



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Employer Brand Loyalty Revisited - Adapting to a Changing Reality

A qualitative article on how companies, engaging in Employer Branding efforts, need to adapt to a constantly changing context.

Viktor Brodin and Anna Forkman
Master of Science in Marketing and Consumption
Master Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption, Spring 2019
Supervisor: Lena Hansson
Graduate School, GM1160 V19

Acknowledgement

First and foremost we would like to thank our supervisor Lena Hansson for the valuable input and constructive feedback to this article throughout the writing process. Furthermore, we would like to thank all the interviewees from the different business areas for their time and answers that provided us with the insights for this article. Last, but not least, we would like to thank our mothers, Anna Brodin and Malin Forkman, for their help with feedback and for providing us with contact information to the interviewees.

Anna Forkman

Viktor Brodin

Göteborg 2019-06-19

Göteborg 2019-06-19

Employer Brand Loyalty Revisited - Adapting to a Changing Reality

A qualitative study on how companies, engaging in Employer Branding efforts, need to adapt to a constantly changing context.

Anna Forkman and Viktor Brodin

School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, 2019

Abstract

This qualitative case study aims at critically analyse how businesses today, actively working on their Employer Brand, engage in this work in a changing context, focusing on Employer Brand Loyalty. This was done by investigating six case companies using interviews and document analysis. The case companies chosen are all actively working with their Employer Brand with the goal to be attractive employers and can be found on Universum Global's list over the most attractive employers. The article shows that the concept of Employer Brand Loyalty needs to be revisited and redefined. We have found that a loyalty towards the Employer Brand values is more valuable than loyalty in terms of employee retention. Instead of speaking about exclusive Employer Brand Loyalty we propose the terminology Employer Brand relationships. Our research points to the fact that employees can have multiple Employer Brand relations, although they are normally employed by one employer at a time. Further, this article criticizes what previous theory argues regarding the costs associated with recruitment. Although the recruitment costs might be as high as suggested, one may ask if the possible monetary gains from former employees speaking highly of an employer have been considered? If a business is able to handle different employee relations in such a positive way that an employee continues to feel loyal towards the Employer Brand values, we argue that there are probably indirect profits to gain.

Keywords: *Employer Branding, Employer Brand Loyalty, Employer Brand Relations, Employer Brand Identity, Employer Value Proposition - EVP, External influences, Jolts*

Introduction

Employer Branding is an important area for employers to deal with, not at least in times of labour shortages where the movement of employees is high (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018). From a historical point of view, the concept has its roots in the general branding theory. Employer Branding definitions share many similarities with branding definitions. To illustrate this, one can compare the definition of a brand and an Employer Brand.

A brand is, 'a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (Fill, 2013, p.326-327).

Employer Branding is the "Building of identifiable and unique employer identity, and the Employer Brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors" (Backhaus' & Tikoo, 2004, p.502).

Still, the Employer Brand and the corporate brand differ in two main aspects due to the nature of the brand. First, the Employer Brand is employment specific and characterises the firm as an employer (Tikoo & Backhaus, 2004). Second, Tikoo and Backhaus (2004) argue that the Employer Brand is directed at both internal and external audiences, while corporate branding efforts are to a greater extent directed towards an external target group.

The *aim* of this article to critically analyse how businesses today, actively working on their Employer Brand, engage in this work in a changing context, focusing on Employer Brand Loyalty through case studies. Myers and Kamyab (2010) and Serazio (2015) have researched how generational behaviour affects Employer Branding efforts. Dabirian et al. (2017) have looked into what employees value the most in a workplace. Previous Employer Branding theory has also focused on how to create loyalty and a strong organisational identity (Tikoo & Backhaus, 2004). Dyhre and Parment (2013) argue that a strong Employer Brand will make people apply to a position in the firm and then stay in the business, thus not change work for a competing Employer Brand. Dabirian et al. (2017) also argue that a low employee turnover is desirable since there are high costs related to recruitment. The existing research is mostly focused on describing why Employer Branding is important and provides guidelines on how businesses *should* act in order to create a strong Employer Brand. We consider that the available theory lack a business perspective on how businesses *actually* engage in Employer Branding efforts. For

instance, low employee turnover has often been described as a goal with Employer Branding (Dabirian et al., 2017), how is this dealt with by businesses when there are reports suggesting that a new generation is entering the labour market and are likely to change job every fifth year (Deloitte, 2016; Västsvenska Handelskammaren, 2017)? Furthermore, we believe that as businesses find themselves in an environment with increasingly quicker movement of workforce, increased demand for transparency towards stakeholders, and where information is spread more quickly, there is a need to investigate how external factors influence the Employer Branding efforts. Greyser (2009) has investigated how reputational trouble, from external sources, have an impact on how *corporate* brands are perceived. Based on this, we asked ourselves what reputational trouble might look like in an *Employer* Branding context.

An example of an external source, which we believed could impact Employer Brands, is the Metoo-movement, which started in 2017. In short the Metoo-movement aimed at revealing sexual harassment and abuse in different work environments. The movement took place almost exclusively on social media using the hashtag #metoo and spread all over the world. The movement put a spotlight on businesses that had not stopped such behaviour and even led to business leaders and politicians to be forced to leave their positions, after it had been revealed that they had abused women in the workplace (Svenska Dagbladet, 2018). External sources, such as the Metoo-movement, can thus have a strong impact on businesses' corporate brands (Greyser, 2009), and as a

consequence possibly affect Employer Brands as well? Thus, how do businesses handle external influences in terms of employer branding work over which they have little or no control?

The purpose of this article is to critically analyse how businesses today, actively working on their Employer Brand, engage in this work in a changing context, focusing on Employer Brand Loyalty through case studies.

To fulfil the purpose two research questions were formulated:

1. *How do businesses engage in the creation of a strong Employer Brand?*
2. *How are the Employer Branding strategies affected by unexpected external influences?*

An iterative case study was considered the most suitable method to be able to answer how businesses engage in Employer Branding work and how contemporary, external events can affect this work (Yin, 2014). To be able to fulfil our purpose and answer the research questions stated above, six in-depth interviews were performed with businesses actively working on their Employer Brand. The interviews were based on a document analysis of the same businesses.

This article points to the fact that for businesses to be able to build strong Employer Brands the entire organisation needs to engage in the process to build an authentic and sustainable Employer Brand. Succeeding in this work can protect the Employer Brand from unexpected and

potentially harmful external influences. Additionally, the case study suggests that how businesses refer to Employer Brand Loyalty differs from the existing theory. It is argued that Employer Brand Loyalty in terms of employee retention is an outdated concept and that there are more ways to display loyalty to an Employer Brand than simply staying in the company. We have found that a loyalty towards the Employer Brand values is more valuable than loyalty in terms of employee retention. The theoretical contribution of this article is the introduction of a complement to the concept of Employer Brand loyalty, which we refer to as *Employer Brand Relations*.

Theoretical Framework

The reader will be presented with a brief overview of the development of the Employer Branding concept. This is followed by what previous research suggests as successful Employer Branding strategies in terms of developing an attractive Employer Value Proposition, EVP. Lastly the reader is presented with how previous research has discussed the impact of external influences on Employer Branding strategies.

Employer Branding and Employer Value Proposition

Ambler and Barrow formulated one of the first definitions of the concept Employer Branding in 1996. The authors focused on what type of benefits a firm can provide and formulated it as; “The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187). From this early definition of the concept, it has transformed from just another buzzword,

into a more extensive and valuable practice (Dyhre and Parment, 2013). During the transformation, the understanding of the concept has been formulated in almost as many different ways, as there have been authors writing about it. A few years later, in 2001, the Conference Board (2001) defined Employer Branding as the “*identity of the firm as an employer*” (Dell, 2001, p.2). The first definitions of Employer Branding can be understood as a screenshot of the business, a static description of how your company’s Employer Brand should look like when you are ‘finished’ with the Employer Branding work. Later definitions of Employer Branding have rather seen Employer Branding as a continuous and dynamic process. Tikoo and Backhaus (2004) describe this process as the “[...] *building of identifiable and unique employer identity, and the Employer Brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors.*” (Tikoo & Backhaus, 2004, p. 502)

The process of building an attractive Employer Brand is thus about how to create value for potential, as well as existing, employees. Prior to the introduction of Employer Branding, businesses focused mainly on the value creation for customers (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). The brand promise made by the firm to its customers is what Dyhre and Parment (2013) refers to as Customer Value Proposition, CVP. The concept of CVP was introduced to the Employer Branding discipline and resulted in Employer Value Proposition, EVP, which “[...] *should be a truth which embraces existing employees and the first thing a new employee faces*” (Dyhre & Parment, 2013, p.93). Further, EVP targets existing,

potential and new employees (Dyhre & Parment, 2013).

Employer Branding has been divided between internal and external Employer Branding (Backhaus, 2016). Furthermore, Backhaus (2016) describes Employer Branding as a three-step process; first, the development of an EVP, second the internal Employer Branding and third, the external Employer Branding. Developing a sustainable EVP requires that the firm knows the employees as well as the strategic direction of the business, now and in the future (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). The authors have provided a checklist, which they argue needs to be fulfilled in order to create an attractive EVP. According to Dyhre and Parment (2013) the EVP should be: clear, truthful, concrete, distinguishing and preferably contain a feeling.

Developing an attractive EVP requires an understanding of what employees value at their workplace since, according to Sengupta et al. “*Satisfied employees are the best source of Employer Branding*” (Sengupta et al., 2015, p.309). A successful EVP encourage engagement for the Employer Brand, which makes the employees good Employer Brand ambassadors and potential employees eager to join the organisation. In order to gain an understanding for what employees value at a workplace Dabirian, et.al. (2017) conducted a research based on the collection of reviews from the platform Glassdoor, a platform where employees from businesses can write comments about their employers anonymously. Based on the authors’ research they came up with seven Employer Branding value propositions, which were the most

common topics employees, wrote about, regardless if it was in a negative or a positive way. What the 48 000 employees mentioned most frequently were; Social value, Interest Value, Application value, Development value, Economic value, Management value and Work/life balance. As a consequence, a consideration of these different values can be argued to be seen as important and valuable for the ones responsible of the development of an employer value proposition (Dabirian et.al., 2017, p.4).

As the Employer Branding concept has gained increased interest, theory has moved from defining what Employer Branding is (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) towards trying to formulate how to succeed with Employer Branding work and which positive outcomes it might have for the firm (Dabirian et al., 2017; Dyhre & Parment, 2013; Sengupta et al., 2015; Ugglå, 2018). With previous theory providing what can almost be described as a 'guidebook' for firms interested in working with their Employer Brand, we found it interesting to study how firms engage in Employer Branding efforts in practice and how they reason around this work.

Employer Brand Loyalty

According to Tikoo and Backhaus (2004) one of the outcomes from working with Employer Branding is Employer Brand Loyalty, which in turn fosters employee productivity. In the model presented by Tikoo and Backhaus (2004) the term organisational commitment is used to describe Employer Brand loyalty. Thus, organisational commitment refers to the employees' identification and involvement

with the firm, their desire to stay in the firm, the acceptance of the firm's goals and values, as well as their willingness to work hard (Hoppe, 2018; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). To establish trust between employer and employee, the employee should have the same image of the employer before and after recruitment (Ugglå, 2018). Sengupta et al. (2015) argue that to encourage employees to stay in the organisation the firm needs to establish strong moral corporate values. This fosters pride among the employees, and thus they are more likely to stay in the organisation and not change job for a competitor (Sengupta et al., 2015). To have employees willing to stay in the organisation for a longer period of time is considered a success, especially since it is more cost efficient according to Schlager et al. (2011).

The more the employee feels that his or her own values are aligned with the values of the organisation, the more the employee feels attracted to the employer (Sengupta et al., 2015). This is further supported by Aurand et al. (2005) who argue that an increase in employee commitment through an increased engagement in the brand will improve the organisation since the employees can make the brand come alive and thus make it more appealing to customers and other stakeholders. The theory presented here suggests that a low employee turnover rate, thus strong Employer Brand Loyalty, is a success factor in terms of Employer Branding efforts. We believe that this can prove to be a challenge for firms today since a new generation is about to enter the labour market, the Millennial generation. The Millennial generation is a generation likely to change jobs more frequently than

previous generations have (Myers & Kamyab, 2010).

Organisational Identity and External Influences

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) organisational identity is the attitudinal contributor to Employer Brand loyalty. The organisational identity can be described as a collective attitude about the employer firm, the employees will identify with the firm if they find that their own values are in line with those of the firm. The organisational identity is shaped by the insiders, the employees, and is a result of their interactions with both internal and external actors and influences. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) This is similar to how Woensel et al. (2016) defines organisations. They define organisations as “[...] *self-organising complex systems in which a shared attitude will emerge from the interactions among individuals*” (Woensel et al., 2016, p. 497). As this could be considered a broad and unspecified definition, and not really mentioning what ‘external actors and influences’ may be, we made a decision to extend the theory by introducing concepts originating from organizational science.

Firstly, Hatch and Schultz’s (2002) presents an organisational model, which describes how the organisational identity is created and shaped. The model comprises three components: culture, identity and image, it is argued that they are affected by four processes linking them together (Hatch & Schultz, 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). The processes are formulated as follows: “*Identity expresses cultural understandings*”, “*Identity mirrors the images of others*”, “*Reflecting embeds identity in culture*”, “*Expressed identity*

leaves impressions on others”. From that study, this article focus on the first two processes “identity expresses cultural understandings” and “identity mirrors the images of others” to be able to understand how the environment might affect the Employer Brands investigated. The understanding of influences is crucial in today’s business environment with a society in constant change and it is key to avoid “organisational dysfunctions” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1014). In more general terms, the model suggests that an organisation’s identity can partly be perceived as a result of how others expect us to act as a business, and how we as a business understand the cultural reality we are a part of (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). As the work with Employer Branding is closely connected to a firm's identity or values, this theory of how the identity is shaped will be important in order to understand how successful brands reason in these matters.

Secondly, if Hatch and Schultz’s (2002) model explains the processes argued to affect businesses’ identities, the following concept is introduced to explain what an external influence might ‘look’ like. In the Employer Branding theory this type of external events, and their potential impact, is lacking. In the building of a brand in general or in this case, Employer Brands, businesses do not act in a vacuum. We found it necessary exemplify what an external influence might be. Organisational jolts is a concept introduced by Woensel et al. (2016), and the jolts are essentially defined as events that the organisation has difficulties to foresee, which can pose a potential risk for the organisational success. Examples of jolts are the introduction of a competing

product, bad publicity and new laws and rules (Woensel et al., 2016). Woensel et al. (2016) argue that organisations are self-organising, complex systems. However, when there is a disruption in the environment in which they are active management plays an important role to avoid that the organization is harmed by a jolt (Woensel et al., 2016). When it comes to organisational persuasion the CEO and management are the most influential agents, they have a significant impact on the emergence of a shared attitude in the organisation. Moreover, the management of the different organisational departments needs to be aligned to ensure successful outcomes in organisational persuasion. (Woensel et al., 2016)

Methodology

Case study approach

A case study approach was found suitable for this article as it allows us to investigate *how* businesses engage in Employer Branding efforts, as well as the *contemporary events* we aim to investigate (Yin, 2014). Since we decided to look into several businesses actively working with Employer Branding and compare these cases to each other, an extensive case study approach was chosen. The aim of the case study is to find, if they exist, common patterns between the cases. Since the case companies are engaging in building attractive Employer Brands they were assumed to function as “*instruments that can be used in exploring specific business-related phenomena*” (Yin, 2014 p.119).

Based on this methodological starting point, where different cases will be studied at different occasions and new questions or patterns may show up (Eriksson &

Kovalainen, 2008), an iterative research approach was deemed to be suitable. The iterative approach gave us the opportunity to go back and forth between the theory and the empirical data during the process as it evolved (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). By taking this methodological path, we had to be aware of the fact that the initial idea might change during the research period, and be open for this. During the case study the focus of the study shifted towards Employer Brand Loyalty and this was included in the research aim.

Case companies

The chosen case companies are all organisations actively working with Employer Branding, aiming at becoming attractive employers. To be able to find businesses that could contribute with relevant input to our study in terms of interviewees, Employer Branding strategies or other useful content, the choice was made to begin the search for cases among businesses that are successful in this area. Still, we are aware of the fact that to define a ‘successful’ Employer Brand could be argued to be dependent on the beholder, resulting in a subjective judgment. Thus, in order to reach objectivity as high as possible, in terms of successful Employer Brands, we began the search on the acknowledged Employer Branding platform Universum Global. The national rankings of employer brands provided at Universum Global consist of an annual list of the most attractive employers, based on a survey among students and professionals (Universum Global, 2018). Consequently, as the case companies were found on this list, we have reason to believe that they can answer questions related to how they engage in

Employer Branding, which in turn would contribute to our study, and make it possible to fulfil our purpose. The aim of this study is to understand Employer Branding efforts, not to provide a specific strategy for how businesses should work with Employer Branding. The focus of this study is the comparison and transferability between the cases, to identify potential patterns among the cases. That is why no comparison will be made between the “strongest” or “weakest” cases of Employer Branding, since all of the cases are considered successful based on the selection from Universum Global. This reasoning regarding selection of cases are in line with the recommendations provided by Patton (1990) and an extensive case study process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Patton, 1990).

In addition to the interviews, a company specific document analysis was performed using material regarding the case companies’ work related to building an Employer Brand and internal communication. The material was provided in the form of various documents and videos by the case companies, found on their respective web sites and on LinkedIn. This was performed prior to the interviews in order to create a first impression of the businesses’ Employer Brands, and thereby be able to ask appropriate questions making the interviews as rewarding as possible. What was found in the document analysis were for example the business values, Employer Value Propositions, code of conducts and similar statements. The information helped us to ask more specific question related to each business, for instance how they communicate their core values externally.

Interviews

As part of the case study approach, the choice was made to perform interviews. The six chosen interviewees are all in a management positions and connected to the work with the Employer Brand at the case company in question. Six interviews were considered enough to reach theoretical saturation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In order to get behind potentially standardised answers and broaden the understanding the question related to the Metoo-movement was added. Furthermore, the respondents were told that only their title and industry would be published. The respondents’ names were replaced with pseudonyms since we did not want this study to become advertising for a specific company (Table 1). By using pseudonyms the reader can focus on what is discussed and not get distracted by the company in question and the reader’s potential preconceived opinions of the same. Moreover, since the representatives from the case companies knew that they would be anonymous, we believe the risk that they would try to promote themselves would decrease and they would discuss the practices instead. The choice of people in a management position for the interviews was based on their ability to contribute with a broad, as well as specific, picture of the respective businesses’ Employer Branding strategies.

The interviews conducted were in depth and semi-structured. The interview guide was structured according to seven themes, (1) the respondent’s background, (2) Employer Value Propositions of the company, (3) internal communication, (4) loyalty, (5) internal versus external Employer Branding, (6) external influences and (7) other information

(Appendix, table 2). Connected to each theme were several questions, during some interviews all questions were asked and answered and during some new questions came up, all depending on the respondent's answer. Each interview conducted was approximately one hour since most researchers find it to be sufficient for an interview; one hour enables discussion and is not too long for the interviewee (Cragg & Cook, 2011).

The aim with the interviews was to go beyond the standardised answers and really understand the principles and thoughts behind the Employer Branding practices. Therefore, the questions were open and often followed by a follow-up question for the interviewee about examples, for instance "How can this be seen in your company?" (The alignment between the corporate and individual identity). Asking open questions to allow for an establishment of a basic ground for the interview is recommended by Cragg and Cook (2011). This allows the interviewee to discuss and elaborate on their attitudes concerning the Employer Branding work they do.

All interviews included a question connected to the Metoo-movement. The Metoo-movement was a global call against sexual harassment and abuse. The movement aimed at highlighting a structural, societal issue where the perpetrator is protected and able to use his or her position of power in sexual abuse. (Nationalencyklopedin, 2019). Including this question was an attempt to go beyond the standardised answers and at the same time understand how external factors can affect the Employer Branding efforts, described as jolts in the theoretical

framework. In the cases where the representative from the company did not experience Metoo as a significant external event we asked them if they had experienced any other external influences, which had affected their Employer Brand. In two cases we discussed jolts other than the Metoo-movement, which had affected the businesses. External influences, jolts, were not something that was brought up by the interviewees, we had to ask them specifically how this had or could have influence their Employer Branding work.

Each interview was, after the interviewee had given consent, recorded. Recording the interview is appropriate because taking notes during the interview can be distracting for the researcher and disrupt the interviewee. Furthermore, the memory of the researchers cannot be deemed enough to recall an entire interview, what is said and how it was said, for an hour. (Cragg & Cook, 2011). After the interview was conducted the recordings were transcribed and analysed using applied thematic analysis.

Respondent's title	Industry	Pseudonym
Director Global Employer Branding	Car industry	Karin
Head of Employer Branding	Construction industry	Erica
Head of Internal Communication	Retail industry	Christina
Regional manager Gothenburg office	Technical consultancy industry	Carl
HR director	Recruitment industry	Sofia
Recruiter and head of Employer Branding	Banking industry	Eva

Table 1: Interviewees

Applied thematic analysis

Applied thematic analysis was used to analyse the material and text segmentation was used as a tool. The material from the interviews was segmented by identifying repetitions in the transcripts and documents using an iterative approach, see appendix table 3 (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). The repetitions helped us identify connections between the different case companies and the seven themes from the interview guide (table 2). Three segments per research question were developed from the material as illustrated in figure 1 (see appendix). The three segments relating to the first research question “How do businesses engage in the creation of a strong Employer Brand?” were: (1) Employer Branding Values, (2) Employer Branding communication and (3) Employer Branding loyalty. Connected to the second research question “How are the Employer Branding strategies affected by unexpected external influences?” are the segments (1) Employer Brand Loyalty, (2) Jolts and (3) Internal versus external Employer Branding. Employer Brand Loyalty (EB loyalty in the figure) was found under both research questions. The segmentation of the material allowed us to assess the quality of the gathered data and sort accordingly.

Next, a codebook was developed to be able to analyse the segmented material (Appendix, figure 2). The codebook consists of three theoretical themes, guiding the analysis; (1) creation of Employer Brand identity, (2) identity in contrast to environment and (3) loyalty. Under identity in contrast to environment we had a subtheme, jolts.

Trustworthiness

What is generally considered as standard when you perform qualitative studies is that they do not provide ground for broader generalisations of larger populations (Bryman and Bell, 2013). This logic goes for this study as well, and as the purpose is to problematize and reason about a phenomenon with the help of cases, rather than draw any generalisations for other businesses, the study should be considered valid. With this said Hillebrand et al. (2001) refers to one type of generalisation, which he claims can be drawn from qualitative studies, namely theoretical generalisation. With this he argues that results derived from case research can be considered valid for other populations based on structural similarities and logical reasoning, and thereby the results from this study might be theoretically generalizable. Moreover, the selection of cases is according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) key to assess whether the study is trustworthy. As the cases in this study were found on the Employer Branding ranking Universum Global provides, they could be considered “*well-grounded*” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p.330) and thereby this contributes to the trustworthiness (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Ethical guidelines

Prior to the interviews the article’s purpose was presented to the interviewees and we made clear that the article has no commercial purpose. The article is not written for any company and the authors have no monetary gain from the research. This was done to avoid deception of the respondents in accordance with the ethical guidelines for marketing research provided

by the American Marketing Association (Feinberg et al., 2008).

Furthermore, all respondents were asked if they agreed to have their title and industry published. All respondents were also allowed to read through their quotes and in which context it had been analysed prior to publication. This was also done in accordance with the American Marketing Association's ethical guidelines (Feinberg et al., 2008).

Empirical material and analysis

The case study shows that Employer Branding is a dynamic process, which engages several business functions in an organisation. We have seen a pattern among the respondents that to succeed with Employer Branding efforts the different departments in the firm need to be aligned, and that external influences do have an impact on internal Employer Branding efforts. Furthermore, there is no finish line with Employer Branding work since it is a continuous engagement. This will be discussed in the following section which is structured according to the three themes created in the thematic analysis, (1) Creation of an Employer Branding identity, (2) Identity in contrast to environment, jolts and (3) Loyalty.

Creation of an Employer Brand identity

The process of shaping a sustainable identity as an employer is highlighted as a key success factor by researchers (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The representatives from the different case companies engaged in a specific creation of an identity in different ways using a wide range of various activities. We could see activities such as building an internal labour market, where

jobs are marketed internally prior to reaching out externally, to a focus on more intangible features such as creation of values or branding workshops. What we saw as a constant claim though was the importance of a clear identity.

One of the businesses interviewed have been given their mission, and reason for being, by the government, resulting in an identity shaped by this mission and idea. As the representative from this business mentioned:

“If you do not believe in our idea and mission, you cannot work in this business” (Christina, Retail industry).

In this case the identity is given and created on a higher level instead of together with the employees, resulting in an identity engagement that includes a more hierarchical way of ‘teaching’ the employees. With this said, the representative for this business, added that this ‘teaching’ should happen in an including way, with activities such as:

“[...] themed meetings, where values and central themes are discussed and understood together.” (Christina, retail industry).

A business in the construction industry has engaged in Employer Branding efforts successively over time. They realised that their Employer Brand was not considered very attractive, it used to have such a bad reputation that employees working on the train covered their computer screens because they did not want to show the other passengers where they worked. Today they have one of the most attractive Employer Brands and Erica (Construction

industry) argues that this is due to the fact that their Employer Brand identity is authentic.

“The identity must come from the inside, it cannot be something that an external party pastes on us” (Erica, Construction industry).

In this case the process to develop, what Dyhre and Parment (2013) refers to as an EVP, was done by conducting over 2500 interviews as well as several focus groups, to understand how their employees perceived them as a business, and based on that, they created their Employer Branding profile. The values they decided upon is communicated and reinforced by being discussed every meeting and when a new employee is introduced into the company (Erica, Construction industry). This way of developing a sustainable Employer Brand responds to the guidelines provided by Dyhre and Parment (2013) who argues that to formulate values which the employees can relate to, the business needs to understand the business as it is now, what the employees believe to be important aspects and evaluate what to keep and change. It can thus be argued, following the logic presented by Dyhre and Parment (2013), that the choice to include the employees in the development of a new employer value proposition is the reason for the improvement of the Employer Brand in question.

Sofia (recruitment industry) describes how their promise towards their employees is indeed developed and fortified by internal Employer Branding efforts, however she further argues that how external parties perceive the Employer Brand is also important. When they developed their core

values they had external parties' input as well as internal input from the employees. The interview with Sofia also points to the fact that in her company the value promise towards customers and employees are almost the same. Using input on the Employer Brand from external parties could be seen as an effort to ensure that there is no gap between how the Employer Brand is perceived externally and the internal perception of the Employer Brand. This can result in a higher level of trust in them as an employer since it could ensure that the image of the company is the same before and after the recruitment process, something Ugglå (2018) argues is crucial to create trust between the employer and the employee, and thus create an attractive Employer Brand.

Another way of creating an Employer Branding identity, which was highlighted by one of the interviewees, was using a more specific and structural method.

“We have a very large internal labour market, which means that we try to appoint the vacant spots to already existing employees, this is done by, for example, only publishing vacant positions internally as a first step in the recruitment process.” (Eva, Banking industry).

Providing an internal labour market can be seen as a possibility for the employees to develop in their workplace. This is referred to by Dabrian et al. (2017) as developmental value, which, according to their study, is important for employees. An internal labour market could ease the creation of a strong identity by providing developmental possibilities, making the employees feel that the employer care about the employees.

Without saying anything about which process is more or less desirable, the extensive description provided by the cases underpin previous Employer Branding theory, arguing for the importance of creating a distinct identity as a firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Maurya & Agarwal, 2018). Although the methods differed from a focus on structural approaches to more intangible features, a pattern was found among the businesses, which answered to the question of *how* the case companies engage in Employer Branding efforts. One respondent claimed that:

“Trustworthiness is key” (Carl, Technical consultancy industry)

and another emphasized how;

“You cannot be something you are not” (Karin, Car Industry).

The general concept presented here, which was substantiated by the other cases, is that whichever actions you take, they need to be true and coherent with your identity. So, in Carl’s case, who represent a business which want their brand and Employer Brand to be associated with sustainability, they need to *“Walk the talk”* (Carl, Technical consultancy industry) in order to stay trustworthy. As a result, the firm priorities recycling in their office by giving physical possibilities to do so as easy as possible, in combination with extensive information in the matter. Further, the same business have a ‘bike-day’ every spring where all employees leave their bike in the morning to invited mechanics, who fix the employees’ bikes during the day. From an Employer Branding perspective, Carl claims, that this

is done to encourage employees to ride their bike to work, instead of using their car, all for the environmental and sustainability profile which they desire to have and show.

Connecting the efforts performed by the case businesses, to the concept of EVP (Dyhre and Parment, 2013 & Sengupta et.al., 2015), the proposition a business makes towards the employees is argued to be of highest importance. Considering this, the internal Employer Branding efforts towards your existing employees, as well as the external Employer Branding work seem to have equal importance to the case businesses, and should rely on a thoroughly and rightful Employer Value Proposition. The aim of this work is according to Erica (Construction industry) to:

“Live your values every day”. (Erica, Construction industry)

The continuity as this quote suggests, is additionally brought up by the representative Karin (Car industry) who claims that:

“You could never be finished with your Employer Branding work”.

At the same time as the importance of hard work is highlighted by Employer Branding theory (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Backhaus, 2016) and the interviewees, businesses do not act in a vacuum by themselves. To us, the understanding of how the businesses act when constructing identities, and what possibilities they have to change their identity, could be elaborated by putting it in contrast to the organizational identity theory provided by

Hatch and Schultz (2002). To understand and formulate an identity as a business could be understood as something the case companies do because they are expected to do so by the reality, which they find themselves in. This line of reasoning derives from Hatch and Schultz (2002) who claim that an identity; “expresses cultural understandings” and “mirrors the images of others”. Consequently, the engagements in Employer Branding efforts can be understood as a response to what they are expected to do by more extensive forces, such as the industries or even society. The paper presented by Myers and Kamyab (2010) puts the spotlight on the generation *Millenials* and how they differ compared to previous generations. This could be argued to create pressure on businesses to act accordingly, and that the shape of the Employer Brand is affected from this environmental understanding. To this point, the understanding of how the environment could put pressure on businesses to act, still suggests that the businesses are in control and choose to act. But sometimes the environment changes in more radical terms, creating a more direct pressure for businesses to act.

The effect of Jolts on Employer Brands

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), the organisational identity is shaped by the insiders, the employees, and is a result of their interactions with both internal and external actors and influences. The Metoo-movement is in this study an example of an external influence, which affects the organisational identity. The Metoo-movement can be described as a jolt as defined by Woensel et al. (2016) since it was a movement that was difficult for organisations to foresee and can imply a risk for the organisational success in terms

of bad publicity. During the interviews it became clear that a jolt such as the Metoo-movement could put a spotlight on internal shortcoming with Employer Branding work. If there is any insecurity regarding what the firm stands for or how these matters should be handled, it will be difficult for the employees to align and communicate the desired organisational identity, both internally and externally.

During the interviews we brought up questions related to Metoo, since none of the interviewed representatives from the case companies brought up external influences without us asking them about it. The representatives commonly and consistently claimed that routines concerning these matters, and a fundamental understanding of the company values, are key to avoid harm to the Employer Brand. One respondent argued that a risk when an unexpected and potentially negative event takes place is that you as a company lose focus. She argues that it is important to keep in mind what the business’ core values are, what your core identity is, and make sure that the right identity of the company is communicated.

“You can’t panic just because you are facing a crisis then and there. [...] It is all about keeping your identity and ensure continuity by keeping that in mind.” (Eva, Banking industry)

The interviewees highlighted the importance to allow these types of external effects to actually affect you, not denying they happen, act on them and try to learn something from the experience.

“When these things happen we need to go back to what we stand for, rely on that, and as a next step see what we can learn” (Karin, Car industry)

“If something happens we bring it up on the table, we do not want to hide what has happened.” (Eva, Banking industry)

“We needed to act, firstly we communicated internally in text using our internal network. Then we arranged an information meeting where we informed where we stand, how we will act, and how employees can get help if something happens” (Carl, Technical consultancy industry).

“We had a very clear structure of how to work with this, but still things can occur and then the important thing is that you act directly. For example we recently had to dismiss a subcontractor who, on these grounds, behaved unacceptably towards one of our employees.” (Erica, Construction industry)

These statements indicate that management has an influence on the emergence of a shared attitude, and that a shared organisational attitude is desirable. Furthermore, it points to a need for department heads to align in their view of the effect of the jolt. This is in line with the research by Woensel et al. (2016) who argues that the most influential agent when it comes to the formation of a shared attitude is management.

The respondent Eva (Banking industry) argues that her experience is that to avoid harming the Employer Brand, the HR and communication departments must work together in order to align what the business

says they represent, and what is communicated. Furthermore, the management should according to Eva (Banking Industry), provide information to ensure that the employees are well informed. However, she also stresses the need for employees to take a responsibility to read and understand the information provided. Underlining the importance of aligned department heads follows the logic presented by Woensel et al. (2016). They claim that different departments in the organisation must work together if they are going to be successful in creating a shared organizational identity and not allow a jolt to harm the organisation.

The statements above could indicate that the introduction of a jolt to an organisation can put the spotlight on internal shortcoming in terms of communicating Employer Value Propositions. The organisational identity is affected by how it is understood by the environment it is a part of, which results in the business becoming a part of the environment itself (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). It is not rare that organizations claim that they are value driven today, it could even be argued to be customary and expected. Businesses consequently creates values, using different methods, which in turn are marketed towards existing and potential employees, as the concept of internal and external Employer Branding reflects (Backhaus, 2016). We argue that the introduction of a jolt can function as a ‘stress test’ for the organisational values. Ambiguity in what the company stands for could imply a delay in response to a jolt and thus it can harm the Employer Brand. A jolt such as the Metoo-movement can function as a test to how well the values

and guidelines stand, this is supported by Karin who claims that:

“I can almost feel that a movement like Metoo, could be seen as something positive, because it makes us able to bring up these questions, and become more transparent.” (Karin, Car industry).

So, in the changing and dynamic reality today, jolts and external influences could in some cases be considered a test to re-evaluate what you do on an everyday basis. Which in the next step can lead to an Employer Brand identity based on values which is true to both internal and external stakeholders (Aurand et al., 2005; Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Ugglå, 2018). Building on how dynamic the environment, surrounding the businesses are today, the concept of loyalty, and how it is referred to by the cases, was found interesting to dig deeper into.

A new perspective of Employer Brand Loyalty

As the theoretical framework suggests, in the previous Employer Branding theory Employer Brand Loyalty is described as an important component of Employer Branding. It is argued that an organisation is successful if the employees stay in the organisation for a longer period of time. This loyalty is desirable since it is argued that it fosters productivity and cost efficiency in the organisation (Tiko & Backhaus, 2004; Schlager et al., 2011). The interviewees were asked about how they view loyalty and what they thought about the fact that a generation such as the Millennials is likely to switch job more often than previous generations (Myers & Kamyab 2010; Serazio, 2015). Especially

two case companies discussed loyalty in relation to how long the employee stayed in the organisation.

“[...] I think you should think about your career here as a long term commitment.” (Carl, Technical consultancy industry)

“The culture is, once you start at X you never quit.” (Erica, Construction industry)

These statements resemble the previous theory about Employer Brand Loyalty. The logic of wanting employees to stay in the firm was understood by us, as a proof of the fact that the employees feel a strong connection to the firm. Similar to Hoppe (2018) who argues that organisational commitment is a tool to investigate an employee's belongingness to an organisation. On the other hand, one respondent, the director of global Employer Branding in the car industry (Karin), argued the opposite, that loyalty is not necessarily an advantage. As an employee, Karin claims that one should always ask oneself if you are right in the position you are in, loyalty can prevent this line of thinking among the employees. The respondent argues that a better way of putting it is engagement among employees. Thus as an organisation you should work to uphold the right level of engagement with the employees.

Hatch and Schultz (2002) argue that organisations sometimes act as they are expected to by the surroundings. As successful Employer Branding has often been described as resulting in long-term employment we believe that this has affected how businesses think about Employer Brand Loyalty. Thus, we argue that the reason the respondents start

discussing loyalty in terms of long-term employment when asked about Employer Brand Loyalty is because the surroundings has shaped them to think in those lines. The respondents were asked to elaborate on the concept of loyalty and a new interesting pattern emerged. From the different answers a new interpretation of the Employer Branding Loyalty concept surfaced. Several respondents talked about how they work with people who have left the company and returned later on. The following quotes are statements about former employees returning to their old place of work.

“It is perfectly fine to come back after you have quit, employee turnover is natural and even a good thing.” (Karin, Car industry)

“We have people returning to our company, and that is great, I mean we discussed making a movie about them, they are our best influencers!” (Carl, Technical consultancy industry)

“You should always be welcomed back, we work with a lifecycle perspective.” (Erica, Construction industry)

This line of thinking contradicts the Employer Branding theory arguing that organisations should hold on to their employees as the ultimate goal. Previous theory has described employment as something with a clear start and end (Hoppe, 2018; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Schlager et al., 2011). The insights from the interviews imply that there is a new way of discussing employment. Just because you leave a firm you do not have to detach yourself from it forever. To say that employees leaving an organisation are

disloyal can be considered unfair and a line of thinking that does not match the reality in which these firms find themselves in today.

Karin (car industry) who argued that employee turnover is natural and good for a company was asked to elaborate on her thoughts regarding this, and described how employment can be seen as a firm ‘loaning’ employees for a specific period of time.

“[...] you come in (to the company) and do your best for as long as you are here and we are grateful to loan you for these years.” (Karin, Car industry)

Instead of speaking of loyalty in terms of long-term employment, one could speak of loyalty towards the values of the organisation. One of the respondents, (Carl, Technical consultancy industry) talked about employees leaving the company because they were offered a higher salary elsewhere as disloyal. However, he continued by saying that if someone came to him and said they would change work to a company that work more actively and better with sustainability, it would be more accepted. The company in question has a strong sustainability profile and that is one of their core values. The respondent further argues that he would *“Almost encourage a change of work”* (Carl, technical consultancy industry) based on another company’s sustainability profile. Another respondent, Christina (retail industry) argues that loyalty towards the reason for why they exists as a company is a necessity if one is going to work there. This respondent highlighted the importance of loyalty towards the values of the company rather than a loyalty

in terms of staying in the company, similar to the respondent Carl (Technical consultancy industry). Karin (Car industry) criticised even using the term Employer Brand Loyalty and argued that engagement would be a better choice of word. Aurand et al. (2005) argue that engagement with the brand will allow the employees to make it come alive. However, the same authors state that this engagement will result in a long-term commitment from the employees by decreasing employee turnover, something (Karin, Car industry) does not argue is the ultimate goal, consequently approaching it in a different way.

Following the logic presented here, being loyal or engaged towards the Employer Brand identity, make employees brand ambassadors. What could be considered new in this study, compared to previous theory, is that the ambassadorship and loyalty was referred to as something you can be even after the employment is over. This is mirrored in the interviews where representatives from the case companies discuss the possibility, and even the positive aspects, of returning to the workplace. It made us reason about how it might be possible to argue that loyalty to a company's values, and thus an ambassadorship for the Employer Brand, is not tied to an employment. We argue that employees can form several Employer Brand relationships, which implies that individuals can have several, non-mutual, Employer Brand loyalties. Carl for instance highlights this in the technical consultancy industry that talked about how his company works with establishing a good Employer Brand with students, potential employees. His view is that his company can have a relation with the

potential employees even if the company in question does not employ them. This, in addition to the possibility for employees to return to the workplace after quitting, implies a greater need for companies to create engagement around their Employer Brand. Further, it also implies a possibility to create sustainable and long-term relations with employees and other individuals connected to the company, in different ways during different periods. The following quote provides an understanding for how relations with students, potential employees, were perceived by one of the businesses.

“Today a new relation begins between us, we will be with you during all these years and when you have graduated some of you will work with us and some of you will work at other companies we work with, either way, today we begin a relation” (Carl, Technical consultancy industry).

The respondent in question says this to new students on their first day at university, in order to build their Employer Brand.

Discussion

This article points to the fact that for businesses to be able to engage, and consequently build strong Employer Brands, they need to have a clear image of who they are. An Employer Brand needs to be authentic and there should ideally be no gap between the employer's perceptions of what the Employer Brand stands for, and what the current and potential employees consider to be the essence of the Employer Brand (Uggla, 2018; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to our case study, the ultimate goal with the Employer Branding efforts is

to create a sustainable and authentic Employer Brand with a clear identity. However, how the Employer Brand identity is developed and communicated, differs. One thing all investigated case companies claim though, is the need for everyone in the organisation to act according to the values of the company and be loyal to the Employer Brand values. This was regardless of industry, company, representative and common for these successful Employer Brands.

Our findings implicate that society, which is characterised by a fast moving information flow has a high influence on the Employer Brand and the Employer Branding efforts. All investigated businesses had experienced jolts, external events affecting their Employer Brands. To not let a jolt such as the Metoo-movement harm the Employer Brand, the values of the Employer Brand needs to be clear and prioritised by everyone. If this is fulfilled, the more practical aspects, in terms of direct actions, will be less painful to handle. Again, the importance of an authentic Employer Brand becomes evident.

As argued before, businesses interested in building an attractive Employer Brand needs to be aware of the changing reality in which they operate, as evident from the research on jolts on organisations (Woensel et al., 2016). Furthermore, this study has uncovered a pattern in the discussion around Employer Brand Loyalty, which may also need to be revisited as the employer context changes. Today, employees change jobs more frequently than before (Västsvenska Handelskammaren, 2017). In previous Employer Branding theory, changing from

one job to another is considered disloyal to the employer (Schlager et al., 2011). What we argue in this article is that employees do not necessarily need to be considered disloyal if they change jobs, rather that their loyalty is not demonstrated by staying in the organisation. From our research we argue that there is a need for a redefinition of Employer Brand Loyalty. We have found that a loyalty towards the Employer Brand values is more valuable than loyalty in terms of employee retention. We propose that in a changing reality employees can leave a firm, and still be loyal to the firm's values, perhaps even return one day. Furthermore, we argue that terminating the employment does not equal terminating the relationship with the employer. Instead of speaking about Employer Brand Loyalty we propose the terminology Employer Brand relationships. An employee can speak highly of an employer, thus building on their Employer Brand, and still be employed by another employer.

As a consequence, the employments an employee starts and ends during a career could rather be perceived as different relationships that continue to last even though the physical presence is changed. Previous theory highlights the costs associated with recruitment (Dabirian et al., 2017; Schalger et al., 2011), although this can be true, one may ask oneself monetary gains from former employees speaking highly of an employer has been considered? If a business is able to handle the employment, on- and off boarding in such a positive way that an employee continues to feel loyal towards the Employer Brand values, there are probably indirect profits to gain. Both in terms of Employer Branding efforts to potential

employees in private, as well as professional contexts, and additionally due to the possibility of an employee returning to the company. Employees returning would imply a lower cost in terms of onboarding and recruitment. If the reality and expectations of the future generations on the labour market is as described by Myers and Kamyab (2010) and Dabirian et al. (2010) it could be considered unnecessary and a waste of resources to try to get exclusive rights to employees. By focusing on achievable loyalty, loyalty towards values, businesses could be more successful and even increase the number of positive relations connected to the organization, resulting in a possible new perception of the word employment.

Conclusions and Implications

What is evident from this study is that Employer Branding is an on-going process that needs to be adapted to the environment in which the organisation operates. The article suggests theoretical implications in how to approach the concept of loyalty within the Employer Branding theory. In previous Employer Branding theory, loyalty has been evaluated based on the physical presence and exclusivity of the employee, this article implicate that this might have to be re-evaluated. How we consider employment might change in the future, this article points to the fact that as an employee you can have relationships with several employers, and yet be employed by only one at a time. Even though the physical presence might change, the employee can still feel attached to the company's values. Therefore, we argue that the concept of Employer Brand *Relations* should be introduced in the Employer Branding theory as a

complement to Employer Brand Loyalty. In addition to theoretical implications, the alternative way of understanding Employer Brand Loyalty can have practical implications for employers in their work with their Employer Brand. The implications will concern the recruitment process, the professional development process, and not to forget, the termination of employments.

Limitations and future research

To the best of our knowledge this article is the first one resulting in new insights regarding Employer Brand Loyalty. Therefore, we argue that further research in this area is important. This article has investigated Employer Brand Loyalty from a management perspective; therefore we suggest future research to investigate this from the employees' perspective. That kind of study could provide a new perspective and avoid managers' from having a potential hidden agenda, i.e. to reflect a positive picture of the company they work for. Thus, it could be interesting to investigate how the relationship between managers and employees look like at different firms. Is the Employer Brand perceived as the manager want? Do the employees feel part of the brand? These, and similar questions would have been interesting to investigate further, and could through a quantitative research provide a statistical generalisation which this study does not (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

We propose that the concept of employment is researched further, for instance how the new concept of Employer Brand Loyalty and our proposed term Employer Brand Relations can be used in agile organisations. As agile organisations

require that knowledge does not leave the organisation when a person does, it could benefit from new insights on employee loyalty. Furthermore, as businesses become increasingly internationalised, businesses find themselves active on many different markets. Building on this, the view on Employer Brand Loyalty could differ between the different markets, and thereby the concepts might need to be understood and referred to differently within the same organisation. To investigate this further is suggested for future research to understand how globalisation affects Employer Branding generally, and Employer Brand loyalty specifically.

References

- Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4, 185–206.
- Aurand, T., Gorchels, L., & Bishop, T. (2005). Human resource management's role in internal branding: An opportunity for cross-functional brand message synergy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 14(3), 163-169.
- Backhaus, K. (2016). Employer Branding Revisited. *Organization Management Journal*, 13(4), pp.193–201.
- Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S., (2004). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9(5), pp.501–517.
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2013). *Företagsekonomiska forskningsmetoder* (2.[rev.] uppl. ed.). Stockholm: Liber.
- Cook, I. & Crang, M. (2011). *Doing Ethnographies*, SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Dabirian, A, Kietzmann, J & Diba, H, 2017. A great place to work!?: Understanding crowdsourced employer branding. *Business Horizons*, 60(2), pp.197–205.
- Dell, D., Conference Board. (2001). *Engaging employees through your brand*. New York, NY: The Conference Board, Inc.
- Dyhre, A. & Parment, A. (2013). *Employer branding : allt du behöver veta för att bli en attraktiv arbetsgivare 1. uppl.*, Malmö Liber.
- Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A (2008). *Qualitative methods in business research*, Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Feinberg, F.M., Kinnear, T.C. & Taylor, J.R., (2008) *Modern marketing research : concepts, methods, and cases*, Mason, OH: Atomic Dog Pub Inc.
- Fill, C. (2013). *Marketing communications – Brands, Experiences, and participation*. (6 th ed.). P. 326-327.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. & Namey, E., (2012) *Applied Thematic Analysis*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Greyser, S.A. (2009) *Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management*. *Management decision* : MD, 47(4), pp.590–602.
- Hatch, M., & Schultz, M. (2002). The Dynamics of Organizational Identity. *Human Relations*, 55(8), 989-1018.

- Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M.S. (2000) Scaling the Tower of Babel: Relational differences between identity, image and culture in organizations. In M. Schultz, M.J. Hatch and M. Holten Larsen (Eds), *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation and the corporate brand*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hillebrand, B., Kok, R. & Biemans, W., (2001). Theory-testing using case studies - A comment on Johnston, Leach, and Liu. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(8), pp.651–657.
- Hoppe, D. (2018). Linking employer branding and internal branding: establishing perceived employer brand image as an antecedent of favourable employee brand attitudes and behaviours. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 27(4), pp.452–467.
- Maurya, K.K. & Agarwal, M. (2018) Organisational talent management and perceived employer branding. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 26(2), pp.312–330.
- Myers, K., & Sadaghiani, Kamyab. (2010). Millennials in the workplace : A communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225-238.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* 2. ed., Newbury Park, Calif. ; London: Sage.
- Sengupta, A., Bamel, U., & Singh, P. (2015). Value proposition framework: Implications for employer branding. *DECISION*, 42(3), 307-323.
- Serazio, M. (2015). Selling (Digital) Millennials. *Television & New Media*. 16(7), ss. 599–615.
- Schlager, T, Bodderas, M, Maas, P, Cachelin, JL, (2011) "The influence of the employer brand on employee attitudes relevant for service branding: an empirical investigation", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 25 Issue: 7, pp.497-508,
- Uggla, H., (2018) *Employer branding: utmaningar och tendenser* Första upplagan. Stockholm, Sanoma Utbildning AB
- Västsvenska Handelskammaren. (2017). Livskarriäristerna - om milleniegenerationen på arbetsplatsen. ss. 2-10
- Woensel, Gilder, Besselaar, & Groenewegen. (2017) Managerial influence on attitude formation in organizations: how to manage emergence. *Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory*, 23(4), pp.496–523.
- Yin, R.K. (2014) *Case study research : design and methods* 5. ed., London: SAGE.

Online Sources

- Deloitte. (2016). *Millennials byter gärna jobb - värderingar viktigare än pengar*. [online]<https://www2.deloitte.com/se/sv/footerlinks/pressreleasespage/deloitte-millennial-survey-2016.html> (Retrieved: 2019-03-20)

Nationalencyklopedin. (2019). *Metoo rörelsen*.
[online]
<http://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lång/me-too-rörelsen>
(Retrieved: 2019-04-02)

Svenska Dagbladet. (2018). Ett år med metoo. *Svenska Dagbladet*. 2018-10-12
[online] <https://www.svd.se/bakgrund-ett-ar-med-metoo>
(Retrieved: 2019-05-21)

Universum Global. (2018). *Sweden's Most Attractive Employers*.
[online]
<https://universumglobal.com/rankings/sweden/> (Retrieved: 2019-02-25)

Universum Global. (2018). *Vem påverkar Generation Z?*
[online]
<https://universumglobal.com/se/insights/vem-paverkar-generation-z/>
(Retrieved: 2019-03-22)

Appendix

Theme	Questions
Introduction, respondent's background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational background • How long have you been working at X? • Different positions within the company? • Main task? • How does your team look like?
Values of the company (EVP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you work with your corporate values? • How do you work with your employer values? → Difference? • The process to develop the values?
Internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are your employer values communicated to the employees? → How often? • How are the values established? • How often are they established? • Do you measure the success of this communication? → How? • Do you have a goal with this work?
Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you reason around loyalty in an employer branding perspective? • How is loyalty valued at your company? • How to work to ensure loyalty towards the employer brand? • New generation likely to change job more frequently, what do you think about that?
Internal VS external employer branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees have the same image of the company before and after employment? • How to ensure this? • Examples of how this is done?
External influences, jolts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the Metoo-movement affect your Employer branding work → Or other significant external event • How to handle employees not acting in line with company values/employer brand values • Are there limits to how you can act as an employee? → Examples • How should these events be handles, according to you?
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to add anything? • Which are the keys, according to you, to succeed with your Employer Brand?

Table 2: Interview guide

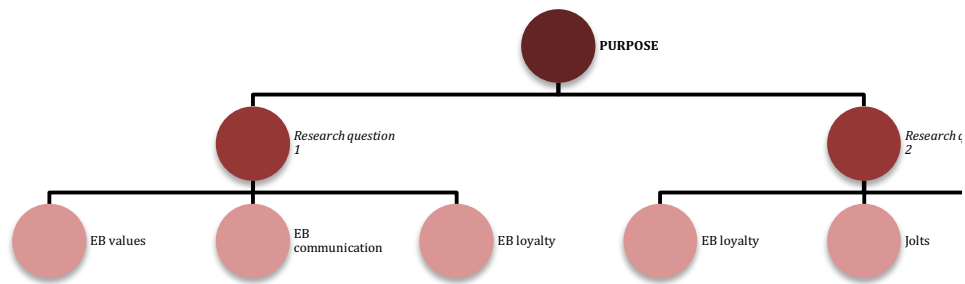


Figure 1: Thematic analysis

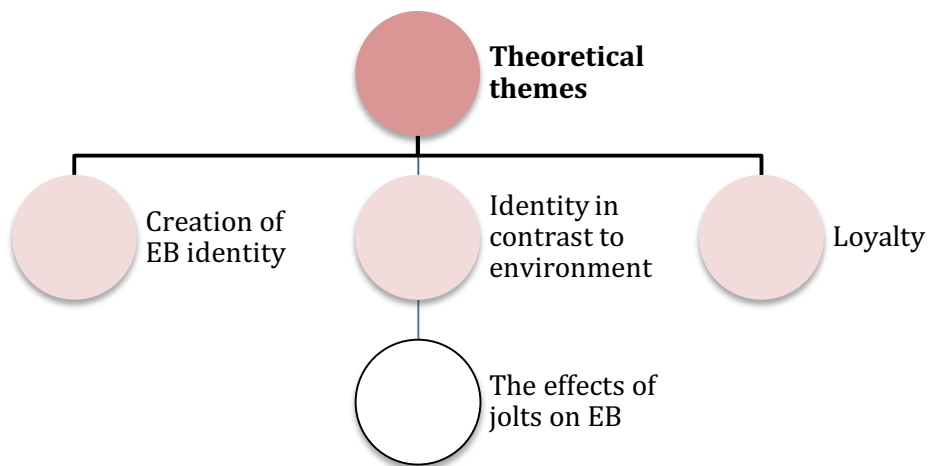


Figure 2: Code book

Theoretical theme	EVA Banking industry	SOFIA Recruitment industry	CARL Technical consultancy industry	CHRISTINA Retail industry	ERICA Construction industry	KARIN Car industry
Creation of EB identity	EVP connected to CVP EVP developed 2 years, input from whole org. Career fair Recruitment in online media Senior management responsible for communicating EVP Employees own responsibility to work with how to apply EVP in work Communicate company goals (wanted position) Internal labour market (tangible)	Management provides EVP Communication from the top down EVP and CVP same EVP developed external and internal EVP part of internal courses, introduction "[...] it is easy because we have a clear WHY" Complex, all over Sweden	Credibility Activities, big and small Semlor Sustainability training Lectures on food Recycling bins Bicycle service Management in charge of barbeque When consultant need activities to feel part of the office (ski trip for instance) Angered high-school	Synchronise management and stores Values connected to work, one value is wledgeable, hands you need to know goods Two themed meetings every year to work with the values Everyone take part in themed meetings We have many applicants for summer work, indicator that we have a strong EB During themed meetings employees discuss how they relate to the values Internal com. Network, inspire each other	For EB-work to actually work departments need to work together 2500 interviews, focus groups to develop values, crisis led to development of values Talk about values every meeting External com. Aligned with values Mentorship	The inside and the outside need to be connected Local individuals working in a market, activate the employer brand Employees part of the recruitment commercials Try to avoid titles to create a "We-feeling" One leg in HR and one in marketing Not divide external and internal com. Too much Authenticity, you can't be something you are not
Identity in contrast to environment	Fall back on EVP Do not conceal Management decide what is said to external parties, same message Use internal communication Employee responsibility to get information Prepared to discuss with private network No gap what we are/consider we are Keep focus even if crisis, continuity	External parties asked how they perceive the organisation Case as part of recruitment Introduction programme as in parallel with work Internal system for reporting issues	Our business role model for other businesses Influencers not serious for us First day at Chalmers Calculator with X's logo Internal communication platforms Had incident, e-mail to everyone, talk to him Obligation to report	Need to be a representative for the company and the values in personal context as well Jolt (not Metoo) work group responsible for both internal and external com. All information to all departments, be aligned, prepare for questions from customers in stores	Code of conduct, examples on meeting, clarify that not OK with examples Social media, lift employees, show the everyday life (management not control) Dare to talk about it Have ethical counsel, hotlines for support if happens One example, whistle after a woman, fired Welcome jolts, test the organisation	Need to go back to what we stand for Process to handle these kind of events Metoo almost positive because highlights these questions Dare to say that we have issues but we are working on it, open
Loyalty	"If you chose to leave the bank you still have a responsibility towards it" Ambassador even after the employment is terminated Personal network potential employees Internal labour market "You can't expect loyalty if you (the employer) do not reciprocate" "Encourage people to develop in the company) Provide development possibilities		"[...] your employment here should be long-term" Prefer change of work if due to better at sustainability People who return, our best influencers "Loyalty is important, I get disappointed when there is a lack of loyalty" Talk about work in a personal context, needs to be positive (ambassadorship) Internal work reflected in external efforts "Today a new relation begins between us..." Relation even if other company after graduation	To be employed you need to stand by our values and purpose Loyalty is believing in our values for us	Ambassadorship, a person of the company Discuss during meetings how you talk about the company in private context "The culture is, once you start at X, you never leave" "Need to have an understanding for both generations"	Everyone working in the company representative for the EB Prefer the term engagement Loyalty not necessarily positive to me Should question if you are the right person for the job and position Knowledge in the company, not in people "You come into the company and do your best, we are grateful for loaning you during these years" Allowed to return Quick on- and off-boarding process

Table 3: Applied thematic analysis