



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Master of Science in Management

Employer Branding – An ongoing Change and Translation

*A qualitative article of how consultants translate their ideas of Employer
Branding and act upon them in practice*

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Master's Degree Project
Graduate School

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse how an Employer Branding consultancy firm strategically works with identifying and implementing Employer Branding into other organisations. A case study was conducted using primarily 16 semi-structured interviews between Employer Branding Specialists, Senior Managers, and Partners, as well as document analysis, digital- and physical observations. Inspired by the Scandinavian Institutional- and Translation theory, together with research about consulting, the study discusses how ideas of Employer Branding translate into practices. The findings show how Employer Branding can practically be identified and implemented in another firm by following a certain structure. Initially Employer Branding project usually starts with the Employer Branding consultants establishing a relationship with their partners to gain their trust. Hence, the findings show that once trust is earned, the consultants focus on concretely defining and explaining Employer Branding as an abstract management fashion since it can be hard to fully understand. Thereafter, the Employer Brand consultants identify the purpose and values of the organisations (the EVP), to later on activating them by implementing activities, associations, and behaviours. Having gone through the above practices, the study highlights the importance of communicating the Employer Brand internally as well as externally. Lastly, the results indicate that the work with Employer Branding is an ongoing change and will continue to be highly relevant. This article has contributed to the research within Employer Branding, with an insight into how Employer Branding consultants translate ideas into practices and how they practically can work with identifying and implementing Employer Brands of other firms.

Keywords: *Employer Branding, Employer Branding Practices, Employer Value Proposition - EVP, Employer Branding Consulting, Translation*

Introduction

The continuous development of information technology has in recent decades developed faster and become more powerful than ever before (Bijker & Law, 1992). The digitalisation has thus put pressure on organisations to adapt to the rapid changes in IT and it has affected all businesses. In addition, it has reshaped the way organisations recruit, select, and develop their employees (Bijker & Law, 1992; Dawson 2003; Mihalcea, 2017). Consequently, the business environment has become highly competitive, hence having a strong Employer Brand is one way of creating competitive advantages against other companies (Mihalcea, 2017). Consequently, Employer Branding has been spread as a fashion management and the phenomenon has in recent years become a well-known buzzword (Mihalcea, 2017).

Employer Branding appeared as a phenomenon in 1996, coined by Simon Barrow & Tim Ambler (1996). It was initially defined, in terms of benefits, as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187). Further, Employer Branding can today be described as an extensive and valuable practice (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). The valuable practices mentioned as benefits by Amler & Barrow (1996), are in addition supported by Wilden et al. (2010). Wilden et al. (2010) further state that the knowledge of these benefits within every organisation will facilitate the creation of an attractive and competitive Employer Brand, as well as competitive advantages for the organisation (Wilden et al., 2010; Van Mossevelde, 2014). Pop (2008) extends the definition of an attractive Employer Brand as a combination of tangible and intangible factors, including the packages of employee benefits. Tangible factors in terms of organisational performance, cost reductions through retention and recruitment. Intangible factors in terms of a positive reputation, awareness, as well as brand ambassadors for the company promoting the company’s products and services (Pop, 2008; Mihalcea, 2017).

Prior to Employer Branding was introduced as a concept, companies mainly focused on value creation for customers, referred to as CVP (Customer Value Proposition), which over time eventually turned into EVP (Employer Value Proposition) (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). The EVP represents the internal face of working at a company while Employer Brand is the external face presented to the world and in order to develop a sustainable EVP, it is important for the company to know its employees, as well as the strategic direction of the business (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). Dyhre & Parment (2013) state that the EVP is the most important part of an Employer Brand and it should, therefore, be; clear, concrete, distinguishing, truthful, and contain a feeling. Further, Sengupta et al. (2015) discuss how an attractive EVP relates to satisfied employees. Additionally, according to Mihalcea (2017), Employer Branding has been seen as synonymous with employee engagement, which refers to how attached the employees are to the company, the internalisation of the organisational culture, and the relationship with their colleagues and the company. The employees are the most important brand ambassadors since they have a direct influence on the image of a company (Elving et al., 2012; Urbancová and Hudáková, 2017). Further, Sengupta et al. (2015) state how satisfied employees can become good Employer Brand ambassadors and have a positive impact on current and future talents willing to work for their company. Moreover, Sengupta et al. (2015) argue for the importance of establishing a strong corporate culture with strong corporate values in order to have high retention among their employees. A higher degree of employees aligning with the

organisation's values create an increased attractiveness and pride for the employees against the employer (Schein, 2010; Sengupta et al., 2015). Hence, the focus on Employer Branding has today moved from defining the concept of Employer Branding (Ambler & Barrow, 1996), to define how to create a successful and attractive Employer Brand (Dyhre & Parment, 2013; Sengupta et al., 2015).

Moving on, Urbancová & Hudáková (2017) describe Employer Branding as still being a relatively new concept. The majority of companies that have been working with their Employer Brand have done this inhouse by internal employees, usually, it is implemented top-down by the Human Resource department or other senior managers (Pietersis et al., 2005; Edwards, 2009; Chunping & Xi, 2011). However, little is known about how the concept of Employer Branding is being practiced by consultants and how it is implemented by externalities. One company working as consultants with identifying, implementing, and developing other companies Employer Brands is the Swedish company named Oddwork, established in 2012 (Oddwork, 2020). The company started as a recruitment firm that by their customers' demands, translated their practices and skills towards also working with Employer Branding. Their way of working has raised attention and their model, *Oddmodel of Employer Brand*, has been widely spoken of and published on sites such as Forbes (Forbes, 2018; Oddwork, 2020). Considering how the concepts have been spreading and translated to organisational practices in recent years, it becomes interesting to further investigate how Employer Branding will continue to change and translate. In addition, this becomes highly relevant since the current digital transformation offers candidates the opportunity to be more aware of what type of company they are applying to (Dawson 2003; Sengupta et al., 2015; Mihalcea, 2017). Hence, companies focusing on their Employer Brand has become of high importance in order to attract and maintain employees as well as maintaining a good reputation (Pop, 2008). However, as the concept of Employer Branding is still considered being relatively new (Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017), we argue that the empirical research on how Employer Branding practices implemented by external consultants is insufficient and scarce. Thus, this article aims to analyse how an Employer Branding consultancy firm strategically works with identifying and implementing Employer Branding in other organisations. Consequently, the research question of this article is:

- *How do consultants translate their ideas of Employer Branding and act upon them in practice?*

This article is structured as followed; firstly, we provide an overview of previous studies on Employer Branding. Secondly, we present the theoretical framework by discussing research that has been done on consulting followed by our main theory Scandinavian Institutionalism and Translation. Thirdly, the methodology of this article is introduced with a description of how we have conducted our study and the limitation of our study. We then present our empirical findings in chronological order and discuss the findings by support from the previous research and theoretical framework. Lastly, the key findings and implications are presented as well as our contribution to the field of Employer Branding research.

Previous studies of Employer Branding

Numerous studies have been done on how a well-established Employer Brand serves as a guide for setting the direction of the company's goals and vision, how the employees should act and behave, or as a guideline for them when making decisions (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Pietersis et al., 2005; Alvesson, 2009; Schein, 2010; Chunping & Xi, 2011). Studies have shown how almost all organisations have their own corporate culture (Schein, 2010) and that a strong corporate culture can be the result of strategically working with Employer Branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In fact, when the leaders are communicating, educating, and guiding their employees to act according to the values within the organisation, the corporate culture can be strengthened, regardless of the size or the industry they are operating in (Schein, 2010). Hence, an affinity can be created through the strengthened corporate culture, which in addition can lead to a strong meaning for the people operating in it (Schein, 2010).

For instance, the yearly and largest independent Employer Brand research made by Randstad (2019), including over two hundred thousand respondents across 32 countries around the world, shows that 96 % of all the participants agree that a company's culture must be aligned with their personal values in order for them to feel satisfied with their workplace and their employer. The study by Randstad (2019) further states that people work for the corporate cultures and not for the companies per se, which means that the way companies are perceived becomes of high importance. The corporate culture is further considered as one of the most important factors when choosing between employers, and one of the top cultural characteristics is the ones with an open corporate culture (Randstad, 2019). Thus, candidates who find positive reviews from both previous and current employees are more motivated and will more likely apply for a job at the company (Randstad, 2019). Additionally, the study by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) indicates that working strategically with Employer Branding and communicating it, both internally and externally, can lead to more productive employees.

Considering the still ongoing "war for talents" which refers to the competitive landscape for recruiting and retaining talented employees, Employer Branding becomes of high importance (Tanwar & Prasade, 2016). Further, studies have shown that companies' attractiveness is crucial since according to Hershatter & Epstein (2010) employees do not want to become identified only with their job, rather they want to identify themselves with their employer. This is also confirmed by Randstad (2019) where 80 % of the employers recognise the fact that a strong Employer Brand is of high importance when recruiting and retaining the right employees (Randstad, 2019). Studies have shown that previous and current employees spread either a positive or negative word-of-mouth and it is therefore important for companies to be aware of how they are taking care of their employees, the working conditions they offer, benefits, etc. (Woźniak, 2015; Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017). Further studies confirm that employees are seen as the most important ambassadors of an Employer's Brand (Elving et al., 2012; Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017). This since employees tend to speak about the company they work for, the services and products the company offer and are therefore most likely to either present their company as a suitable or non-suitable employer and hence affect the company's Employer Brand (Elving et al., 2012; Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017).

As previous studies have shown, the concept of Employer Branding, still being a new and exciting field (Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017), has in a short period of time affected a majority of the organisations and has the potential to further change the way companies operate.

Much of the previous research has focused on defining the concept, trying to understand the importance of Employer Branding and examining Employer Branding as a strategy for attracting and retaining talents (Ambler & Barrow, 1996); Dyhre & Parment, 2013; Sengupta et al., 2015). However, we found that there is a lack of research showing how external professional consultancy firms work with translating ideas of Employer Branding in other companies and into new practices. Considering Employer Branding as a rather new concept, simultaneously, the concept already being recognised and established as of high importance for the future of companies, it is important to look more into how Employer Branding is implemented by consultants. Additionally, it is important to investigate whether there are any best practices firms could make use of and what the benefits of hiring external Employer Brand professional consultants are.

Theoretical Framework

Consulting

Considering there is almost always an ongoing change when studying organisations, it becomes interesting to further understand how the concept of Employer Branding travels and how it is translated in practice. Research about consulting can be a way to understand how Employer Branding as a fashion management has been translated to practices of Employer Branding since consultants show, for example, how new management fashions are legitimised (Clark & Fincham, 2002). Consultancy is primarily used when a client wants to acquire specialist expertise that they do not possess or, for example, want to recruit that specific skill, and is simply described as a relationship between the client and consultant (Wood, 2002). Moreover, the relationship between the consultant and client is important if the consultant wants to be genuinely helpful. The results of the organisational changes the consultants help to implement are often related to the relationship between the consultancy firm and the client (Wood, 2002). Further, involvement and continuous support of senior management are of high importance when the consultants want to drive a culture of quality (Legge, 2002). Besides, it is important to delegate responsibilities to cross-functional middle-management teams. Consequently, these employees can get “empowered” to participate in the decision-making process and take ownership (Legge, 2002).

Furthermore, Clark & Fincham (2002) argue that consultants who possess the right rhetorical skills are able to legitimise strategies and knowledge claims, which can be of value when implementing an abstract concept as Employer Branding in another firm. Thus, consultants can have the impact to determine effectiveness and success. The scholars explain how rhetoric is a process of commodification of knowledge and can be seen as a persuasive power and convincing of a specific message. These narratives in management fashion are integral to the knowledge being spread. Clark & Fincham (2002) hence describe in their research of consultants how the consultants in one way legitimise their knowledge claims by using rhetorical strategies. In addition, they state how the key mechanisms of building legitimacy to the client are the consultants’ persuasive powers of fashion, the ideas and the methods they trade in. Additionally, Clark & Fincham (2002) explain how rhetoric works as a tool to convince others and can, therefore, be equivalent to a persuasive power possessed by the consultant. Moreover, Clark (2002) describes the two personality types who can create

legitimacy; the charismatic or the rational authority. These techniques can be a way for consultants to persuade business leaders.

Moreover, management fads and fashion, such as Employer Branding, is a way for managers to create reassurance in a volatile and uncertain society (Clark & Fincham, 2002). Poorani & Thiyagarajan (2018) state how consultants or external partners have the ability to bring knowledge and innovation into another organisation. If a consultant is adaptable and fast-moving to change, it will according to Poorani & Thiyagarajan (2018) also have a higher value in itself. In addition, narratives play an important role in the knowledge to be spread as a management fashion, and therefore an integral part of start to end in the process (Clark & Fincham, 2002). Legge (2002) further explains how knowledge (or truth) can be seen as credible “stories about the world” and hence a substantial part for consultants is to establish a “good story”, which may differ in terms of different times and audiences.

According to Legge (2002), to create a strong rhetoric or “good story”, consultants create and develop a package that involves the ongoing fashion and simultaneously anticipates the answers to the potential problem the client has. They achieve this by using techniques that connect claims to statements which the client already has faith in. For example, the primary step to convince a customer is to make them “want what you want”, thus, the consultants have to claim that their “package” will solve the customer’s problem.

Considering the society being uncertain, consultants’ role can be of importance since it becomes substantial for companies to see change as a strategy that creates efficiency, which means that in order to succeed companies have to see change as an obvious part (Bloomfield & Vurdubakis, 2002). During the last decades the world wide web and e-commerce have evolved, and it is therefore important to “ride the revolution”. New changes lead to new norms to follow since every company risks irrelevance if they cannot retain their business, people, and technology aligned with a dynamic strategy (Bloomfield & Vurdubakis, 2002). Clark & Fincham (2002) argue for that consultants who follow fashion can reduce uncertainty and therefore it is as a reason why fashion is followed. Another reason Clark & Fincham (2002) argue why it is followed, is that new fashions are integral for decreasing imitation, and new imitation hence is necessary for establishing social energy. Consultants can effectively explain for employees within one organisation what employees in other organisations are, or were, doing. This activity hence leads to the spread of fashion and consultants can provide interpretations of ideas, metaphors, models, and words that create order in an uncertain world (Clark & Fincham, 2002).

Scandinavian Institutionalism and Translation

In line with the discussion about consulting and management fashion, the Scandinavian Institutional theory can explain this further (Clark & Fincham, 2002). The Scandinavian Institutional theory focuses on how organisations are affected by other organisations and institutions in the society, which means that the institutions play an important role for organisational changes (Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). Thus, the theory has an interest in *how* institutions appear, changes and disappears rather than *why* they do so (Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). Moving on, changes have been studied since ages ago considering it is only through changes one can reveal if the changes have been successful or not (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). When studying organisations and changes, there is almost

always an ongoing change since the world goes through changes all the time, even though one might want to portrait a strong illusion of stability (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016)). Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) further explain that in order to understand how the organisations change and stabilise, one should study the processes within an organisation. The processes such as how identities are formed, how rules are established and broken, and how de- / institutionalisation are created (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996).

The Scandinavian Institutionalism becomes relevant when trying to understand how Employer Branding as fashion management has been translated to practices of Employer Brand consulting since Scandinavian Institutionalism further views organisational changes as a process where organisational ideas, concepts and fashion travels (Abrahamson, 2006; Røvik, 2016). Additionally, researchers argue that the receivers of these traveling ideas are active translators and not passive receivers and this argument comes from the many interpretations that the ideas and fashions trigger in every actor within a network (Brown; 2002; Latour 1987; Røvik, 2016). It is also through the translations that organisations imitate each other and become similar, and the translations take form by ideas being transformed in objects such as buzzwords, models, etc (Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). Once these translations have been done, the ideas start traveling and become activated by different actors within an organisation (Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). In fact, one condition for ideas and fashions to travel is when they are being materialised and adopted by an institution/organisation (Czarniawska, 2005). Therefore, when new ideas and fashions have been adopted, stabilised, and taken for granted, they have become institutionalised (Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016).

To understand the translation of practices and organisations further, Clegg et al. (2004) describe translation as an ongoing change that constantly loses and gains its meaning throughout the translation process. Thus, the process simultaneously combines differences and repetition and therefore can be seen as the driving force of business development and organisational change (Clegg et al., 2004). Further, Wæraas & Nielsen (2016) also focus on translation and explain translation as general management ideas, models and practices. Moreover, it is described as “the process in which ideas and models are adapted to local contexts as they travel across time and space’ (Lamb and Currie 2012, p. 219) or as when something changes due to it moves from one place to another and hence it gets recreated (Wæraas & Nielsen, 2016). According to Wæraas & Nielsen (2016), translation can be seen as a process that both leads to homogenisation and heterogenisation among organisations. This as a consequence of the ideas tend to get translated by circulation and are emerging and developing differently depending on the context. However, the concept of translation as a change process has an impact and can lead to change in both the adopting organisation and the spreading construct (Wæraas & Nielsen, 2016). One empirical study that has revealed how institutional fields become uniformed through isomorphic practices and at the same time shows how organisations undergo change is done by Skille (2011). Skille (2011) exerted this study of change in a Norwegian Organisation by also applying a perspective of translation. The results showed that changes done within this organisation's policy were based on the interplay between the influence of internal and external discussions (Skille, 2011). Furthermore, the study concluded that when the organisation was developing a model for the development of the actors, the best solution was found by mimicking ideas from other similar organisations (Skille, 2011).

Hence, Skille (2011) shows how the decision-making processes within the same institutional field are related to the translation of ideas in the field of similar organisations. Lastly, Skille (2011) stated that the ideas most likely to be translated are the ideas that were conceived as successful within the field.

Consequently, according to Sturdy (2004) ideas and fashions are adopted by managers for different reasons. One reason why managers with an institutional approach adopt ideas might be a response to the changes that have been imposed or a response to how they seek legitimacy (Sturdy 2004). Within the institutional theory, legitimacy is associated with social acceptance, and organisations are viewed as legitimate if their norms and values are in line with the expectations of the society (Khan et al., 2015). Khan et al. (2015) also argue that organisations with a high level of legitimacy tend to survive longer due to social acceptance. In addition, Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) argue that organisations which operate within the same field tend to introduce the same type of changes within their organisations, either imposed or from own ideas. By sharing and adopting similar practices these organisations, in turn, tend to become similar, which is a concept called isomorphism. Thus, according to the institutional theory, when organisations are becoming similar, they can also become legitimised (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). Furthermore, seeing this isomorphism from a consultant perspective, Clark & Fincham (2002) write about how professional norms are considered playing a critical role of organising practices in contemporary societies. However, Clark & Fincham (2002) state that imitations play a larger role than assumed since people only choose to imitate others when they do not know how to conduct the changes themselves.

Methodology

Choice of case company

We have selected to study the Swedish company Oddwork and use them as our case object. This since they have an interesting way of working with identifying, developing, and implementing Employer Branding in other firms, which is quite uncommon in earlier research. Therefore, we assumed that Oddwork would give us valuable insights on how this can be done in the practice. Oddwork is a small to medium-sized company that works with Employer Branding and recruitment, “designed from today’s talent market” (Oddwork, 2020). In addition, Oddwork was nominated and winner of *Di Gasell* 2017 and 2018 (Oddwork, 2020). *Di Gasell* is a prize for fostering entrepreneurship and growth and in order to get the title “Gasell” some requirements, such as, increased turnover each of the three latest years, organic growth, more than 10 million Swedish crowns in net revenue, need to be fulfilled (Di, 2020). Consequently, we identified Oddwork as a fast-moving and growing actor on the market, which could contribute to an exciting angle of the article.

Data collection

The methodology approach we have chosen to use is a qualitative approach. We have conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews by using an interview guide in order to answer our aim and research question (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The interview guide was structured in different themes such as recruiting, onboarding, Employer Branding and partnership, in order to help us follow a clear approach. According to Bryman and Bell (2013) semi-structured interviews allowed us to have follow-up questions to clarify the interviewees’ statements and to understand

their diffuse sayings, which is also why semi-structured interviews have been an advantage for us. Hence, we adapted follow-up questions to every question, such as “how”, “why”, etc, which helped us understand how Employer Branding can be understood in practice. The aim of doing interviews was to get a detailed view of how the case company works with translating their ideas of Employer Branding to practices and act upon them. Therefore, we considered this as the right method to use since the interviewees could freely open up and explain their thoughts. This was of great importance when we wanted to understand how this phenomenon works in practice.

We have held 13 interviews with employees on different levels and positions to get a holistic perspective of the organisation. However, all interviewees from Oddwork possessed a more senior role in their organisation. The interviewees were carefully chosen, and we considered that they all could provide us with valuable information about how this phenomenon can be done in practice based on their knowledge and senior roles. Moreover, we have interviewed 3 employees from one of Oddwork’s partners, this in order to be able to see if the statements from Oddwork’s employees are aligned with their partners’ statements. The 3 interviewees from the partner organisation were the ones responsible for the implementation of the Employer Brand project in their organisation and could, therefore, provide us with valuable insights as well. These total of 16 interviews were considered good enough to achieve theoretical saturation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). We presented the subject of the study to all the interviewees, although we were not specific and explained our research question in detail when conducting the interviews since this could have led to the interviewees not presenting their actual opinion. This as a consequence of their willingness to speak freely could have decreased if the research question was known when answering the interview questions (Silverman, 2013). All interviews held lasted for 30-60 minutes.

Further, the interviewees have got pseudonyms, this since we wanted them to feel comfortable with opening up and discuss their own opinions and hence promised them to be anonymous in the article. In addition, we wanted the reader to focus on what is said and not by whom, therefore, the role descriptions of the interviewees are general and not specific since we did not consider the specific roles important for the reader to focus on. All interviewees from Oddwork are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Overview of the interviewees from Oddwork

Pseudonym	Role description	Years at Oddwork
Carl	Recruiter	3
Sarah	Recruiter	2
Andrew	Communications Specialist	3
Robert	Employer Branding Specialist	8
Julian	Employer Branding Specialist	8
Oscar	Employer Branding Specialist	8
Harry	Senior Manager	0,5
Liam	Communications Specialist	2
Juliette	Senior Manager	3
Hannah	Senior Manager	4,5
Adam	Senior Manager	2
Martha	Senior Manager	3

In addition, we have conducted 15 hours of observation, gathered data from two episodes of different podcasts where two of Oddwork's founders have been interviewed. Besides, on-site observations have been done during a period of 5 months. Additionally, we have studied internal documents and models, such as their EVP and Oddmodel (*Oddmodel will be mentioned and presented further in the empirical section*). As we were conducting our data collections during the unexpected pandemic crisis of Covid-19, we had to conduct some of the interviews online through a system called Whereby. These interviews allowed us to change and add some specific questions connected to the ongoing crisis in our interview guide. Questions of how they had adapted to this new situation were asked, which gave us another interesting aspect to analyse about. One of the observations was also held through this system. During this observation, Oddwork held its first online internal workshop, where they focused on updating and activating their internal EVP. The online observation was done by us joining the digital workshop without our camera or sound being turned on, this in order to be as discreet as possible. We took notes separately and then documented our data together. The other observations were done at their office in Gothenburg during two different days. All observations were documented on a total of 7 pages.

Data analysis

The gathered and collected data have been coded and analysed using a grounded theory approach. This approach urged us as researchers to have an open mind when we analysed the data, meaning that the theory being used was grounded in the actual collected data (Martin & Turner, 1986). Thus, according to Martin & Turner (1986) this approach has worked as a helpful tool when writing our article since we could continuously develop the theory and simultaneously gather data from the interviews, observations, and other material. Consequently, we have recorded all our interviews and transcribed them after completion. Cook & Crang (2011) state it is relevant to record the interviews since the memory of us as researchers are not able to remember a full interview with precisely what and how something is said. Thereafter, we have according to Martin & Turner (1986) coded all the transcriptions in excel. This has helped us find interesting patterns and key facts to present in the empirical section. Coding the material was a helpful tool when answering our research question and analysing our data. By using this approach, it became easier to make sense of the transcribed interviews, thus, by putting the answers into different categories. Some of the themes we used during the coding process were categories such as "EVP identification", "EVP activation", "Internal Employer Branding", "External Employer Branding", "Partnerships" etc.

Furthermore, we have aimed to transcribe the recorded interviews as carefully as possible, hence we have had the possibility to use quotes from the interviewees. However, Silverman (2013) argues that one can be more flexible and decrease the intensity after time and some experience, which to some degree has been followed.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the article which need to be considered. According to Bryman & Bell (2013) qualitative studies can be hard to use for broader generalisations of larger populations. This statement by Bryman & Bell (2013) can be applicable for this article as the purpose is to answer how this *can* be done in practice based on one case and this study can

hence be seen as valid. However, it is therefore hard to draw any generalisations for how this can be done by other actors. Further, Kvale (2006) discusses the complexity of qualitative interviews and states that interviews “attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world”. Consequently, we are aware that our personal bias and interpretations can affect the results of the article. Moreover, there might be a risk that the interviewees have answered according to what they think is the “right answer”, instead of presenting their own opinion. Further, the answers can depend on the interviewee’s mood and whether they trusted us well enough to open up. Therefore, it is difficult for us to know if the respondents told the truth or not. According to Kvale (2006) this can be referred to as power asymmetry, hence, we tried to create an atmosphere where the interviewee felt comfortable with answering the questions according to their actual opinions. Another limitation is that the interviews were held in Swedish and hence translations of the quotes might not have been translated literally. Furthermore, observing a digital workshop and having digital interviews could also be considered as limitations since it becomes harder to observe what is going on in the digital rooms, compared to a physical room

Empirical Section

Background of the case company

Oddwork was founded in Gothenburg, 2012 by three students who found a gap in the recruitment industry (Personal Communication, 27 Feb 2020). The founders felt that the recruitment companies operating on the talent market did not consider matchmaking personalities with corporate cultures, rather they focused on matchmaking CVs with competencies. Consequently, Oddwork decided to start their business with the aim to be designed from today’s talent market and focus on target candidates, rather than other businesses. However, the founders felt they needed to stand out in the crowd and “be idiosyncratic among all big recruitment giants”, mainly due to the fact that the recruitment industry is highly competitive. Hence, they created their unique Employer Brand and corporate culture and started to communicate it externally through primarily social media. This in order to both attract candidates and other stakeholders such as new partners to collaborate with.

One day an Employer Brand Specialist from a big industry company based in Gothenburg contacted Oddwork since the industry company had identified them as a good example of an attractive Employer Brand. Hence, they wanted Oddwork’s help to improve their Employer Brand. This was the first job directly connected to Employer Branding Oddwork had. As a consequence of this and after helping several companies recruit talents for a few years, Oddwork realised how they often faced comments from their partners that they did not receive any or enough applications to their open positions. There and then an idea evolved from these partners who had problems with attracting new talents, and in 2015 Oddwork started helping other companies with building and activating their Employer Brand (Personal communication, 27 Feb 2020).

To systematically show their partners how an Employer Brand theoretically should emerge and how one structurally can work with their corporate culture, Oddwork created their model *Oddmodel* (see model below), which in 2018 was published in Forbes. This as an example of how companies can work with their Employer Brand in a structured way. Oddmodel consists of four parts: reason for being, cultural pillars, cultural activities, and communication.

“The reason for being” relates to “why you do what you do” (inspired by Simon Sinek’s famous Ted Talk *the Golden Circle*), thus, a reason for being is not related to money. The cultural pillars describe how one as an individual shall act in order to fulfil the reason for being. Once an organisation has discovered its reason for being and cultural pillars, it has the foundation of the company’s Employer Value Proposition (EVP). Further, the cultural activities are the actions one put through to achieve the cultural pillars, for example, if one of the pillars is kindness, an action can be to implement mandatory compliments to each other. Consequently, if a company does all these three steps, they will, according to Oddmodel, have a great corporate culture within the organisation. However, if this is not communicated inside or outside the organisation, current employees or targeted candidates will not be aware. Consequently, Oddmodel communicates the fourth step “communication” as an important step when attracting and retaining the right talents through communicating to the right target audience (Personal Communication, 27 Feb 2020).

Model 1: The Oddmodel of Employer Brand



How Oddworkers define Employer Branding

When respondents answered the question of what the definition of Employer Branding is, there was a general perception of Employer Branding as the way a company is perceived by its previous, current, and future employees. All the interviewees mentioned this perception in their answers and one of the Employer Branding Specialists, Robert, defined Employer Branding more specifically as followed:

It is about how a company is perceived by both its current- and future employees. But also, about the image people who have worked here before, and left, have of us and of working here. I believe that all that is within the framework of Employer Branding. - Robert, Employer Branding Specialist

However, Employer Branding is more than just the perception of the employer and the image of working there. According to one of the Communications Specialists at Oddwork, Liam, the

definition of Employer Branding also includes the activities that the employers exercise in order to fully practice their Employer Brand. Employer Branding is further described as the culture within a company that is expressed in terms of shared beliefs, vision and goals, together with practices that signify what a company stands for:

Employer Branding really is about who we are, it is about the people that work here, how we live here, and how we practice our Employer Brand inhouse and how we communicate it to everyone out there. It is about how we carry out our vision in practice and making sure that everyone is working towards the same goals. Actually, it is about the culture that we carry internally and externally. - Liam, Communications Specialist

Despite all the interviewees had a general perception of the definition of Employer Branding, the majority of them mentioned that Employer Branding is hard to understand in terms of its broad and abstract definition. Considering that Employer Branding is something abstract and not concrete, it can become hard to understand why working with Employer Branding is of any use for the companies, and even harder for the companies working with Employer Branding to sell their services. The Recruiter Carl mentioned that “the concept is still very unclear for many people”, whereupon the Senior Manager Juliette added to the fact that it took her almost one year after being employed at Oddwork to really understand what the concept actually all is about. She explained that Employer Branding is something that one can see, hear, feel, and experience when, for example, entering the walls of a company, or read about in a document. However, to understand what it means concretely is where it becomes challenging. In order to understand Employer Branding at the workplace, one has to understand and reflect upon the daily day. It includes reflecting upon how a day starts from the moment one enters the workplace, to what one goes through during the day, and when one leaves the workplace:

Employer Branding should be as concrete as possible. It is about everything that I have been through during the day until I leave the office at 5’o clock. That is how concrete it should be...It is so hard to understand Employer Branding but there is a reason why you are happy, or not happy, with working at your company. And usually, while figuring out what makes the employees happy or less happy, it ends up in these soft values that are the values of Employer Branding. - Juliette, Senior Manager

Employer Branding Partnerships

When an Employer Branding project is being initiated, a sales process has already been completed by Oddwork’s Account Managers. The sale process differs from partner to partner. In some cases, a company has taken contact with Oddwork since they admire Oddwork’s own work with their Employer Brand. In other cases, one of the Account Managers at Oddwork takes contact with a partner or a new company after careful prospecting. One of the Senior Managers explained that a common case can be that a partner complains over too few candidates, or candidates not reaching the requirements of skills when they aim to recruit for new positions. Therefore, the partners contact Oddwork primarily to get help with the

outsourcing of their recruitment processes. However, the Senior Manager Juliette stated this as a perfect situation to propose for the partner that Oddwork also can help them with building or developing their Employer Brand. She discussed that Oddwork's vision is to actually help their partners become independent, and by a well-established Employer Brand a partner can, later on use their own attractiveness to recruit new talents.

How to identify a partner's EVP

The process journey with Oddwork's Employer Branding projects can look slightly different since every partner needs different help and have problems with different stages of the Oddmodel. However, what all projects have in common is that Oddwork starts with identifying if they have an EVP, and if that EVP is something they can build further on. In addition, it is important that the EVP goes in line with what the organisation stands for, in terms of purpose and values.

All interviewees felt united when describing how an Employer Brand is being developed. It all starts with identifying the purpose of the company, a purpose that is not connected to profitability, rather a purpose that goes beyond money and has a deeper meaning. According to one Employer Branding Specialist, an example of such purpose can be "ideas worth spreading", which is the purpose of Ted Talks, or "Dare to dream, be the revolution" which is the purpose of Oddwork. Thus, according to Oddmodel, it all begins with the purpose, to thereafter move further to the values of the company. All the interviewees agreed upon that the values are something that plays an incredibly important role within an organisation since the employees need to have a belief in them, in order to thrive at their workplace. Otherwise, if the employees do not have a belief in the values, the interviewees argued that it will be harder for them to be motivated and the productivity can hence decrease. In line with this, the Employer Brand Specialist Julian mentioned that they focus much on their partners' purposes, which he stated is a way for companies to retain their talents. Further, the Employer Brand Specialist Julian explained it like this:

Talents search for a company with a good external Employer Brand, however, if the company will not fulfil the expectations of the talents and not offer the organisational culture they have promised, these talents will resign after 6 months and that is extremely costly for the company, both in terms of money and resources.

- Julian, Employer Branding Specialist

To identify the purpose and values of a company Oddwork use workshops as a tool. The workshops start with that one of the Employer Branding Specialists introduce Employer Branding to all the participants and talking them through the purpose and importance of working with its Employer Brand. It is important to make sure that everyone in the room are aware of why they will be working with their Employer Brand and why it is important for them to participate during the workshops. The next step is the part where participants share *Pride Stories* with one another as a way to identify the organisation's purpose and core values. The pride stories can be described as moments of when the employees have felt the proudest of their workplace, or role, during their time they have been employed in the organisation. The Senior

Manager Martha explained the importance of telling a story and why Oddwork uses it as a tool in their workshops:

We human beings, we respond to feelings or stories...a story is what people will remember, they do not remember fact, however, when you tell a story connected to something it will stay in our mind in a remarkable way. - Martha, Senior Manager

The format of the workshop with pride stories goes like this; firstly, the participants of the workshop are divided into small groups. Secondly, everyone in the group gets time to write down when they have felt the proudest or a moment when they have felt appreciation for belonging to the organisation. These stories are then presented to everyone in the small groups. Thirdly, the group choose one of the stories that they want to represent the group, and lastly, that story is presented to all participants in the workshop. Andrew, a Communications Specialist at Oddwork says “It is very high and low; it is very individual of what consists in a pride story and that story exists in everyone”. Another employee described how Oddwork gathers empirical material from both the presented and not presented pride stories to thereafter see which red threads that exist and can be seen at the specific company. Consequently, with this data, Oddwork works with creating a purpose and/or values that fit the organisation. Hence, Oddwork digs deep in these words, values, and stories in order to understand the meaning behind. Hence, they can help with creating a purpose and/or values that the employees actually can relate to, and not a purpose or values that only the executive management team have decided, and think is good. As a result, an interviewee described how this can lead to that the employees hopefully feel an ownership of the organisation’s purpose and values.

All the interviewees seemed to promote the importance of involving employees when identifying these purposes and values within an organisation. Preferably, everyone within the organisation should participate during the workshop when identifying its purpose and values. However, some interviewees stated that it can be hard to achieve since especially if it is a larger company with more than 100 employees, it is rare to have the ability to involve the whole organisation. In these cases, one interviewee suggested that it is important to have a cross-function of the employees that will participate in the workshops. Thus, there will be representatives for all different departments and roles in relation to the size of it. Hence, this cross-function of employees then can create a project group:

In a utopian world, everyone in the organisation is participating during the workshops since we want to see what everyone thinks and feel, however that is basically as impractical as having all citizens in Sweden participating in all decisions. Therefore, we vote for people that we give the mandate to speak for us.
- Robert, Employer Branding Specialist

One of the Employer Brand Specialists at Oddwork promoted the importance of choosing employees who actually want to be a part of the project group and actively work with their company’s Employer Brand. Thus, in larger organisations it is common the one responsible for the implementation of the Employer Brand, investigates which individuals that have a genuine interest of being a part of the project by sending out an email to the whole organisation. In

addition, the Employer Branding Specialist Robert explained how the board, or the executive management team are not the ones who can help with identifying the purpose and values. Rather, he said it is something that comes from bottom-up. Oddwork has usually a dialogue with their partners about this or provide them with a recommendation of how many and which people to include in a project team.

How to activate a partner's EVP

All of the interviewees described Oddwork as an activating partner, which means that the main purpose of the partnerships with their customers is to actually “activate” their partners' EVP. Hence, the purpose is to help their partners with both identifying, developing, and implementing the Employer Brand.

Some interviewees explained that when Oddwork has identified a partner's EVP, or in some cases when the partner already has a well-established EVP, the Oddworkers move further to identify if they exercise any activities, or if they have any associations and behaviours related to their EVP. The interviewees explained how they investigate if the partner embraces the purpose and values connected to the EVP. The Recruiter Carl explained it as “Basically, mapping out; What activities do we actually do today? We try to map out activities, behaviours, and associations.” This is one of the steps in Oddmodel, and by the interviewees and further on in this study referred to as “Activities, Associations, and Behaviours”. Thus, Oddwork first create a package of the partner's EVP, and then the implementation is all about activating the EVP with these connected activities, associations, and behaviours. The Employer Branding Specialist Robert explained how the values in themselves are not enough, it is important to fill the EVP with these aligned activities, associations, and behaviours. One way to make this happen in reality is to delegate responsibilities or ownership of certain actions to be made by different Employer Branding representatives within the organisation. For example, the interviewed partner to Oddwork implemented “Popcorn Fridays” as an activity connected to their value “welcoming”. Another example was how they got more generous with giving out hugs, this as a behaviour Oddwork helped them implement to fulfil their value “encourage”. These examples help employees in the organisation, or future employees of the organisation to associate the partner with their EVP, and hence the EVP is exercised. One can draw a connection to pillars of values that are fulfilled by a platform with activities, associations, and behaviours. “We are very skilled with the activation and to create something from zero by giving the tools to the organisations themselves to continuously work with.” – Liam, Communications Specialist.

To make sure the organisation's Employer Brand lives on and to establish a sense of momentum among the employees, Oddwork has recently started a new project they call *Employer Brand Ambassadors' Program*. The Senior Manager Juliette promoted the importance of having dedicated employees if a company wants to succeed in the transformation and hence become a successful Employer Brand.

The ambassadors we want to reach are the ones with a driving spirit, who does not care if they get extra paid, or work overtime. Instead, these employees take ownership and look after that the values are activated, and that their colleagues also comply with them. Hence, the values can get stronger as a consequence of many

but small actions and activities, made by an increasing number of employees...Because if you are a role model, some people will imitate that behaviour and some other will then imitate them and well suddenly the whole organisation works with it, without even noticing. - Juliette, Senior Manager

The Employer Brand Ambassadors' Program will help the organisations “fly with their own wings” - Julian, Employer Branding Specialist. Hence, by establishing this program, Oddwork's aim is to help their partners to structurally and systematically carry through the transformation of their Employer Brands', without holding hand with Oddwork. The Employer Branding Specialist Julian explained how Oddwork will try to implement this program in order to help their partners become more independent. Thus, they can drive a structured culture work on their own with these engaged ambassadors who will get further education in the meaning and benefits of Employer Branding. They also get a systematic document with the company's EVP and all activities, associations, and behaviours connected to the values, which can help them to drive this Employer Branding change forward without help from Oddwork. Consequently, this helps the ambassadors to take ownership of the company's Employer Brand and hence become real Employer Brand Ambassadors. Usually, the ambassadors are dividing the ownership of the activities, associations, and behaviours among them. Having ownership does not mean that the ambassador will be the one arranging the weekly Monday breakfast, rather he or she will be responsible for delegating that task to another employee (who might or might not be an Employer Brand Ambassador within the company). The Employer Brand Specialist Julian promoted this idea since he together with Oddwork has a belief that the world will be a better place if companies could handle this on their own, and hence he says it will facilitate that candidates easier will be matched with the right company. This without any intermediary recruiter since the companies in themselves will have the right attractiveness ability.

The implementation process from a partner's view

One of Oddwork's partners were interviewed in order to fully understand the identification and implementation process from another perspective. The interviewees from the partner organisation explained how they took contact with Oddwork since they admired their work with Employer Branding. The interviewees had heard one of the founder's lecture about Employer Branding and they all described how this person was inspiring. However, the interviewed partner admitted that when they brought up the idea of investing in their Employer Brand, all of the board members were not convinced that they should proceed with the project. The partner informed Oddwork about their situation and they decided to invite all of the board members into a meeting with one of Oddwork's Employer Branding Specialist to talk more about why this project is a good investment. The turning point of whether to invest in the project or not, was after this meeting had been held since the partner perceived the Employer Branding Specialist as charismatic, energetic, and inspiring. Further, according to the partner, this person knew how to argue pro Employer Branding and how to convince others with his expertise and personality.

In line with what is described above with identification and implementation, Oddwork started with a workshop where the partner organisation gathered a cross-section of people in

the organisation. They started with lecturing about the benefits and importance of building a strong Employer Brand and this moved further to divide the participants into small groups. In the small groups, everyone got the opportunity to write down and tell their “pride story” and together they chose the best ones to be presented in the big group. Oddwork’s Communications Specialists also participated in the workshop and took “comprehensive notes” and gathered everyone’s note with their specific pride story. The interviewees described the presentations of the chosen pride stories as “a beautiful moment” where they felt belonging to the organisation. After the workshop was conducted, Oddwork created a new purpose and values for them. This was later activated in another workshop together with Oddwork, where they in small groups got the mission to come up with concrete different activities, associations, and behaviours connected to each value. The interviewees from the partner organisation described how they were impressed by Oddwork’s work, however, they mentioned that after a while the activities and behaviours were not performed in such a high degree as they had wished for and blamed themselves for this. All in all, they appreciated the Employer Brand project and believed that people outside the organisation have got a better perception of their organisation after the “rebranding” and thought of it as a good investment.

How Oddwork tailor and work with their different partners

A common view amongst interviewees at Oddwork was that there were no remarkable differences in the implementation and partnership with companies, in terms of their different sizes or if they were operating in different industries. However, the majority of them rather discussed the fact that all partners are different, and hence all cases are tailored to that specific partner. Further, they also mentioned that Oddmodel’s principles always can be used and fits all organisations even though every step looks different for every partner. “Well, basically it is the same things that need to be done, however, it is the strategy to achieve the goals which make a difference” - Oscar, Employer Branding Specialist. Moreover, one concrete difference of small versus big organisations mentioned by the interviewees, is the size of the workshop, and if all employees have the ability to participate or not. Larger organisations require, from Oddwork’s perspective, more human capital from their own organisation during the held workshops since they involve more people and hence can be harder to moderate. In addition, it is usually hard to gather all employees in a workshop in larger organisations and therefore this cross-function of employees is made. Another mentioned difference by one interviewee is how the larger organisations often have more money to spend on these projects and due to their size and complexity, it can be easier to get help from an external company like Oddwork. One interviewee stated that a difference that reflects on if the project will succeed, is whether the responsible person of the Employer Branding project has faith in their work and influence in its organisation to get other employees on board and inspired. The Senior Manager Juliette agreed upon this and mentioned that when their partners have reached momentum, is when a powerful individual within the organisation has been the one promoting and driving the Employer Branding project forward. With a powerful individual she means, for example, the CEO of the company, or an HR Director with major influence.

Practice what you preach

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that in Oddwork's organisation they have several different activities, associations, and behaviours they do and live after. An example is how they always welcome each other with warmth and getting hugs at the office are not rare. Moreover, they stated they always take off their shoes when they come in at the office and that includes everyone that visits their office as well. By observation, one could see how all the shoes stood neatly in a row and one felt embraced by the warm corporate culture. Their different group rooms were decorated according to different themes, for example, *Jungle*, *Space* and *Neverland*, and in the bathrooms, one met quotes like “Wow, you look amazing” and “You got this”. The interviewees explained how this makes them act according to their purpose and values and the Employer Branding Specialist Robert stated that their culture is something they “live, breathe and spread outside their walls every single day”. All these examples of activities, associations, and behaviours are ways to activate their EVP. Consequently, they promote to their partners the importance for the whole organisation to feel an ownership and not only for the executive management team since when the EVP is “lived out” it automatically gets activated. The interviewees described how it is substantial to always practice what you preach, this in order to promote to their partners how it is a never-ending project and to set a clear example of how themselves work with it. In addition, one interviewee stated that this is the reason why they get all the Employer Branding partnerships and hence it can be easier to sell these projects.

How to communicate an Employer Brand - Internally and Externally

The interviewees seemed to agree upon that both internal and external communications are of great importance. They described how it is a way to communicate their culture, besides, a way to elevate the employees and to tell about exciting projects. A specific case for Oddwork is how they tell about their extreme athletes, who they sponsor as a way of activating their values. The sponsoring of the extreme athletes is Oddwork's way to promote their purpose “dare to dream” and a way to activate their values such as “grit” and “energy”. In line with always practicing what you preach the interviewees explained how their external communication about their Employer Brand can inspire other companies to do the same or to get companies to contact them about entering a partnership with them.

One interviewee described how communications include all ways one can research the company. “In my perspective communications is what we are doing in social media and what we are doing every day, how we say hi to each other, it is non-prestigious, we take off our shoes” – Andrew, Communications Specialist. The Employer Branding Specialist Robert explained how communication is a way to have control over its Employer Brand and one should not underestimate the power of social media. Therefore, one should communicate its Employer Brand against relevant target groups, thus, this includes future employees and other people, customers and stakeholders a company wants to target. The Recruiter Carl agreed with Robert and described how the work with communication plays an important role in the definition of what target groups to reach and how to reach them. By doing this he explained how it is easier that employees search for the right job or get hired on the right conditions and with the right expectations:

In the best of worlds, the internal and external communications are aligned, thus, what we communicate externally is also what people say internally. Hence, we do not say that xxx is an amazing workplace when people actually not agree on that. Therefore, these two need to be aligned in order to be a good Employer Brand - Robert, Senior Manager

Some interviewees explained how they often help their partners to communicate their Employer Brand after activating it, often in terms of social media advertisements or engagement. When they help with communications, they start by trying to get to know the employees working in the organisation. This by digging deeper into what fun and interesting activities they do within the organisation, and by trying to find employees behind prominent projects or programs. Consequently, they gather content with which they can communicate their partner's Employer Brand externally. The pride stories are a recurrent tool they use and are a common way to create interesting content in for example social media. Furthermore, internal communication is especially of great importance in larger organisations. The Senior Manager Hannah described how they sometimes use the intranets to spread the word about, for instance, how the purpose has evolved during Oddwork's creation of the partner's EVP. She explained how this later on can be used for everything from an onboarding tool, to digital education, or a lecture where the Employer Brand project will be presented. This with the purpose to educate and inform new and current employees about the company's EVP and how it was created by the ones participating in the workshops. One of the Employer Brand Specialists described that if all employees are well aware of the purpose and values of the company, and further the story behind how they evolved, it will be easier to actually live up to them and act accordingly.

What constitutes success for the Oddworkers in an Employer Brand project?

The interviewees have somehow different interpretations of what constitutes success when they have implemented an Employer Brand for a partner, however, they feel somewhat united in some main factors that it is all about establishing a sense of success. One interviewee mentioned that success can be when the partner reaches a larger audience in social media, another interviewee mentioned success as when the customer over time receive a much larger number of applications, and another interviewee felt success is when the partner is pleased and comes back to them for a new, or another service. The Employer Branding Specialist Robert said, "when we have succeeded is when one actually can see that people feel belongingness to their workplace" and this is a statement the majority of the interviewees agreed upon. However, they all agreed upon that the work with an Employer Brand will never end and it is something organisations constantly need to process and develop. Further, a successful Employer Brand is described as intangible, and in line with Robert's statement, it is in a high degree a feeling one has if the Employer Brand is attractive or not.

An example of a successful partner case that the Oddworkers promoted was with an international financial company. This company had chosen to follow the full Oddmodel and also establish the Employer Brand Ambassadors Program. The employees in the financial company have shown an incredible amount of appreciation to Oddwork since the first workshop with the pride stories. This workshop was described for many of the employees as a turning point and the workshop made them feel pride of and belongingness to their organisation. This

since many of the employees realised, they had more in common with their colleagues than they thought. Therefore, the climate and culture in the company had become remarkable better after the first pride story workshop, which established a sense of success among the Employer Branding consultants at Oddwork.

Future View of Employer Branding

All interviewees at Oddwork believed that Employer Branding will become something that almost every organisation will be working more actively with, and the Recruiter Sarah highlighted the fact that Employer Branding is not just a Management Fashion, and therefore it will never disappear as a trend. “Maybe the name Employer Branding in itself is fashionable and has become a buzzword which might change, but the work will still exist, we will just be calling the work of Employer Branding something else.” She explained there has always been a perception of how it is, or have been, to work at a company and those perceptions will always exist regardless of if it is a one-person business or a multinational billion-dollar company with thousands of employees. As long as these perceptions are existing, the work of Employer Branding will be current and ongoing.

Turning to what successful Employer Brands will be characterised by in the future, the majority of the respondents mentioned the importance of companies being authentic, transparent, and honest as the key factors. In line with the digitalisation transformation, information has become more accessible. An example by Oddwork’s employees that were used to illustrate how future companies will be rated based on their Employer Brand, is close to how we see hotels or restaurants being rated through websites such as TripAdvisor today. Employees, both current and previous, will be able to review their employer, and future employees will be able to read those reviews. Based on that, and other available information as websites and social media, job seekers can decide if they want to work for the company. Indeed, as one of the Senior Managers explained, if there is a downturn in the economy then there might not be that many jobs to choose from, and the job seeker might not be able to choose as they please. However, this means that the employees working there are only doing it for the monetary reason and not because they believe in the companies’ values, or since they want to be a part of it as such, which in the long run will be inefficient:

If you have a person working for you without loving their job or even liking it, then they might just be there for a short-term period, thinking about themselves and move on as soon as there is another possibility. If you instead gather a group and you invest in that team, and really invest in the company, then you also want to have people who really care about the company, you want people who can represent the company and then, questions about Employer Branding become relevant in order to create an efficient team. - Harry, Senior Manager

When talking about being more authentic, transparent, and honest it includes companies daring to show both good and bad sides. It is about showing what is really going on in the company, as transparent as possible. One of the Communication Specialists, Andrew, mentioned that Employer Branding will be all about daring. Companies daring to expose themselves and not being afraid of showing their true colour. He explained how he sees a future where companies

will be able to stream their daily days online, where candidates will be given the possibility to look into how a firm is doing on good *and* bad days. Additionally, the employees at Oddwork are seeing that the demand for longer partnerships with their partners is increasing. Partners that have seen the benefits of Employer Branding and of having a consultancy firm with a specialist by their side, helping them through their challenges, are not ready to let go of Oddwork. In fact, they are entering long term relationships as a strong belief of Employer Branding becoming a “must-have” within every company, and a topic being discussed at the table of every board of directors. As the Senior Manager Harry expressed it, “Working with Employer Branding today serves the companies competitive advantages, it gives you an edge. However, if we jump 10 years forward, not working with Employer Branding will become a fear of missing out.” He then continued by stating that working with Employer Branding in the future will be “a standard thing”. He stated what we are seeing now is still the early adopters moving towards Employer Branding becoming more of a commodity. The Senior Manager Harry then also added that there is not much that can change the future of Employer Branding becoming standardised, one cannot escape the fact that there will be a change of generations to the ones seeking after authenticity, transparency and honesty.

Another future scenario brought up by the majority of the respondents was that in smaller firms, the Human Resource and Marketing departments will be merging in the future and working more closely together. However, the Senior Manager Juliette is sure of that bigger companies will form new Employer Branding departments, with Employer Branding Managers. She highlighted the fact that 10 years ago, it was almost impossible to try and predict where we would be today. In contrast, with all the information available today, we can easily see the future.

How to adapt to an unexpected challenge

At this moment of writing, spring 2020, the whole world is facing challenges related to the worldwide pandemic-crisis, caused by the virus Covid-19. One of the interviewees mentioned how Swedish unemployment has escalated even faster compared with the financial crisis in Sweden 2009 and that one of the effects has been thousands of employees losing their jobs. As the Senior Manager Adam further explained, most of the Oddworkers are working remotely during this time. It is obvious that this crisis has had an impact on the way Oddwork work. From being used to work with digital tools as a way of facilitating their business, to now being totally dependent on the digital tools in order to maintain their business. It has also affected Oddwork’s internal Employer Brand, their daily activities, and behaviours. Everyone at Oddwork is used to warm greetings with hugs and smiles when they enter their office, whereas now, they have to exchange those physical activities into digital ones. As the Senior Manager Adam explained it, “We meet online now instead, we start the day at the digital headquarter room to say “Hi”, to catch up, to boost each other and just trying to spread good energy in order to keep up during the day”.

The interviewees explained how it is important to be able to quickly adapt to changes in order to survive. As soon as Covid-19 was recognised as a pandemic crisis and Oddwork realised that this was going to affect their business they took action on trying to prepare for the worst-case scenarios. As one of the Employer Brand Specialists explained, “...okay, there is a worst-case scenario where everyone will be forced to work from home every day. We might

just start training with working from home.” Oddwork sent their employees to work from home the next day to try working from home before the situation got worse. During this day, they also had their internal Employer Branding activation workshop scheduled. Since the workshop now was not able to be held in physical form, Oddwork chose to try out the workshop online. “Welcome to one of Sweden's first Digital Employer Brand workshop online” - Julian, Employer Branding Specialist. Before the workshop took place, the participants were served with instructions online such as how to use the online platform, and how the workshop was going to be structured. They were also divided into different groups before starting the workshop, in order to minimise unnecessary misunderstandings and to be more efficient. They started by shortly explaining what Employer Branding is and how they work with it, this in order for everyone to have the same pre-understandings, and also since there were some new employees who had not attended an activation workshop before. The structure of the online activation workshop was similar to the physical ones where they all met in one digital room, instead of a physical one. When they were holding discussions in the smaller groups, they entered separate digital rooms in order to have viable discussions. Further, they shared pride stories in the same way as they do when they have a physical workshop. The purpose of this was to see if the current EVP still was relatable and if there was a need for any changes or an updated EVP. However, the digital workshop was more time consuming than expected and they did not manage to complete the workshop as planned during the scheduled time. Despite that, all the participants were satisfied with the overall results of the digital workshop. There are also risks going online with workshops, except the digital challenges, convincing people through a screen is much harder since there are difficulties in making everyone in the “digital rooms” comfortable to open up and dare to talk. Further, the interviewee added the fact that it becomes easier for participants to hide behind the screens, and therefore, a physical workshop is preferred. It is also easier to handle opponents of Employer Branding in a physical room. Another Senior Manager, Adam, also highlighted the time-issues of a digital workshop. It takes much more time and it also requires more resources in order to create a good working digital workshop with a suitable structure.

Companies are becoming more used to work with digital tools during the crisis since they in one or another way, as explained by one of the Senior Managers, “are now forced to go digital”. The interviewees believed that this will have a good impact on the future of Oddwork, also since it will be easier to introduce digital services and workshops to the partners as well. Further, the Senior Manager Adam explained how some of the customers’ needs have changed during this time of pandemic crisis, and how Oddwork has adapted to those needs in order to still be able to help the partners and to keep their business running:

We saw very early that the need for a digital meeting will increase within 1-2 weeks. We have been using digital meetings before, so how can we now use our skills to help others and our customers? With our rapid product development team, we were now able to help our customers quite immediately. We act very fast; our founders have always been like this and this is our strength. And we also do this in an efficient way and we always strive to create value for our customers because if it does not create any value then we do not want to sell it. We adapt to the need at the moment,

we are willing to learn, and we dare to try which is the essence in this. - Adam,
Senior Manager

However, since the outbreak of the crisis, it is obvious that things have changed in many other ways. There has been a significant decrease in Employer Branding related business and the reason for that is explained by one of the Senior Managers as:

Precisely because it feels like there is a certain uncertainty in almost every company in Sweden. Many of the customers that we have been in contact with have mentioned that they want to start or continue working with their Employer Brand, however, almost everyone says that they want to wait and see what happens. -
Martha, Senior Manager

Despite the uncertainties, there have been a few companies that have contacted Oddwork and chosen to work even more with their Employer Brand in times of the crisis. As explained by one of the Senior Managers, some of the partners see this as the right time to do it now, while they still have the opportunity to act. They are aware of the importance of Employer Branding and feel like if they won't invest money in other things during times like this, then Employer Branding is perfect to invest in. "So, I would say that if you have the opportunity and are able to invest, this is really the time to do it for some companies." A partner within the food industry is one example of companies that have been investing in their Employer Brand during the crisis. They had the opportunity to invest and decided to do so, this since their sales in general had increased and they wanted to improve their Employer Brand. Another example given by one employee was how one of Oddwork's partners contacted them and asked about help related to crisis communication. "We know that we have a good copywriter who is great at writing texts and creating content. Can we help them with crisis communication? Absolutely! And we adapted to this." - Oscar, Employer Branding Specialist

Further, the Senior Manager Martha explained that "It is not business as usual for us either, I cannot just call my customers to continue talking how I have always done as if there has not happened anything." She further highlighted that it is important to be understandable, to ask relevant questions such as "How are your company doing right now?" "How are your partners/customers affected?" this as a consequence of that there are some partners who has not been widely affected whereas others are dealing with significant difficulties. However, some businesses continue being the same despite going digital and the interviewees believe that the way of working with Employer Branding will not change. The fundamentals of how Oddwork works with identifying a company's EVP will still follow the same structure accordingly to the Oddmodel as described earlier. Additionally, one of the Senior Managers mentioned that there are no differences either in the way they sell and promote their service now during the crisis compared to before.

During this time of crisis, Oddwork has been reaching out with digital After Works. After having their own internal, "successful", digital After Work, Oddwork invited everyone, both internal and external participants, to attend on their upcoming After Work the next Friday. They were offering an After Work with "energy", quiz, a DJ, etc. Comments on social media

such as “Genial”, “Wonderful” “What an initiative” and thousands of views and hundreds of likes were streaming in and made this, as the interviewees said, “a lucky initiative”.

Further, relating to the adoption of unexpected changes, the Senior Manager Adam mentioned that they have been operating in a period of economic growth since day one, where they have had a lot of work and partners requesting their services. However, Oddwork has never stopped trying new ideas and new ways of working even though they have had much business coming in.

We dare to try new things, and if they work, we then continue doing it even more. If it does not work, then we evaluate why and why not? Can we do something different or not and what can we learn from it? It is the same thing going on right now with the crisis when something happens right now, now. We rather do something about it right now than just sit down and discuss things for a long tie. And this is where our founders come in hand, they act straight always, they are good at it and that inspires us. - Adam, Senior Manager

Discussion

The importance of good partnerships

When analysing the empirical data one can understand how the employees at the recruitment company Oddwork translated their own ideas and work with its Employer Brand to practices of Employer Branding, which now are implemented in other firms. Their ideas and practices of Employer Branding have constantly evolved and in 2018 their model of Employer Branding *Oddmodel of Employer Brand* was published in Forbes. This goes in line with Nielsen & Wæraas (2016) and how they explain translation as when something changes since it moves from one place to another and hence it gets recreated. Thus, this can be seen as one step in the translation of their way to act upon, or work with Employer Branding.

This article indicates that many of Oddwork’s partners need help with building their Employer Brand since this is a special expertise they do not possess or aim to recruit, which according to Wood (2002) is the main reason consultants are hired. In addition, Wood (2002) states how the results of organisational changes often depend on the relationship between the consultants and the client, which the Oddworkers agree upon. The interviewees explain how important it is to build a good and long-term relationship with their different partners since it is common that their partners within recruiting will later on need help with their Employer Brands. Hence, the interviewees describe a good relationship as the most substantial part when acquiring new partnerships within Employer Branding which can be analysed as the foundation of establishing an Employer Branding project.

Further, by analysing the answers from the interviewees, one can argue for several different reasons Oddwork’s partners choose to collaborate with them. The interviewees from the partner organisation explained how they were impressed by Oddwork’s own Employer Brand, consequently, by adopting Oddwork’s ideas, it can be discussed as a way for the partner to seek legitimacy (Sturdy, 2004). Further, the described case with the big international financial company, which had an employee from the executive management team who suggested this project as a necessary measure for the company’s well-being, can be seen as an

institutional approach to an imposed change (Sturdy, 2004). Further, Legge (2002) explains how a primary step to convince a customer is the “want what you want” principle, which by analysing the empirical material, Oddwork does through practicing what they preach. One can analyse how practicing what you preach can be a way to give the client faith in the consultants’ statements (Legge, 2002). Oddwork describes how they from start have worked intensively with building and constantly developing their own Employer Brand, which also was how they got the idea to sell their expertise within this area when they got requests from other companies who were impressed by their work. According to the interviewees from the partner organisation Oddwork’s Employer Brand was one factor that had an impact on why they wanted to collaborate with them. Moreover, the “want what you want” principle according to Legge (2002) can be a way to exceed a customer’s expectation, which the results indicate Oddwork did with their partnership with the financial company, as the partner told their comfort after this workshop became remarkable better.

Employer Branding as an abstract management fashion

The results in this article further show that in order for Employer Branding consultants to implement an attractive Employer Brand into another firm, there is a need for all the involved stakeholders to understand what Employer Branding is and why it is of high importance. This since the article shows that Employer Branding is hard to define. However, Brown (2002), Latour (1987) and Røvik (2016) argue that the receivers of traveling ideas are active translators and not passive receivers and by analysing this it can be interpreted as Oddwork’s Employer Branding consultants contribute to a trigger for every actor participating in the implementing of a partner’s Employer Brand. Consequently, there is a common perception of Employer Branding being defined as how previous, current, and future employees perceive their employer. The Communications Specialist at Oddwork, Andrew, adds to the fact that Employer Branding also constitutes of all the activities, associations, and behaviours exercised by the employees and that a company's Employer Brand is the culture they profile themselves with. This goes in line with how, for instance, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) describe Employer Branding as a tool to position the organisation as an employer. Hence the employer can strategically work with Employer Branding to communicate the company's culture and to promote how the company values their employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Considering how Oddwork has structured their way of working, from identifying to activating Employer Brands into other firms, it shows that the consultants strategically always consider the activities, associations, and behaviours within a company, meaning that the culture of a company is what steer how a company will be perceived as an employer. Having a strong culture and associations related to a company's Employer Brand also indicates that a company will have an increased attractiveness compared to companies not having a well-established Employer Brand which Oddwork strives for. In line with this, Alvesson (2009) and Schein (2010) describe corporate culture as a substantial part of an organisation and suggests it creates a valuable meaning and affinity for the company and its employees, which in turn lead to the employees becoming more creative and motivated.

Consultants rhetoric skills and identification of an Employer Brand

This study indicates that in order to be able to explain and implement Employer Branding into another firm, the Employer Branding consultants need to possess the right rhetorical skills in order to legitimise their work, strategies, and knowledge claims (Clark & Fincham, 2002). Using personal charisma can also be a technique, consultants can use to be persuasive (Clark, 2002), and this could further be analysed as one of the reasons the implementation of Oddwork's Partners' Employer Brands can, and has, become successful.

Oddwork's way to implement Employer Branding into other organisations, thus, implementing organisational changes, is to use workshops as a tool. One can analyse how the workshops are a way to establish a good and long-term relationship and hence, get involved in the partner's organisation and show continuous support. This according to Legge (2002) is required when driving a culture of quality and the results indicate how the workshops with sharing employees' pride stories have become an important part of Oddwork's way to identify and implement other companies Employer Brands. The Senior Manager Martha explains how people remember and respond to stories, which Clark & Fincham (2002) also discuss as an important role in management fashion, in order to spread the knowledge from start to an end in a process. By analysing the empirical material further, it can be seen as the consultants from Oddwork are being good storytellers and thus use stories as a tool when giving examples in the conducted interviews. For example, they tell stories about how the hotel industry has changed and how the industry, more or less, is dependent on their reviews. They then compare this story with the reality and future of Employer Branding in order for everyone to understand how important it is. This goes in line with Legge (2002) who states that it is important for consultants to create a "good story" to legitimise knowledge and create a sense of truth. Moreover, when observing their internal workshop and when they were sharing their own pride stories, some employees' stories evoked a lot of emotions. By analysing this even further, one can draw the conclusion that the employees at Oddwork are good rhetoricians, which Clark & Fincham (2002) state can be a tool to help to solve that consultancy is achieved.

Further, Clark & Fincham (2002) discuss how consultants create and develop packages that involve the ongoing fashion trends. Oddwork's Oddmodel is a clear example of how they show that their Employer Branding implementation process is an attractive package, which will solve the customer's problem (Clark & Fincham, 2002). The Oddmodel has, as already mentioned, been published in Forbes (2018) and hence can be seen as a story Oddwork uses to promote their quality of fashion (Legge, 2002). In addition, one can analyse how the model has become legitimised after it was published in Forbes, as a result of many people seeing Forbes as a publisher with relevant news and trends. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2015) state that legitimacy is associated with social acceptance and hence organisations are viewed as legitimate if their norms and values are aligned with the society's expectations. Hence, organisations can survive longer due to social acceptance, which indicates that Oddwork's published model of Employer Branding can be seen as socially acceptable. Therefore, these statements can, by analysing the results, indicate how the consultants at Oddwork by the use of their model, increase other companies' legitimacy and help them create social acceptance in the society. This since an activated Employer Brand can be a way to show a company's values and what they stand for (Khan et al., 2015).

Activation and implementation of an Employer Brand

Further, this article indicates that the implementation and activation of an Employer Brand can be seen as substantial parts when translating Employer Branding as a fashion management to practices. Hence, these organisational changes or processes work as a way where the ideas, concepts, and fashion can travel (Abrahamsson, 2006; Røvik 2016). The interviewees argue for the importance of activating and fulfilling the EVP of an organisation with connected activities, associations, and behaviours, which they also state as something they are skilled in. Further, they discuss how the main goal when starting a new partnership is to get the partner “activated”, which Brown (2002), Latour (1987) & Røvik (2016) argue is integral for these ideas and fashion to travel. Therefore, one can analyse how the second workshop with a focus on activation of the EVP is an important tool to achieve that Employer Branding as a fashion management, actually travel as an idea and move to a homogeneous and heterogeneous practice (Nielsen & Wæraas, 2016). This as a consequence of the Employer Branding ideas can get translated by circulation and are emerging and developing differently depending on the context. Hence, one can interpret how the second activation workshop will have an impact on how these ideas evolve and when different organisations are adopting them it will develop differently since it appears in different contexts (Nielsen & Wæraas, 2016).

Moreover, Oddwork’s newly established Employer Branding Ambassadors’ Program is a substantial part to involve employees in the decision-making process and “empower” them to take ownership (Legge, 2002), which also according to Urbancová & Hudáková (2017) is an important aspect since the ambassadors have great influence. Hence, by seeing the employees as ambassadors of the Employer Brand it can become more attractive for all stakeholders (Elving et al., 2012; Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017). The majority of the interviewees stated that a company’s purpose and values need to evolve from all employees within an organisation and will not have the same impact if the management executive team are the ones to decide them. This can according to the Recruiter Carl be a way for employees to take ownership, which in line with Legge’s (2002) statement will involve them in the decision-making process and increase their empowerment to take ownership. Additionally, analysed from a translation perspective, the employees are able to further translate and spread the ideas, practices, and artefacts, such as the Oddmodel, further into the organisation (Nielsen & Wæraas, 2016).

One of the Employer Branding Specialists at Oddwork explains how it is of great importance to strategically work with your Employer Brand and promotes how it is substantial to structure all activities, associations, and behaviours that take place within an organisation. This can according to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) establish a corporate culture within the organisation, which the empirical evidence shows is what Oddwork is doing when identifying and implementing an Employer Brand of another firm. According to Schein (2010) an organisation’s corporate culture can be strengthened when the leaders are communicating, educating, and guiding the employees to act aligned with the values. Hence, Schein’s (2010) statement suggests that Oddwork’s way of implementing Employer Brands in other firms can help companies’ corporate cultures to be strengthened. The empirical material shows how this was done with both the interviewed partner organisation and the case with the financial company, since the results indicate how they both got an increased affinity and meaning connected to their organisation (Schein, 2010). Moreover, the study indicates how both the internal and external communication is an integral part of establishing an attractive Employer

Brand, which also Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argue as an important part of achieving an attractive Employer Brand and can as well lead to more productive employees. Hence, communicating an Employer Brand both internally and externally leads to both current and future employees becoming aware of the benefits provided by the employer. Thus, by communicating the Employer Brand, it can get “activated”. In line with this, Skille (2011) states how the interplay between the influence of internal and external discussions are an important part of the translation process.

Employer Branding - An ongoing change and translation

According to Nielsen & Wæraas (2016), translation can be seen as a process that both leads to homogenisation and heterogenisation among organisations. This as a consequence of the ideas tend to get translated by circulation and are emerging and developing differently depending on the context. In line with this statement, this study shows that when consultants have done their job and handed overall responsibility and documentations to their partners, another step of the translation process is being initiated, where the partners now are in charge of translating their own practices and activities. Further, the Oddworkers discuss how to succeed with continuing to maintain an attractive Employer Brand and argue for the importance of seeing the work with an Employer Brand as a constantly ongoing process that requires regularly updated changes. An example of how this can be done is how Oddwork did themselves with their internal workshop of updating and strengthening their EVP, this in order to make sure it is still relevant for new as old employees.

Additionally, Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) describe how there is almost always an ongoing change since we live in a constantly changing world. This argument indicates that even though the results show how Employer Branding is moving to an institutionalised principle, it will in line with what the interviewees’ statements about the future view of Employer Branding, continue to change and develop. Further, Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) explain how it is necessary to look into an organisation’s processes, such as how identities are formed or how rules are established, in order to understand how it changes and stabilises. By analysing the results one can analyse that Oddwork forms identities and establishes rules at other companies connected to their EVP. Thereafter, they promote to later on break these identities and rules down by continuously having new workshops with updates of their partner’s Employer Brand. This as a consequence of the importance to process the constantly changing society, which Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) explain as how de- /institutionalisation are created.

According to Czarniawska (2005) for ideas to travel, they have to be materialised and adopted by other organisations, which can be related to Oddwork’s way of trying to spread their aim and ideas of Employer Branding to other organisations. Considering how Oddwork started as a recruitment consultant company and that one customer asked them about help regarding their own Employer Brand since they were inspired by Oddwork’s image, one can analyse how Oddwork translated this request into a practice. The founders translated this opportunity into a new practice of Employer Branding, and along the way the consultants at Oddwork, by inspiration from different sources such as the famous author and lecturer Simon Sinek, translated their practices into a concrete model, the Oddmodel. Further, one can analyse how the Oddmodel has been translated into an artefact as such by being published on Forbes for example.

Oddwork believe that Employer Branding will become a “fear of missing out” and a “must-have” rather than something “good to have”. Hence, when ideas and fashion are adopted and taken for granted as something the companies need to possess, one can conclude that the fashion has been institutionalised and thus legitimised (Czarniawska, 2005; Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). The “fear of missing out” could further be analysed as companies being afraid of not “riding the revolution” (Bloomfield & Vurdubakis, 2002), and being left behind. In this case not being the employer candidates choose to work for, as a consequence of not coping with the fashion and trends. Consequently, new ideas and fashions result in many companies not being familiar with how to act in order to adapt to these new concepts. Therefore, people only tend to imitate others when they do not know how to conduct changes themselves (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). Thus, one can analyse how Employer Branding consultants will be relevant in the future as well as in the current state since consultants are professionals within their area and can help companies implementing new ideas. This is also shown in an example of Oddwork’s Partner, who was not ready to let go of the Oddwork consultants when they had realised how important the constant work with their Employer Brand was. Thus, having specialists helping them facing their issues, led to the partner wanting to enter a long-term relationship with Oddwork. According to Clark & Fincham (2002) management fads and fashion can create reassurance in a volatile and uncertain society, which indicates how the ongoing work with Employer Branding will continue being relevant. Considering information being more accessible whilst the digitalisation keeps moving forward, the Oddwork consultants highlight the fact that the reviews of employers online will affect the choice job seekers take when searching for a future employer. Moreover, our findings show that another evolving trend as a result of the digitalisation is employees seeking employers that are authentic, transparent and honest. Thus, this study shows how the digitalisation has an impact in the translation process and how the management fashion, Employer Branding, will develop further and can thus lead to change in both the adopting organisations and the spreading constructs (Nielsen & Wæraas, 2016).

However, as ideas travel and become institutionalised by translation, new ideas occur and the previous ideas can become deinstitutionalised (Czarniawska, 2005; Corvellec & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). When companies face unexpected challenges such as the current crisis regarding Covid-19, it becomes highly relevant for companies to quickly adapt to changes in order to survive. By having a well-established Employer Brand, with employees sharing the same values, one can argue based on the findings in this article that it becomes easier to face these crises. This since employees are more willing to work extra hard for keeping the company up and running since this company is not only a place they work at; it is also an employer that hopefully shares the same beliefs and values as the employees. Oddwork is one of many companies who have been negatively affected by the crisis, however, Oddwork has shown to be adaptable and quick to adjust to these changes, which Poorani & Thiagarajan (2018) describe as an important aspect for consultants to have a higher value in itself. The employees at Oddwork were not scared of trying new ways of working and this could be analysed as an outcome of the Oddworkers embracing their values of daring to try new things (Dyhre & Parment, 2013). This further indicates that an attractive Employer Brand attracts the right people to the company, and the right people will most likely do everything they can to overcome

challenges together. Additionally, this can be seen as a driving force for developing the business throughout the translation process (Clegg et al., 2004).

To further analyse the changes Oddwork has implemented during the crisis as part of the translation chain, one can argue that the consultants have during the crisis been forced to change their way of working. Consequently, with new ways of working, new practices become translated and new trends might occur which taken a step further, shows how the changes occur all the time and that Employer Branding will continue being an ongoing change (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996).

Tailoring Practices

Lastly, the interviewees discuss how there exist minimal differences in establishing an Employer Branding partnership with companies operating in different industries or differ in terms of size. Therefore, they describe how their model Oddmodel can be applicable to all different organisations, and from there, identify and tailor how the partner can create an attractive Employer Brand. According to Eriksson-Zetterquist (2016) organisations imitate each other and become similar when the ideas being transformed into, for example, buzzwords or models, which can be analysed is what Oddwork as consultants are doing. The Oddmodel once again is a concrete example of how Oddwork's consultants translate their ideas of Employer Branding into several other organisations, which can indicate how Oddwork has an impact on how organisations can become more similar. Thus, by implementing the same principles in other organisations and when they originate from the same model, ideas and fashion become adopted, stabilised and taken for granted and hence, therefore, become institutionalised (Czarniawska, 2005). Further, Czarniawska & Sevón (1996) argue how sharing and adopting similar practices can lead to isomorphism among organisations, consequently, isomorphism can be a way for organisations to become legitimised. Therefore, the results show how Oddwork has an impact on how organisations are becoming more similar in terms of working with their Employer Brand and hence how they can affect their partners become legitimised by implementing Oddwork's ideas and practices (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996).

Conclusion and Implications

With regards to the research questions of *How do consultants translate their ideas of Employer Branding and act upon them in practice?* it can be concluded that there are different tools and ways of practically understanding and working with this.

Firstly, one can conclude that establishing a good long-partnership between the client and the consultant is necessary in order to have a successful outcome of the Employer Branding projects. Further, when initiating a new Employer Branding project, one of the first steps for the consultants should be to simplify what the concept means and why it is relevant. This as a consequence of Employer Branding can be concluded as an abstract management fashion, however, the article indicates that by establishing an attractive Employer Brand, employees within the organisation can become more creative and motivated.

Secondly, rhetorical skills can be concluded as an important component when consultants identify and implement Employer Brands into other firms. Thus, consultants can use stories as a rhetoric skill and a persuasive power to further legitimise knowledge and get

ideas to translate into practices. The pride stories have shown to be a valuable tool when identifying a company's EVP. Another helpful tool has shown to be the activation workshop since employees themselves are allowed to come up with actions to activate their company's EVP. Further, it can be concluded that when the employees are engaged and involved in the process of identifying, implementing, and developing their company's Employer Brand, it can connect them to the employer. Consequently, since a feeling of affinity can be created, and the employees further take ownership of the values. Additionally, announcing ambassadors of the Employer Brand can be concluded as another helpful tool since they are seen as the ones carrying out the Employer Brand into the organisations.

Thirdly, possessing an attractive Employer Brand requires daily work and constant updates of the EVP since changes occur all the time. Therefore, it is important that the EVP always will be in line with what the company stands for, which also might change over time or when facing unexpected challenges. Thus, Employer Branding is an ongoing process, and it is therefore important to be adaptable and understand how it constantly get de- /institutionalised in other organisations.

Lastly, it can be concluded that there are not any best practices for how Employer Branding should be implemented. Every company is unique in its own way and requires its individual ways of working. However, the structure in itself tends to work for several companies. All in all, how these practices further change is dependent on how the consultants choose to translate new ideas into new practices.

Contributions and Further Research

This article contributes to the research within Employer Branding, with an insight into how Employer Branding consultants translate their ideas into practices, and how they practically can work with identifying and implementing Employer Brands into other firms.

A limitation of the article is that it does not contribute with a comparative insight on how different Employer Branding consulting firms work with translating their different ideas of Employer Branding into practices, and hence identifying and implementing Employer Brands into other firms. Therefore, general conclusions for all companies are hard to be drawn. Consequently, it would be interesting for further research to investigate whether there are any differences in how different Employer Branding consulting firms work in practice and if so, what are the differences?

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