ekman's employee benefits could be a result of that, rather than a strategic decision to improve their employer brand. However, such measures provide the same results, but it is the intention that we believe differs.

The clothing company, however, seems to be very strategically aware of their decisions regarding personnel issues and therefore we believe that they have decided on their benefits to get their staff to stay at the company by making them feel at home, rather than make the staff feel at home so that they will stay, their intention is different from Ekman. Again, it is the organisational culture that plays a major role in retaining and motivating the employees, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) a positively perceived organisational culture creates happy and loyal employees, which in turn makes them get engaged in their work and want to stay with the company. Both Ekman and the clothing company have managed to involve its employees in this way, partly reflected in the low staff turnover that both companies have.

Regarding the way in which the two companies have chosen to motivate their employees, there seems to be a fairly clear difference. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) divide the benefits that companies offer their employees into symbolic and functional benefits. The clothing company appears to focus on trying to convey symbolic benefits, such as the feeling of working for a responsible company and to be part of something bigger. Proof of this is the strategic work to communicate the organisational culture and corporate values internally and externally through the website and in advertisements. It must, however, be added that the company is also working with functional benefits such as education. We think that the fact that the clothing company has many competitors that are not only competing for consumers but also for labour is the reason for the focus on symbolic benefits. The company also believes that offering the highest wages do not pay off since there are many other similar companies that offer much higher salaries and they are therefore forced to find other ways to attract labour.

Unlike the clothing company Ekman offers mainly functional benefits such as, salary, bonus

and healthcare. We do not find this surprising since the company's brand is not directed to consumers but towards their clients (other companies). For this reason, the potential workers do not know what Ekman stands for and the choice not to be visible to the public means that they have to focus on the functional benefits. Though, it is possible that employees, who are already inside the company, experience that there are more symbolic benefits than functional and therefore choose to stay for that reason. We believe that this cannot be said to be unique to Ekman, but also can be found by other B2B companies because of the fact that their brand, generally, tend to be less recognisable to the public. Again, we believe that Ekman partly can benefit from letting the brand be visible among the public and clarify what it stands for from an employer branding perspective. In this way, we believe that they could also use the symbolic benefits to attract, retain and engage staff. This could also result in the need of fewer functional advantages and thus reduce costs. However, it is of course a balance of what costs the most and what they think will bring the most benefits to the company.

5.3.3 External Employer branding and recruitment policies

What is it that makes people seek out these two companies we have studied in this thesis? When we asked the respondents, they thought that the answer was clear. Ekman found that it was the international aura, but also the development-opportunities and their old history that attract people to apply for jobs at Ekman. The clothing company was more focused on the work environment and thought people would like to work for them because of their reputation as a good employer. However, we believe that there are more than these things that attract potential employees to seek out the companies. We believe that the size and well-known name of the clothing company affects the number of applications to a greater extent than their reputation as a good employer. From personal experience we know that when you are looking for work we are more susceptible to apply to companies that you already know of, just because you know them and thus come up with the idea to apply there. Of course, the work environment is important for people when searching for a job, but it is probably not the first thing that is prioritised since we unconsciously chose companies whose brands we have heard of. For Ekman, we believe that the opportunities to work abroad and other functional advantages cause people to apply for jobs with them. Regarding the company's long history, we believe that this may attract people who are

familiar with the industry or the company.

When asked how a strong^{vii} employer brand could potentially affect the companies in their efforts in recruitment, the respondents' answers differ. The clothing company believes that it would affect them in a positive way, with increasing numbers of applications etc., while Ekman does not believe that there would be any difference since they, self-proclaimed, already has a strong employer brand. It therefore appears that Ekman does not perceive the fact that they can strengthen their employer brand. They believe that their employer brand cannot be any stronger than it already is, and therefore it would not make any difference to them. Here, we strongly disagree and instead we argue that Ekman has huge potential regarding their employer brand. The internal attributes are very strong, but the external component does not reach quite the requirements necessary to have a strong employer brand. A stronger external employer brand would give them more choices in the recruiting process since it is safe to assume that more people would seek out the company if the company was well-known.

5.3.3.1 Recruitment Policies

When it comes to the recruitment process, the two companies' approaches and principles differs to a significant level in some aspects, with the principal difference being the clothing company's choice to handle the recruitment themselves and Ekman's choice to outsource the recruitment process to some extent. We believe that we can see a connection to the previously discussed organisational culture and consciousness of their corporate brands and the choice of recruitment policy. As mentioned earlier, a company's corporate brand and employer brand are strongly linked together. We believe that for companies that are keenly aware and committed in their corporate brand, it is equally important to have control of their employer brand and thus the recruitment. The clothing company, as previously discussed, is involved and aware of their corporate brand and knows what to communicate sees it as important to handle the recruitment in-house. This means that the control regarding recruitment and who to recruit increases compared with hiring a staffing or recruiting firm, where they do not have the same opportunity to perceive the potential employee personalities and their ability fit into the culture.

Alvesson (2004) has developed a model in which he describes three different approaches that companies often relate to in their recruitment efforts, which is about how they perceive their staff. When we asked the respondents at Ekman to choose which of the three options that suited them best, they chose, without hesitation "building a strong organisational culture". This means that the potential employees' personality and the chemistry between them and the company is equalled as important as the academic skills and references from previous employers, this is in compliance with the feeling we got during the interview. The clothing company, however, did not want to choose just one option, but told us that the qualifications are extremely important and that you cannot get a job at the company without top credentials. We believe this is similar to option one, "best people", which is about finding the best available people in each area. Both of these strategies, we believe are well thought-out strategic decisions where the companies simply decided what they believed the most effective approach in terms of recruiting staff for their organisation was. Of course, you cannot draw a line between Alvesson's three approaches and say it is "either one or the other", both credentials and personality are important, but we believe that the importance of the ingredients differs for the two companies. Ekman's approach, investing in culture is directly linked to their particular organisational culture and employer brand, investing in relationships and building a community. The same goes for the clothing company which is always very aware of what they do with their brand, for them it is important that their staff have the necessary qualifications to enable them to do a good job, while of course they should fit into the organisational culture.

Since the clothing company acts against consumers, they receive far more spontaneous applications than Ekman (and probably more applications per advertised vacancy as well), it is to no surprise that they have to standardise the recruitment process and make use of such tools as personality tests to see how well prospective employees would fit into their culture. They simply do not have the opportunity to effectively manage all the applications if not done in a standardised way. We think that this is not uncommon among B2C companies, while B2B companies have other options to deal with the applications they receive and therefore have the chance to use methods that may be more thorough in the initial process. If the clothing company would go after personality prior references, it would take a long time to go through all the applications they receive, they have to make their selection in

another way. We believe that even if they wanted a more "soft" approach, it would not be possible for them practically. Ekman, however, can handle the requests they get and can choose to go after personality before the references, even if they have chosen to outsource the recruitment externally, they decide which qualifications are required.

The companies' focus (B2B or B2C) is also reflected in the difficulties of finding qualified staff. The clothing company believes that they have no problem with that at all, but rather it is very easy for them because of their strong brand. The only difficulty they felt they had was to find some specific positions, such as men's designers, which they think may be an industry problem. Ekman, however, stated that it could be difficult to find the right staff for their positions. We think this might be due to their orientation (B2B), again comparing to the clothing company that claim to find staff easily because of their well-known brand, we believe that the opposite may apply to Ekman. Ekman, as a B2B company, do not have a well-established brand among the public, which in turn leads to the fact that one's employer brand will be weaker. This is because it is much easier to feel a connection to a company that one has been in contact with and know what they represent. A company that we never before have seen or heard of will result in that we are not aware of the company's employer brand, or even what the company do. This is also something that both Ekman and the clothing company stresses.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter we finally intend to discuss briefly our conclusions and to present other thoughts and ideas which have emerged during the work with the thesis. For a good overview, we have chosen a bullet form for this section. We will also here discuss and suggest ideas for future research within the subject of employer branding.

6.1 Discussion

Previously in this thesis, we put forward the question whether the theoretical connection we discussed between the corporate brand and the employer brand was in coherence with the reality. The answer to this question is not entirely unambiguous and we did in fact not expect to find an unambiguous answer here. Within the theory, the connection is very clear but what we found from our relatively limited interviews was two different views on what employer brand and corporate brand actually is.

Our clothing company seemed well aware of their two brands, the importance of each of these for the organisation and how to use them to support each other. At the same time, it was obvious that Ekman perceived the two as one unified brand and that they did not feel it necessary to invest resources into building and maintaining these (this). It is of course impossible to draw any conclusions from this limited set of interviews, but it is clear that there are different views on the connection between the corporate and the employer brands, something that is likely to be the case within many companies.

We found from our two case studies that they are different in many ways in their work with employer branding and that this is not only due to their different types of sales (B2B / B2C). Some of the differences, such as the method of communication and the choices on how to work with their organisational culture, we believe come from the existing organisational culture itself. We are not able to form an opinion though on the exact nature of the connection between the organisational culture and the corporate brand. One observation though is that in spite of our somewhat ambiguous results, it appears that the business

model, culture and corporate brand and employer brand of a company are all strongly related in a complex and constantly changing system where they all affect each other and every change results in further changes to the other variables. If then also external factors such as the general public, competitors, authorities et al. are added, it becomes obvious that the employer branding does not take place in a corporate vacuum but rather in the society as a whole, influenced by a multitude of inner and outer factors.

By conducting this study, we believe we have arrived at the answers to the questions we formulated at the outset of the thesis. The most obvious observation we have made is that while working with their corporate brand, companies are also affected in the work with the employer brand. Possessing a strong and strategically well-defined corporate brand is essential in order to create a strong and attractive employer brand. We have come to this conclusion by comparing how the B2B and the B2C companies work with these questions in practical life. We found both differences and similarities regarding the work with the employer brand, something we are inclined to attribute to whether they work in the B2B or B2C segment. We take the view though, that there are different ways to approach the branding process and that it might be beneficial to widen the horizon and learn from other ways of working, how to maximise the use of the corporate as well as, the employer brand.

6.2 Conclusions

As the following conclusions are based on only two case studies, they should be taken more as a general idea of how the employer branding can manifest itself, rather than an exact theory. Specifically, there is no ground for extending these conclusions from the two companies to the two groups (B2B and B2C).

- A B2C company is constantly reminded of the importance of its brand. Companies in this group are therefore likely to work more naturally with their corporate brand than a company in the B2B category, who can be less concerned with the general public's view of their brand. For this reason, we believe that B2B companies are less dependent on their corporate brands and therefore less inclined to build and maintain this as a natural process.

- The way in which a company chooses to work with its organisational culture and the internal part of the corporate brand is likely more affected by the size of the organisation than by the type (B2C or B2B).
- Within the highly competitive businesses in the B2C group, a lot of focus is required on the demanding symbolic advantages, as opposed to the B2B group of companies who instead can focus on functional advantages. This leads to fundamental differences between these two groups in their handling of the internal part of employer branding.
- We believe that there is much to learn still in the area of employer branding, especially for companies in the B2B group. We also believe that as a first step, by simply becoming conscious about the concept of employer branding, these companies can increase their employer status and thereby attract new talents, important for the future development and growth. The future will not generate less demanding employees and a company must be ready to face the new challenges here.

6.3 Suggestions and ideas for the future research

As our thesis has only comprised two case studies, it is as mentioned before hardly possible to draw any general conclusions. One idea for future research would be to conduct a statistically correct investigation wherein a number of companies and their employer branding work are being studied in order to be able to draw more far reaching conclusions.

Another suggestion for the future research is to investigate corporate branding in more detail and its connection to the external brands and the internal organisational culture. Corporate branding is a very large phenomenon, containing a multitude of definitions at the same time as it is a very important part of the corporate identity. By studying the connection between the corporate brand and other important parts of the identity of a company, it is possible to learn more on how to effectively conduct the work with employer branding.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Initial questions

The respondent's duties:

1. Briefly describe your duties here at the company?

General information about the company:

2. Who formulates the company's goals, vision and strategy, and is this documented in any way?
3. Are there any clear goals for employees?

Human Resources

Human Resources' responsibility and organisational culture:

4. How do managers and Human Resources communicate with employees? (In person, phone, e-mail)
5. Could you briefly describe your organisational culture here at the company?
6. Does the organisational culture get communicated outwards? (For example, in job advertisements)

Recruitment

The recruitment process and responsibilities:

7. How do you proceed to find qualified staff?
8. Who designs your job advertisements postings and where do you publish them?
9. Is there any difference (in the recruiting process) when you are looking for skilled workers (e.g. purchasing manager) and when you are looking for, such as store staff / receptionist?
10. How do you make your selection during the recruitment process? (Which of the following options do you believe fits your company the best)
 - Are you looking for the "best employees", with the highest credentials, best references, etc.?
 - Does it really matter who gets the job, the important thing is that the person can do its tasks?

- Are you rather looking for people who would fit into your organisational culture than "the best"?

Brands and image

Brands:

11. What are your views on the company's brand, current competitiveness and knowledge among the public?
12. How do you work actively to convey your brand?
13. What do you think that your brand represents?
14. When you are looking for skilled workers, would you consider that the company's brand is a tractive power or do you differentiate your employer- and corporate brand?
15. Do you think the company's brand, somehow, makes it harder to find qualified staff?

Employer branding

Internal

How to retain staff:

16. How large is your staff turnover per year?
17. What do you offer your staff to enable them to remain with the company?
18. What is the most common reason why employees choose to leave the company?
19. Do you keep in touch with alumni?
20. When you describe the career opportunities within the company, do you use former employees who have reached new heights in his career as an example? (E.g. "our old financial manager is now CEO of...")

Externally

How to find staff:

21. How easy / difficult do you think it is to find qualified staff?
22. Do you get spontaneous applications?
23. How do you handle these candidates?

24. What do you think the reasons are that people seek out / do not seek out for the company?
25. What attributes stresses you, in your marketing towards potential workforce?

Public knowledge of the company:

26. You are a company that works towards consumers / business, how do you estimate your direction affects your possibilities to find qualified work force?
27. Do you see your main competitors also as competitors for labour?
28. How do you think that a strong / stronger employer brand had been beneficial for you company?

The view of the employer:

29. How do you want potential employees to visualise the company as an employer?
30. Do you think that the view of the company as an employer differs between potential and existing employees?

Values:

31. How important is it that potential employees share the values and opinions as the company? ("Living the Brand")

Endnotes

ⁱ Universum Group AB is a Swedish consultancy that specialises in Employer Branding. Among other things they conduct market and opinion surveys to compile into top lists of the most attractive employer in Sweden and other countries. (universumglobal.com, 2011)

ⁱⁱ Source: Their official website

ⁱⁱⁱ Recruitment communications, which means communication in order to find the "right" employees, and branding towards potential workers, merged in the sixties. (Rosethorn, 2009)

^{iv} Work psychology also emerged during the sixties and is a result of a realisation that loyal employees are committed to their work and a better resource for the company. This has since evolved into the idea of the psychological contract (Rosethorn, 2009).

^v Source: "This is Ekman", brochure from Ekman & Co AB, 2012.

^{vi} IKEA and H&M can be found on first and third place on Universum's top lists of the most attractive employers in Sweden. (Universum, 2012)

^{vii} "Strong" in the definition that the company would be in the charts of the most attractive employers in Sweden.