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HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE EM- PLOYER BRAND

International Business
2020

ABSTRACT

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Title	How to build an effective Employer Brand
Year	2020
Language	English
Pages	47 + 3 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Heidi Skjäl

In today's world, the talent market has never been so competitive as a result of the Talent War and Talent Shortage (Mosley, 2014). This makes it harder for employers to find and retain the right talent than ever before. In the meantime, Employer Brand is believed to be the most powerful tool to win the war for talent (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010; Chambers, Foulon, Jones, Hankin, Michael III, 2017). Therefore, the objective of this research is to define the process to build an effective Employer Brand to attract and retain the right talent.

In the theoretical framework, the concept of Employer Brand and its benefits to businesses were first introduced; followed by a brief discussion about the talent war and talent shortage to emphasize the necessity of developing an Employer Brand. The theory continued with a step-guide on how to build an effective Employer Brand and ended with the discussion about the one key element for a successful Employer Brand.

In the empirical research, the qualitative method was applied and primary data was collected by the author through semi-structured interviews with five experts in the field to gain in-depth insights and professional perspectives on the thesis topic.

The research result contains answers to the three research questions of what, why, and how to build Employer Brand. In detail, Employer Brand is the perception the talent has about a company as an employer. Owning an intentional Employer Brand is beneficial to a business in terms of attracting and retaining the right talent, supporting business growth in general, and is also a critical tool to fight against the talent war and talent shortage. The process of building an Employer Brand consists of four phases: Discovery, Analysis & Creation, Implementation & Communication and Measurement. Being strategic is believed to be the most important factor for a successful Employer Brand.

Keywords Human Resource, Employer Brand, Recruitment

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on introducing the background of the research, research objective, and research question. The talent war and talent shortage are briefly discussed as the research background. A theoretical framework is proposed by the end of the chapter.

1.1 Research Background

In today's world, the establishment of many companies within the same business sector increases the competitiveness in not only how many customers one might get, but also how to attract and retain qualified staff. Recruitment is no longer an act from one single side, but rather a win-win battle between employer and employee. While you are trying to evaluate your candidate, they are trying to determine if you are the right place for them to land (Wright, 2017). Talent shortages are considered to be another controversial issue in the talent market. According to Manpower Group's report of Talent shortages 2020, 54% of companies globally have reported talent shortages, which is also double what it was a decade ago with only 30% in 2009 (Manpower Group, 2020).

In the pressure of talent scarcity and talent war, most of the discussion has been shifted to the concept of an attractive employer/ organization, which is also called Employer Branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005; Joo & McLean, 2006). Employer Branding is a familiar yet unfamiliar concept. Since Ambler and Barrow (1996) first brought the concept into the public in 1996, many researches have been done about it, hence, significant awareness has been raised.

1.2 Research Objective and Research question

As mentioned in the Research Background part, the talent market is facing two big issues, which are the Talent war and Talent Shortage. This makes organizations find it harder to find and retain the right talent than ever before. Therefore, the objective of this research is to define the concept to build an effective Employer Brand to attract and retain the right talent.

Thus, the main research question is how to build an effective Employer Brand to attract and retain the right talent. To answer the How question, one should understand the What and the Why. For that reason, the research question will be divided into three small sub-questions:

- What is Employer Branding?
- Why is Employer Branding a necessity in the current situation of the talent market?
- How to develop and manage an effective Employer Brand?

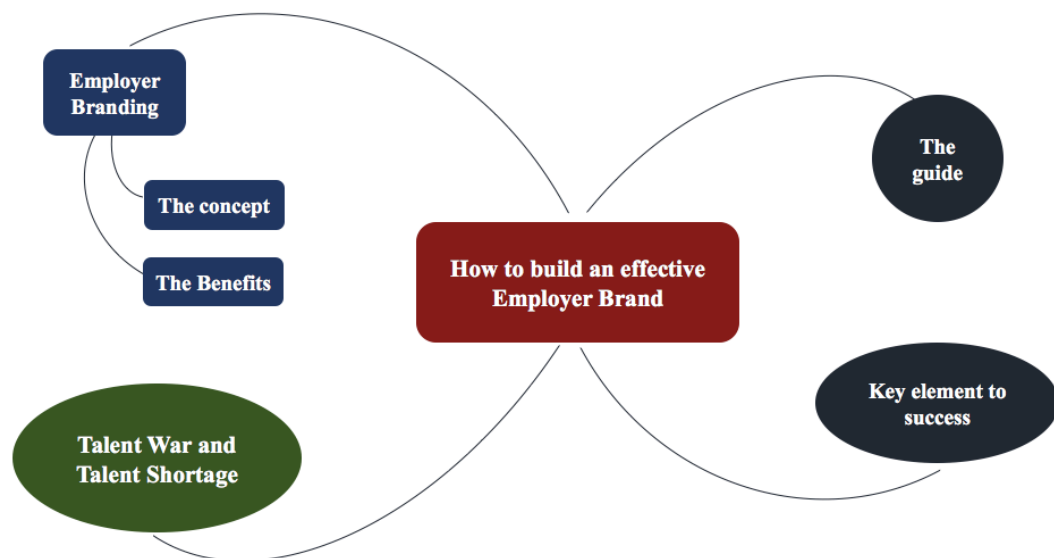


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework by author

The theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 1. The study will first answer the What question by introducing the concept of Employer Branding and its benefits to the business; next, the talent war and talent shortage situation will be discussed in response to the Why question; last but not least, to answer the how question, a step guide to an effective Employer Brand will be proposed; followed by a theoretical suggestion of key element to success.

2 EMPLOYER BRANDING

This chapter focuses on answering the first two sub-questions of the research: What and Why. Many perceptions and definitions of the Employer Brand concept are introduced in the attempt to answer the question of what Employer Branding is. Besides, the Employer Brand Impact model by Graddam (2008) is utilized to discuss the benefits of Employer Brand; While the emerging issue - talent shortage and talent war is mentioned to answer the second sub-question of why Employer Branding is necessary.

2.1 The concept of Employer Brand

Employer Brand is a concept that was discovered two decades ago by Simon Barrow, founder and former chair of People in Business, and Tim Ambler, Senior Fellow of London Business School. They described Employer Brand as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. Since then, there have been many discussions about the concept, which leads to the establishment of different definitions of the term. (Amber & Barrow, 1996)

The UK’s Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) defined Employer Branding, in a report published in 2008 called Employer Branding: a nonsense approach, as “...a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organization distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture” (CIPD, 2008). Brett Minchington, Chairman/CEO of Employer Brand International, defines Employer Branding as “the image of your organization as a “great place to work”.’ Another definition of the term is that Employer Brand is “thoughts and feelings that people associate with an employer, both positive and negative, both true and untrue, both clear and impressionistic, whether based on direct experience, intentional communication, unintentional communication or hearsay.” (Mosley, 2014).

In general, every organization cannot escape the fact that they have an Employer Brand, whether they build it or not. It simply means that once the company is established and has people working for it, there will form a reputation as a place to work. It may not be the reputation they want or may not reflect accurately the working environment within their organization. It may be better or worse than they suppose it to be. Whatever it is, it is the unique identity associated with their organization as an employer. And Employer Branding includes a chain of actions that organizations will take to develop their Employer Brand in the direction they want it to be and to ensure that they will derive full benefit from them. (CIDP, 2008)

2.2 The benefit of Employer Brand to business

Employer Brand is said to be a powerful tool in human resource management that can help lower cost, increase customer satisfaction, and leverage the financial performance (Barrow and Mosley, 2005). Companies should understand that a strong Employer Brand brings added values and competitive advantages to differentiate themselves from competitors (Ito, Brotheridge, &McFarland, 2013). Figure 2 presents Gaddam's (2008, p.47) 'Employer Brand impact model', which shows the impact of Employer Brand on retention, employee attraction and profitability.

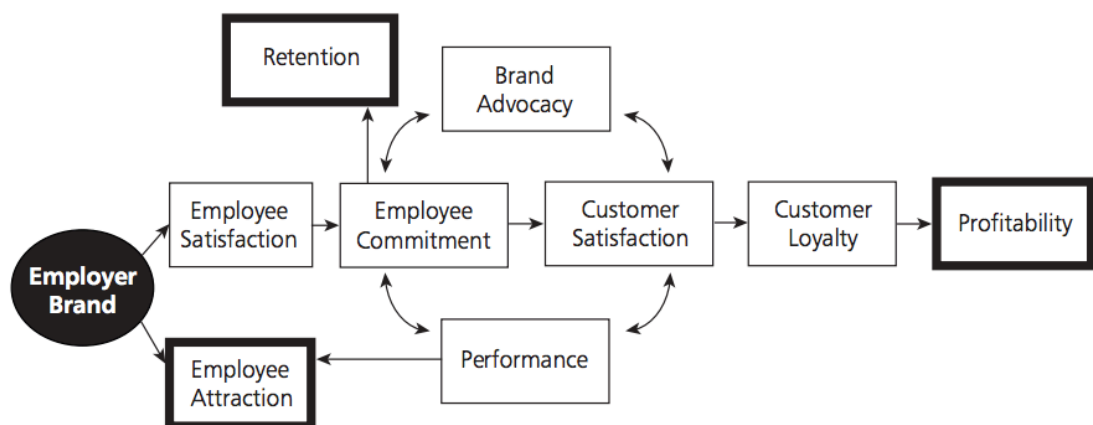


Figure 2: Employer Brand Impact Model by Soumya Gaddam.

A strong Employer Brand plays a significant role in the organization's ability to attract the right talent. According to Glassdoor, a website where current and former employees can anonymously review their companies, 84% of active job seekers

consider the reputation of a company a crucial factor when making a decision where to apply. Moreover, what is being put in a job posting can reflect if a company is investing in Employer Branding. Glassdoor also shows job seekers are twice more likely to apply when a job posting includes Employer Branded content such as perks, benefits, ‘who we are’, ‘why work for us’, ‘what you will do’, etc.; hence, save recruiters time and money. (Glassdoor, 2017)

Retention is another positive benefit that investing in Employer Branding can bring to an organization. Graddam (2008) stated that a strong Employer Brand aims to enhance employee’s experience by providing a beneficial employment package in form of pay and benefits, working environment, career management, balanced work-life, mental and social satisfaction. A high level of employee satisfaction then leads to a higher level of commitment and increases retention rate. Glassdoor (2017) revealed in a report that 67% of employers believe retention rates would be higher if candidates had a clear picture of what to expect about the working environment before taking the job.

A strong Employer Branding improves profitability significantly. It has been suggested that once employees enjoy working in the company, they will automatically become the company’s ambassador. They will not only help the organization attract more potential employees, but also gain loyalty from the customer. Gallup, an American analytics and advisory company, demonstrated that a high level of employee satisfaction and commitment was associated with a 10% higher level of customer satisfaction, 21% higher in productivity and 22% higher in profitability. (Mosley, 2014, p.17). A positive Employer Brand image attracts not only talent but also more customers, thus, contributes to the increase in profitability. According to a study by CareerArc (2018), 64% of respondents have switched or stopped purchasing products from companies that have a reputation for poor employee treatment. 54% of job seekers have purchased products from their employer and 69% have promoted or recommended their company’s product.

2.3 The Talent war and Talent shortage

Talent shortages and war for talent put organizations in a tough competition in attracting and retaining talent (Mosley, 2014). Employer Branding is said to be a natural result of the fiercely competitive talent market (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010).

According to Manpower Group's report of Talent shortages 2020, 54% of companies globally have reported talent shortages, which is also double what it was a decade ago with only 30% in 2009. It is an increasingly global issue when only 18% of countries are not reporting talent shortage (Manpower Group, 2020). By 2030, the demand for skilled labor is expected to exceed the supply, resulting in the talent shortage of more than 85.2 million people (Korn Ferry, 2018). Nearly one-third of companies reported that they cannot find the talent they need due to the lack of application. Another 20% blame the talent shortage on the lack of experienced employees. (Manpower Group, 2018). At the same time, a report by CareerArc (2018) revealed that nearly half of companies (43%) are operating without having Employer Branding practice in a talent market where 91% of job seekers are reported to learn more about Employer Brand and reputation before they apply for the opening job.

The war for talent is another reason contributing to the talent shortage. There are three reasons that causing the war for talent. First, the development of a more complex economy requires talent with more complex and advanced skills. Second, the increasing number of small-to-medium size companies threatens large companies when they both target the same people. Lastly, job mobility is increasing. Talents are not afraid to change employer many times during their career. Today, talent will work for an average of five companies during the whole career. This number is expected to be seven in another ten years. (Chambers, Foulon, Jones, Hankin, Michael III, 2017)

In conclusion, Employer Branding is believed to be a powerful tool to win the talent war and talent shortage thanks to many benefits and competitive advantages it brings to organizations such as increase retention rate, profit and attractiveness of

the company as an employer. (Graddam, 2008). To win the war for talent, organizations must put talent management as the burning priority first; then create an appealing Employer Value Proposition, which is the answer of senior management on why sophisticated talent should work for you rather than the team next door (Chambers et al, 2017)

3 GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYER BRAND

This chapter consists of the guide on how to build an effective Employer Brand and a brief discussion of the key element for a successful Employer Brand.

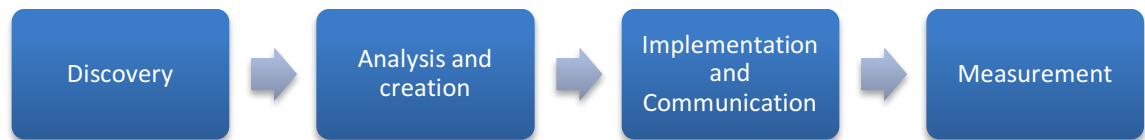


Figure 3: Employer Brand development model by CIDP

The UK's Chattered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIDP) published a recommended typical Employer Brand development and communication project (Figure 3), which consists of four stages: Discovery, Analysis & Creation, Implementation & communication, and Measurement (CIDP, 2018)

3.1 Discovery

The first point to start the project is to collect Employer Brand insight. There are three layers of perception organization needs to collect: view from top management, from internal groups of the organization and the external talent market (Barrow & Mosley, 2006, p.85)

The first two internal groups you need to tackle is the senior management and your internal employees. For the top management people, a senior management workshop is suggested to be held to gain an insightful view of where your brand is at the moment and how far is it from where and what you want it to be. With the internal employees, it is suggested to identify factors that affect employee engagement and commitment, how well they are aware of the organization's values and culture, what characteristics or attributes they refer you to. (CIPD, 2008).

For the external talent market, it is important to have a view of your external Employer Brand image, in other words, how you are positioning as an employer to your potential recruits. It can be done by conducting corporate reputation surveys,

student surveys (University/Trendence), experienced hire surveys, new joiner survey, social reputation audit. (CIDP, 2008; Barrow & Mosley, 2006)

3.2 Analysis & Creation

This phase focuses on defining the gap between how people see you and how you want to be seen. In this phase, two frameworks will be discussed: the brand positioning model (Barrow & Mosley, 2015) and the Employer Value Propositions (EVP) (Barrow & Mosley, 2015; CEB, 2015).

3.2.1 Employer Brand Positioning

Employer Brand positioning is the process of identifying what your brand currently stands for in the hearts and minds of your target audience (Brand Reality) and what you would like your brand stands for in the future (Brand Vision). (Barrow & Mosley, 2005)



Figure 4: Employer Brand Positioning Model by Richard Mosley

The positioning model (Figure 4) (Barrow & Mosley, 2005) is divided into two parts. The upper part, which is the core proposition, contains all the core brand

elements, which is common to all target groups; while the lower part is more specified for different target groups.

The Employer Brand proposition

Employer Brand proposition answers the question: What is the most compelling reason why people should describe your organization as a great place to work. (Mosley, 2014). The key characteristic of a brand proposition is focus, which means there should be only one core proposition statement that brings focus and consistency to the whole brand offerings (Barrow & Mosley, 2008). Kevin Keller defined brand positioning as the company's attempt to position their brand in people's mind. He also emphasized the importance of capturing the brand positioning into a sentence of three to five words, which is called 'the brand mantra' – an articulation of the 'heart and soul' of the brand. (Keller, 2009). A brand proposition statement is usually mistaken as campaign strapline; It might not be visible in recruitment or branding material. But it's a form of words that describe right to the core of the brand (CIDP, 2008, P.43).

Brand Values

The next task is to define a set of values for your Employer Brand. Brand values can be defined as brand DNA, which every aspect of the brand – every branding material, every action or decision you take upon your employee – will grow from. One should have no more than five or six values as for people to have no difficulty in remembering; and needless to say, the 'core' set of values is not considered to be core anymore if there are too many elements in the set. (CIDP, 2008).

Brand Personality

Aaker (1997, p.347) defined brand personality as 'the set of human characteristics associated with a brand'. This will tell if the organization is caring, challenging, adventurous, serious, or humorous. The Employer Brand personality is mostly reflected in the company's social media content, recruitment marketing materials, and on the core element of the organization, its employees. (Aaker, 1997, p.347)

Target employee profiles

Defining the personalities, values of your ideal employees is vital in Employer Brand positioning. The key point organizations need to keep in mind when building their employee profile is that it must be the perfect reflection of your organization's profile (value and personality). (Barrow & Mosley, 2005)

3.2.2 Employee Value Propositions (EVP)

Brett Minchington, CEO of Employer Brand International, emphasized that EVP should be placed in the heart of the Employer Brand strategy. If the brand positioning process is the development of elements that are relevant to all target groups, EVP is customized to different types of employees but still maintaining the Employer Brand consistency. Minchington defined EVP as “the set of associations and offerings provided by your organization in return for the skills, capacities, and experiences an employee brings to your organization”. (Minchington, 2011)

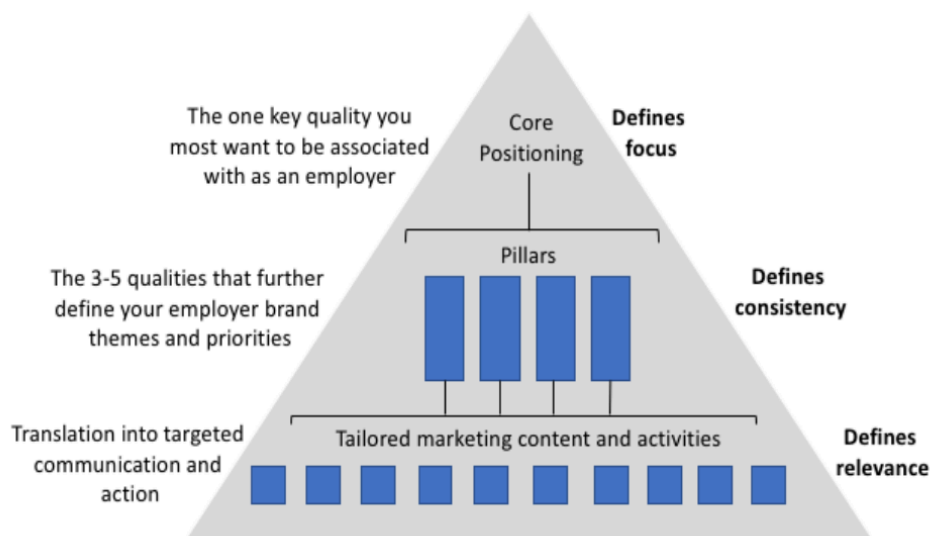


Figure 5: Key components of EVP by Richard Mosley.

Figure 5 demonstrates the three steps in building EVPs. It is suggested to start from the core positioning, which was defined in the brand positioning model (subchapter 3.2.1). Having the one key quality that you want to be famous as an employer helps to achieve focus in building EVPs. The next step is to define from three to five

Employer Brand priorities that you want to focus on your EVP, which can be called ‘pillar’. These pillars will be the key big themes that define the consistency of the whole EVPs. The last step is translating the key pillars into appealing messages to your target talent (Barrow & Mosley, 2005)

3.3 Implementation & Communication

One of the key features of a successful Employer Branding is minimizing the gap between reality (internal situation) and expectation (external reputation). What you say about your company externally must be reflected in your employee. If not, they will see through and so will the market place (Linkedin, 2011). This phase is about how to implement and communicate your brand to internal (current employee) and external target audience (Potential employee).

3.3.1 Internal Employer Branding

The internal environment includes two main groups: the top management/ line managers and employees. Mosley suggested the most effective approach is to start from the top: get the top and line managers briefed on the EVP and understood the roles they have to play, what they need to focus on in terms of communication and behavior. The internal communication should be visibly and proactively led by the top management to better engage employee’s interest and commitment. (Mosley, 2014)

The next target group is the current employees. Mosley emphasized that in order to get employees to engage and ‘buy’ your Employer Brand, it is simply not enough to just introduce the concept, you need to get your people to feel and live it. In other words, the model for promoting brand engagement should include three main principles: think, feel and do. (Mosley, 2014, p220-222)

Firstly, in the effort to get employee understand the brand concept rationally, they first need to understand why the change is happening, how it helps the organization, and what in it is for them. Emotional engagement is the next step in the effort of getting employees ‘buy’ the Employer Brand. Mosley suggests the most effective

approach is active leadership. The senior management team should take responsibility for spreading the message directly to employees by, for example, organizing small events to share or personal sharing within their team. Last but not least, getting people to understand and feel the brand is not enough, they only live the brand once they see evidence from top management and the consistent effort of making then brand wired into the fabric of the organization. The key focus is to deliver consistency across all of your communication and between internal and external communication. Consistency is believed to be the most powerful evidence. (Mosley, 2014, p.220-225; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012).

3.3.2 External Employer Branding

After the brand has been launched internally and achieved a certain level of effectiveness, it's time to process with the external target group which is your potential recruits. Along with online platforms, some other recruitment marketing tools will also be introduced in this part.

According to a research conducted by Wonderful workplace, it is revealed that online content (81%) and company website (79%) are the top two platforms used by candidates when it comes to how to research employers (Wonderful workplace, 2019). Talentgy (2019)'s research revealed that social media has been favorable by candidates, especially millennial and Gen Z. Company website is the next effective communication platform for Employer Branding (Mosley, 2014). According to 2016 Global Talent Trends, candidates don't apply immediately when they see the job opening, instead, 59% visit company's website to research more about their potential employer (LinkedIn, 2016).

Another important thing to keep in mind is the brand personality, which is the tone and style of communicating your brand. Make sure your Employer Brand content such as vision, mission, your values, your proposition statement, and your EVPs are well-featured on your company's website. Focus on authenticity by featuring your current employee experience sharing such as blog post, internal event pictures, interviewing videos. (Kaur & Sharma, 2015)

Employee has always been a trusted information source when it comes to employer research. Employee word of mouth has also undoubtedly been an important factor in shaping the external reputation of the company (Mosley, 2014, p.177). No matter what position they are in, they can be your best brand advocates and have a powerful influence on job seekers (Glassdoor, 2014). Employee referral was revealed that 82% of employers highly rated employee referrals in terms of generating the best ROI (Career builder, 2016).

3.3.3 Candidate journey

Candidate journey is a mix between internal and external Employer Branding when it engages the external target group experiencing part of your internal environment, having direct communication with your employee (CIDP, 2008). According to a research finding from the 2019 Employer Branding Insight report, 82% said that the impression left by the interview influences their opinion about the organization as an employer, 89% would potentially give up the application process if they have had bad interview experience. Post-interview feedback and responsive communication were agreed by 63% of candidates to be a crucial factor that influences their opinions of an employer (Wonderful Workplace, 2019). Talentegy (2019)'s research also revealed that each candidate who has a bad experience during the recruitment process will tell at least three of their friends. That being said, the company should incorporate Employer Brand attribute into managing the candidate experience to deliver a positive impression even in the case of unsuccessful candidates. This should start with being informative and responsive to candidates: make sure to provide enough information, what to expect in each round, communicate decision promptly and clearly, commit to treating every candidate with respect. (Mosley, 2014, p.244)

Those mentioned recruitment tools above are the most popular and effective in the situation of technology development and relevant to Millennials, the main workforce in the talent market at the moment. There are many other strategies that companies can adopt, depending on the organization's situation and different target groups.

3.4 Measurement

The last phase of the complete guide for an effective Employer Branding is the measurement.

3.4.1 External Measurement

There are three aspects to touch on in terms of external measurement: Employer Brand Reputation, the effectiveness of recruitment marketing, and candidate experience.

Employer Brand Reputation

External brand reputation is a fundamental component of your Employer Brand equity. Breaking down the concept into its small components makes it easier to measure and analyze. (Glassdoor, 2014).

The first component of the external Employer Brand is brand awareness and familiarity. It reflects the percentage of your target audience's awareness of your organization and what your organization does. The next component is your brand image, which reflects by how strongly your EVPs pillars are perceived by your target audiences and the consistent presence of your primary image components (EVP Pillars) in your Employer Branding practices. Another component you need to keep track of is how appealing your EVP pillars are to your target audiences. You need to constantly keep an eye on the changing needs and aspirations of your target audiences and adjust the pillars accordingly. (Mosley, 2014, p.255-256)

The Effectiveness of recruitment marketing activities

The effectiveness of marketing activities can be measured by comparing the amount of investment made to the return on investment (ROI) in terms of the number of application, diversity of application, and quality of application (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 267). In addition, you should monitor how effective your marketing content in getting your brand messages across, which can be evaluated by the level of en-

agement (likes, shares, comments, click, etc.); and which channel is the most effective in delivering the greatest values with the lowest cost. (Mosley, 2014). For example, social media channels may be a great source of influence but only 2.9% of hires were reported directly through social media (Crispin & Mehler, 2013).

The effectiveness of the recruitment process is another important area organization should measure to understand the current state of their recruitment strategies and how to improve them. This can be measured by using different hiring metrics to identify the cost effectiveness and quality of hires, such as cost per application, time to hire, time to fill, quality of the applicant, quality of hire, etc. (Mosley, 2014, p.264).

Candidate experience

Candidate experience, as being discussed in part 3.3.2, has a strong impact on what candidates think about you as an employer and how important it is to deliver a positive candidate experience. For that reason, it is important to seek feedback from candidates and new joiners to ensure that it leaves a positive and professional impression. The feedback form should ideally include the image analysis aspect to determine whether the Employer Brand image is successfully incorporated into the candidate journey. (Mosley, 2014)

3.4.2 Internal measurement

Most companies measure the employee experience by conducting some form of employee engagement survey (Mosley & Schmidt 2017). Another method to check the employee's experience is through reviews on professional platforms such as Glassdoor. On Glassdoor, employee can review employer based on five categories: Culture and value; work/life balance; Senior management; Compensation and Benefits; Career growth opportunities. (Glassdoor, 2016)

3.5 Key element for a successful Employer Brand

This part emphasizes the one critical contribution for a successful Employer Branding: Management buy-in.

It is impossible to develop an effective long-term brand without support from the management board. Without this support, the Employer Brand is unlikely to achieve authenticity (Barrow & Mosley, 2005, p.81). The behavior of the leadership team is the most important factor in shaping a positive and brand-aligned experience for most employees. (Mosley & Schmidt, 2017). According to Johnny Torrance-Nesbitt, a Global Talent Acquisition executive with more than 15 years of experience in building/leading Employer Brand project at many global Fortune 500 companies, getting CEO and senior leaders buy-in is the most critical step for a successful Employer Brand and senior leaders are expected to represent and embrace the company's culture and values to convince others that his/her company is a great place to work. (Nesbitt, 2018). As being discussed in the sub-chapter 3.3.1 on how to achieve employee engagement when the brand is first launched, employees only trust completely and live the brand when they see the brand evidence, and the most common place they seek for evidence is from top leaders. For that reason, Mosley (2014) emphasized that "for the brand to be truly authentic and fully embedded in the organization, it needs to be led by the CEO and collectively owned by the entire senior leadership team." The critical step to get the leader team buy-in the brand is to involve them as deeply and early as possible (CIDP, 2008).

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter explains how the empirical research is being conducted. Therefore, it contains a brief introduction of different types of researcher methods, data collection methods, and why certain methods were chosen. Besides, it reveals how the research questionnaire was designed in connection with the theoretical framework.

4.1 Research method

There are two types of research methods: qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative method is the process of collecting data using a structured questionnaire where the response options are predetermined. It engages a large number of respondents and a formalized procedure to gather a clearly defined forms of data to generate a numerical result. It is best for measuring, ranking, or identifying patterns. On the contrary, the qualitative method involves collecting, analyzing data by using an observational technique or unstructured questioning such as an interview. It is best in case researcher wants to gain an in-depth insights of the subject matter. In addition, the background of the subject in qualitative research is usually a man-made meaning (Burns & Bush, 2010, p.235)

After considering the nature of the research topic and the characteristics of different research methods, the qualitative method is believed to be the most suitable technique to gain an in-depth insight for the research question. Moreover, it enables the human side of the topic as Employer Branding is all about understanding people's motivation to work for your organization.

4.2 Data Collection

This part will discuss different types of data collection methods and how data was collected by the researcher.

a. Types of data

There are two types of data: secondary and primary data. Secondary data is data that has been collected by other researchers, such as annual reports, published

books, magazines and journal articles (Burns & Bush, 2010, p.201). Primary data on the other hand, is collected by the researcher himself by using different data collection tools such as interviews, questionnaires or observation rather than relying on the existing data sources. (Burns & Bush, 2010, p166).

In this study, while the theoretical framework is based entirely on secondary data, empirical research is conducted based on primary data. To be more specific, the adopted type of primary data collection method in this study is interview.

b. Primary data collection method

Interview is a common method associated with qualitative research, which allows the interviewer to gain an in-depth perspective of an individual on a certain topic (Burns & Bush, 2010, p.167). As Employer Branding approach varies from different organizations with different problems and characteristics, interview is believed to be the most appropriate method to gain diverse perspectives of the concept.

There are three different interview methods: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. While the structured interview is based on a list of predefined question, the unstructured interview usually begins with a broad question, followed by an open and general discussion. The emi-structure method is the combination of the structured and the unstructured interview. The interview is based on a set of structured questionnaire to keep the interview focus, but also, it enables flexibility for both interviewer and interviewee to raise additional questions or further discussion when unexpected ideas emerge. (Burns & Bush, 2010, p.176,177; Bryman & Bell, 2007). The structured interview is more suitable for quantitative research, while semi-structure interview is often implemented in qualitative research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Hence, semi-structured interview is utilized in this empirical research.

Interviewees were approached by the author (interviewer) through two main platforms: LinkedIn and email. The interview proposal was personalized to fit different backgrounds of interviewees but the general template (Appendix 2) includes an introduction of interviewer, a brief of the thesis topic, invitation message, together

with attachment of the summary of theoretical research (Appendix 3) and the pre-defined questionnaire (Appendix 1). Follow-up communication regarding date, time and location/digital platforms (Skype, zoom, video call) is made if the response is positive.

Interviewees are senior profiles working for companies that are running Employer Branding project, ideally from the recruitment team, HR development team. Below is interviewees background information:

1. Asja Erdelji – Human Resource Manager at Human Croatia.

Asja is an experienced HR professional with a history of working in the retail and insurance industry, national and international corporate, taking over top positions in the Human Resource department. In the interview, she shared her experience of working as Head of Recruitment and Employer Branding for Kaufland – a German hypermarket chain, specifically, the Employer Branding project in which she was the leader, responsible for strategic planning, building and implementing Employer Brand from scratch.

2. Huong Truong – HR Assistant Manager & Employer Branding at Unilever Vietnam

Huong is a specialist in Employer Branding with profound knowledge within the field. She has been spending more than 4 years working with Employer Branding for Unilever Vietnam, responsible for a variety of tasks covering the end-to-end process of Employer Branding, including building and implementing an annual Employer Branding strategy and managed end-to-end Employer Branding activities for Unilever Flagship program (For students and graduates)

3. Mikka Huhta – Head of Employer Brand Service in Miltton Finland

Mikka is passionate about Employer Brand. He is working for Miltton – one of Finland's biggest consulting agencies – providing Employer Branding solution to companies in need. At the same time, he is writing a book about Employer Branding.

4. *Helena Lampinen – Head of Talent Attraction & Acquisition/ Assistant Director for EY Finland.*

Helena is the Recruitment and Employer Branding Leader for Finland at EY for 1.5 years, responsible for the whole Employer Branding activity in Finland and also in some projects on the Nordic level.

5. *Visa Myllyntaus – Senior Manager & Talent Acquisition at Kesko Group*

Visa is a professional with over 10 years of HR and security & risk management experience. He is working for K-group as Senior Manager, in charge of recruitment, Employer Brand, the start of employment, onboarding, employee experience, and employee engagement surveys in K Group and Kesko.

4.3 Questionnaire design

This part will introduce the process of building an effective questionnaire that generates relevant data to the research question. Figure 6 demonstrates the logical connection between the theoretical framework and the interview questionnaire.

Theoretical Framework	Content	Interview questions
What is Employer Brand?	The concept of Employer Brand and its benefits to Employer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you define Employer Brand? 2. What did you hope that Employer Brand development would deliver for your organization? How is Employer Brand affecting your organization so far?
Why Employer Brand?	Why Employer Brand is essential in the time being (External factors)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. In your perspective, how are the talent war and talent shortage affecting your company or other business in general? How Employer Brand can help to solve the problem?
How Employer Brand?	The process of developing Employer Brand and how to communicate & manage it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How did you measure your organization's status before taking action? 5. How did you develop your employer brand? Was there any formal established process that you followed? Could you outline the basic stages of the project? 6. What are the key elements in your Employer Brand positioning? 7. How did you define your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)? What are the key components of your EVP? 8. How did you launch the brand in the beginning? Internally: How did get your employee, stakeholders and the leader team to buy-in and live the brand? Externally: How did you communicating your brand externally in term of recruitment campaign or online and offline channels/flat-forms? 9. How are you measuring the effectiveness of the brand internally and externally? What are the metrics you are using?
Key Element to success	The key element for a successful Employer Brand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. What do you think is the key element for a successful Employer Branding?

Figure 6: Questionnaire Design by author

There are 10 questions in total. The questions are designed to be tightly connected with the theoretical framework.

The first two questions are expected to generate data regarding the definition of Employer Brand and the benefit of Employer Brand to the organizations. The third question is to test how talent war and talent shortage is affecting businesses and what impact Employer Branding can bring to tackle the issues. The next 6 questions are to gather insight into how to build an effective Employer Brand through different phases.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity determines whether the author or researcher are able to measure exactly what he or she intended to measure. It can be assessed by checking the equivalence between the established theories and the empirical research result. Meanwhile, reliability means the extent to which the result can be reproduced in a similar research of the same topic. It can be assessed by checking the consistency of results across time, across different researches, across different researchers and across parts of the test itself. (Malhotra, Wills & Birks, 2012; Middleton, 2019)

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ANALYSIS

This part is designed to review and analyze the result of empirical research. The analysis is divided into three parts, corresponding to three research sub-questions. The result will be presented question by question, along with the connection to theories, comments and conclusions.

5.1 What is Employer Brand?

The first two questions were expected to generate data regarding the definition of Employer Brand and the benefit of Employer Brand to organization, hence answer the first research sub-question: What is Employer Branding?

Question 1: How do you define Employer Brand?

All of the respondents share the same definition about Employer Brand, that it is the perception/impression/idea of people about an organization as an employer. This result ties well with theoretical findings in which Mosley (2014) defined Employer Brand as “thoughts and feelings that people associate with an employer”; or Bret Michington (2011) “the image of your organization as a “great place to work”.

Question 2: What did you hope Employer Brand development would deliver to your organization?

When being asked about the benefit they hope Employer Brand would deliver to their businesses, Erdelji and Huhta agreed on the two benefits of attracting and retaining the right talent. Erdelji (2020) stated that: “We want for the future to acquire the best candidates in the market and we want them to be a happy loyal productive employee”. While Huhta (2020) emphasized the importance of communicating both strengths and weaknesses of the organization because “It doesn’t make sense to communicate that you are the best employer and then when people find out you are not able to live up to their expectation, they will leave”. At the same time, Lampinen (2020) mentioned two advantages: Attract the right talent and support business growth. She emphasized that:

Good Employer Brand can attract more clients to work with us because they know we are an ethical employer so they trust us more” and “when the people are happy, they are more likely to deliver a better performance, better customer service, which makes customer happier.

On the other hand, Truong (2020) agreed with all of the stated ideas above. In her opinion, an effective Employer Brand means being able to communicate the right message to the right target, hence attract the right talent for the business; it also means understanding your employee’s need and make sure that they are happy when working for you, which keeps them stay longer; and a satisfied employee will be more likely to provide better performance, as a result, support business growth. Finally, Myllyntaus (2020)’s answer was the most relevant with the Employer Brand Impact Model (Gaddam, 2008) that Employer Brand makes recruitment easier, improves employee experience, lower return on investment, increase employee satisfaction and engagement at work; Improves brand reference from customer and indirectly affect a lot on the collaboration decision of stakeholders with the company.

Together, the findings confirm the credibility of the Employer Brand Impact model (Gaddam, 2008) in the theoretical study that an effective Employer Brand will bring three key benefits to the organization: employee attraction, retention and profitability.

5.2 Why is Employer Brand a necessity?

The second sub-research question is linked in the questionnaire through question number three regarding the talent war and talent shortage.

Question 3: In your perspective, how are the talent war and talent shortage affecting your company or other business in general? How Employer Branding can help to solve the problem?

All of the respondents confirmed that the talent war and talent shortage are real. However, each of them has different obstacles regarding these two universal issues. For Kaufland, they have a small talent market, which is the biggest risk for them

because, in a small market, people can easily go from company to company and spread the negative perception; and it only takes one negative employee experience to destroy the Employer Brand in a very short time. People will go from company to company and spread the negative perception. Erdelji (2020) stressed that the talent war and shortage had made employers no longer ones who set the rules on the market, instead, it is now the candidates who decide. Huhta (2020) and Myllyntaus (2020) shared the same point of view that there are war and shortage out there for sure but for specific kind of people only. The shortage is the most obvious for digital and technical talents such as elevator repair, software developer, car engineering, UX professional or IT professional. Meanwhile, according to Lampinen (2020), the issues affect EY a lot because there are four similar players in the industry (the Big Four) and it's really hard to differentiate themselves from competitors. Least but not last, Truong (2020) emphasized on the development of technology, in which everything can go online, makes it easier for the candidate to access to different open positions, gather information, and compare between employers, which eventually caused the war and shortage for talent. For Unilever in specific, as being a big multinational company, they need a diversity of skill sets and profiles, which means, they have to compete with all the companies in the market, no matter what industry. Truong (2020) put it:

We need to compete with competitors who are leading in the field. For example, finance-based candidates are more likely to apply for the same position in EY or KPMG rather than in Unilever.

From the short review above, it is clear that the talent war and talent shortage is affecting all companies in the market, however different companies from different industries are fighting different battles.

When it comes to how Employer Brand can help to fight against the talent war, all respondents agreed that to win the war, they have to know their strengths and uniqueness and communicate the right message to the right audience, and that is when Employer Branding comes to play. Truong (2020) said:

We should know well our strengths, our unique selling point, because by knowing that and communicating it to the market, no one can ever beat you because that selling point is unique.

At the same time, Huhta (2020) shared his experience as an Employer Brand consultant that, most of his clients, they are either bad employers or bad at telling about themselves. And Employer Branding can help in two ways: if you are better at communicating yourself as an employer, you can make a specific job or the whole industry more appealing; and it should not be about communicating that you are the best employer, it is more about showing your strength and being transparent about your weakness. Employer Branding is all about “being able to communicate both the plus and the minus of you as an employer so that from the scarcity of talent, you will get the best” he concluded. In addition, Myllyntaus (2020) emphasized the importance of Employer Branding in the midst of the talent war and shortage. He commented that “In a competitive market, if you don’t do Employer Branding, you will be left in the shadow, no matter how great of a diamond you are”.

From the result, it is clear that every organization is suffering from the Talent war and the Talent Shortage. Despite that the battle might varies depending on the size of the company, the type of talent they are looking for and the industry they are operating in, Employer Branding is believed to be an effective tool to win the war for talent by communicating the unique selling point, sending the right message to the right talent. This result ties well with the theory research, in which a lot of data regarding the shortage and war for talent from well-known credible reports was mentioned. Manpower Group (2018) provided the data of 54% of companies globally reported talent shortage. Kon Ferry (2018) predicted an inequivalent between a higher demand and lower supply in skilled labor in 2030. At the same time, many arguments from books, scientific articles confirmed the effectiveness of Employer Brand in dealing with the issue. Wilden, Gudergan & Lings (2010) stated that Employer Branding is the natural result of the fiercely competitive talent market. Chambers et al (2017) stated that creating an appealing Employer Value Proposition is the answer of senior management on why sophisticated talent should work for you rather than the team next door.

5.3 How to build and manage an effective Employer Brand?

In this part, the last sub-question of how to build an effective Employer Brand will be answered by analyzing results from seven remaining questions in the questionnaire.

Question 4: How did you develop your Employer Brand? Was there any formal established process that you followed? Could you outline the basic stage?

This question is expected to gain insight into an overview process used by professionals in the establishment of an Employer Brand.

Huhta (2020) shared a process composed of 6 steps: Goals setting, research, making choices (Choose and decided whom you are going to be as an employer), creative part (ideas of how you are going to communicate the choices you made: campaign, storytelling, writing an appealing key message), implementing and finally, measuring and revising time by time. This process is consistent with the one proposed in theoretical research, which includes four big steps: Discovery (Goal setting and research); Analyze and Creation (Making choice and creative phase), Implementing and Communication (Implementing) and finally, measurement and optimization

Truong (2020) from Unilever presented a framework of Employer Brand building (figure 7) used by Unilever Vietnam. Despite having more steps than the model in theoretical research by CIDP, they both share the same structure: Discovery (Organizational Objectives, Talent & Market Insight; Employee Insight); Analyze & Creation (Strategy, Key Messages & Creative); Implementing (Communication plan; Activities & Engage); Measuring (Performance Measurement).



Figure 7: Unilever Vietnam's Framework of building Employer Brand

Erdelji (2020)'s response was relevant to the theoretical structure. She first started with goal setting by sitting together with the management board.

After we knew our goals, we collected insight (...) After having all the information, we defined our brand (...) we implement and communicate the brand first to internal employee and then to potential recruit and external market. And of course, it's an on-going project so we have to measure occasionally and revise.

Another similar process was shared by Lampinen (2020), which consists of: a clear target of what you want to achieve; doing researches, defining who you want to become as an employer, creating a tactic plan, executing the plan and following up.

On the contrary, the response of this question from Myllyntaus (2020) could not provide the expected outcome. However, looking at responses for question number 5, 6, 7 and 8 from his interview report, the same process of building Employer Brand can be recognized. He did walk through the Discovery phase (define strategy, research); Analysis & Creation (define talent segment, key values, EVP, key message), Implementing and Communication (Internal Campaign, renew brand identity, brand tone of voice, collaboration with external partners), Measurement (Internal and external survey).

On the whole, the results demonstrated in this question match the finding in the theoretical study that the process of building an Employer Brand consists of four main stages: Discovery, Analysis and Creation, Implementing and Communication, Measurement (CIDP, 2008)

Question 5: How did you measure your organization's status before taking action?

The question aimed to examine from which stakeholders and how to collect insight about the organization as an employer in the Discovery phase. Overall, all respondents agreed that it is critical to first collect insight from the management board, then from the employees and finally from the external talent market.

When being asked about what type of information to collect from the management board, Lampinen (2020) indicated the importance of “their leadership style, the future direction where they want to lead the company toward”. Huhta (2020) shared that it was hard to set up a meeting with all managers due to their busy schedules. He recommended an in-depth interview or a small focus group interview would be the best way to get insight from them. This method was confirmed to be used by other interviewees as well.

With the employees and external talent market, it was suggested by all respondents to collect information regarding their perception of who you are as an employer; what motivates them and what they want from the employer. While an internal survey is used for internal employees; market-research agencies are recommended to be the most effective and time-saving method by all informants.

In short, these results confirmed the earlier theory that in the first phase of Discovery, it is important to collect insight from three layers of perspective: management board, internal employees and external talents to understand who you are as an employer at the moment.

Question 6: What are the key elements in your Employer Brand positioning? Question 7: How did you define your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)? What are the key components of your EVP?

Questions 6 and 7 were utilized to create data for the second phase of Analyze and Creation.

In general, all informants analyzed the data they got from the discovery phase to define “our talent segment better, key values, and then we were able to define our EVP” (Lampinen, 2020); “positioning key message, which is the one goal, one sentence answering why are we a good employer” (Erdelji, 2020); “brand differentiator, brand personality, brand values and the people we search” (Truong, 2020). Myllyntaus (2020) shared the same idea: “we did all kinds of survey to get the data and we were then able to define our talent segment better, key values, and then we were able to define our EVP”. Huhta (2020) emphasized the importance of building the positioning model that it should be based on all the data collected in the Discovery phase rather than on gut feeling or whatever employers feel like they want to become.

When being asked about the process of building an EVP, all respondents shared the same view that EVP should be based on a set of key values. Huhta (2020) defined EVP as “a few themes that we would like people to associate with us when they think of us as an employer”. With the Kaufland project, Erdelji (2020) also mentioned that she built the EVP based on some key pillars, which were chosen out in the set of 10 common values. In addition, Truong (2020) shared that Unilever Vietnam had to pick only two out of four global values of Unilever that are more appealing to the Vietnamese talent market. She also mentioned that the final step was “to create an appealing and interesting message to communicate with target audience”. This point of view was supported by other respondents as well. Huhta (2020) also stressed the importance of writing and translating the key pillars of EVP into key messages so that they are appealing and sounds real. In light of making EVP key messages interesting, Lampinen (2020) suggested using external agencies to do this creative work.

In comparison with the theoretical framework, the process of building EVP (Barrow and Mosley, 2015) should first start by defining a key positioning that employer wants to be famous for, followed by defining the 4 key pillars that support the key positioning and the final step is to translate the key values into an appealing message. It is obvious from the short review above that all the case companies followed the second and the last step: they build EVP based on a set of key values and translate the values into appealing messages. However, there was no mention of the first step. Due to the lack of data, the author decided not to investigate further if the first step of defining the core positioning is necessary or not; instead, this will be mentioned in the next chapter of ‘Recommendation for further researches’.

Question 8: How did you launch the brand in the beginning? (Internally and Externally)

The purpose of this question is to test the third phase of Implementing & Communication: how the case companies launch their brand internally to management and employee and externally to the talent market.

What stands out in the result is that they all started first from the management board because “they need to really understand the brand and confidently talk about it”, said Truong (2020). Furthermore, Erdelji (2020) highlighted the importance of getting the management on board first

We need to make sure that they understand everything and be on the same page, the same approach, that we speak the same language and have a common ground and that all board members understand it equally and talk about it equally, because if they don't, then everything will fall apart.

The ways to do it could be: organizing workshops and preparing handbooks with guidelines on how to communicate the brand. The communication will go top-down to the employees. When being asked about how to get employee to buy and live the brand, Myllyntaus (2020) and Huhta (2020) shared the same idea that it is easier to show them the living evidence of the brand first instead of telling them there is a new brand. “You have to first walk the walk and then to talk the talk” (Myllyntaus,

2020). Together with living the brand, Erdelji, Truong and Lampinen (2020) created branding material such as handbook and e-letter to introduce and explain the brand. All in all, the two steps should go hand in hand: first to live the brand, then when an employee recognizes the change by living evidence from their managers, they will get curious and want to learn more about the brand, that is when we need to provide them with an information portal, internal website, e-letter or handbook for them to learn more about the brand. In connection with the theory, the result confirms the critical first step when launching the brand is to start from the top. Moreover, it is consistent with the model of promoting employer engagement when launching the brand, which includes: think, feel and do (Mosley, 2014): we should get them to understand the concept rationally, emotionally and show them the consistent presence of the brand in everything the organization does.

In terms of external communication, collaboration with University and doing campaigns to raise awareness were suggested the most by all respondents. Furthermore, it is recommended to update social media, company website, and career page to make sure that they reflect the brand values, mission, vision, and the EVP. In addition, Truong, Lampinen, and Erdelji mentioned the concept of using employees as the brand ambassador by sending them to campus/university to represent the company or feature employee stories on social media and company website. Besides, candidate experience was touched on by Erdelji and Helena during the interview. They underlined the priority of training recruiters and hiring managers on how to represent the company and deliver the right key message of the brand to candidates. (Lampinen, 2020; Truong, 2020; Erdelji, 2020)

In general, all the methods mentioned in the theory part were used by all respondents. However, not all case companies use the same communication channels, the choice might vary depending on their strategy and budget. Moreover, all the mentioned methods in the theory section are the most used and popular ones, the author did not cover all the methods available. For that reason, external Employer Branding will be listed under 'Recommendation for further research'.

Question 9: How are you measuring the effectiveness of the brand internally and externally? What are the metrics you are using?

The most common method reported to be used by all case companies to measure the effectiveness of internal Employer Branding was the internal employee satisfaction survey. Additionally, many metrics were brought up to measure the effectiveness of recruitment marketing such as number of applications, quality of application, which source to get the application from. Erdelji (2020) recommended one tip that HR people have to keep a big ear on what is happening inside the company.

In terms of external Employer Brand, external research agencies such as Universum were reported to be used by all case companies to measure the perception of external talent toward them as an employer and the competitiveness of the market such as salary standard (how much salary the competitors are paying).

Many metrics were brought up by Helena and Asja to measure the effectiveness of recruitment marketing such as number of applications, quality of application, which source to get the applications from. At the same time, Huong presented a logical process of measuring the effectiveness of recruitment marketing, from the pre-application period: measure traffics through social media such as number of followers, number of interactions, number of application though each channel; to the post-application period after candidate went through the whole recruitment process: cost per hire, conversion rate, offer acceptance rate, retention rate, satisfaction rate from hiring managers and new hires. Candidate experience were taken care of through candidate survey and actively asking for feedback after every interviews. (Lampinen, 2020; Truong, 2020; Erdelji, 2020)

On the other hand, despite not giving any details of what metrics to use, Huhta (2020)'s answer to this question described a bigger picture of what to measure:

Perception of you as an employer at the moment and how close it is to your EVP (...) Also look at the awareness of your brand (...) how many people would want to work for you, what is the consideration percentage of your target audience .

The interview results are relevant to the findings in the theory. It confirmed that there are three scopes that employer needs to take care of in term of measurement: internal employee, external market which includes: the reputation of the brand and the effectiveness of recruitment marketing activities. While internal survey is the most popular method to measure employee engagement and satisfaction; Employer Brand reputation can be measured by external survey provided by agencies such as Universum; and the effectiveness of recruitment marketing can be measured by many different hiring metrics.

Question 10: What do you think is the key element for a successful Employer Brand?

When it comes to the most critical element to a successful Employer Brand, all informants agreed that management buy-in is one of the crucial factors. Lampinen (2020) explained that “if the management doesn’t stand behind the brand and the key message then it’s not real”. Myllyntaus (2020) emphasized the importance of this element through the budget and strategy perspective: “Without the buy-in, you will have small budget, not enough resources and not linked to the strategy”.

Despite the firm positive confirmation of respondents about the importance of management buy-in, most of them believed the most important one to be being strategic. It means Employer Branding has to support the business strategy. Helena explained that it is easy to think of some fun and attracting campaigns to do Employer Branding but if the campaigns don’t support the strategy, it doesn’t make sense doing them (Lampinen, 2020). Mikka also shared the same idea. He stated that employees need to look at Employer Brand from a strategic point of view to make sure that they know what they are trying to achieve and how that goal being translated into Employer Branding. However, when being asked about his opinion of Management buy-in, he presented an interesting point of view that management buy-in actually comes down to being strategic because if the Employer Brand project doesn’t support business strategy, it is impossible to get the management on-board (Huhta, 2020). Myllyntaus (2020) shared the same perspective when sharing that:

Without the buy-in, you will have a small budget, not enough resources and not linked to the strategy. If something is not part of the strategy, then during the bad time, they will cut down cost and you will lose the budget.

In short, management buy-in is important; however, if the brand doesn't support business strategy, it is impossible to get the management on-board. In other words, being strategic is the most important factor for a successful Employer Brand.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to underline the main results of the research. The findings of the research will be briefly presented question by question. Research limitations and recommendations for further researches are stated in the final sub-chapter.

6.1 Research result

After analyzing all the data collected from the theoretical and empirical research, the research questions were resolved by the author.

What is Employer Brand?

Employer Brand is a concept founded by Simon Barron and Tim Amber in 1996. It is the perception of people about an organization as an employer. Every organization cannot escape the fact that they have an Employer Brand, whether they build it or not. And Employer Branding is the process of building the brand intentionally the way the employer wants them to be perceived.

By having an intentional Employer Brand and considering your company as a product to the current and potential employees, employers could enjoy great advantages from it. Firstly, a good Employer Brand attracts the right talent. A positive brand brings not only many job applications but also those that are the right fits for the position and to the company. Secondly, a good Employer Brand supports retention rate. It means understanding your employee's needs and making sure that they are happy when working with you, which will eventually keep them longer in the business. Finally, a strong Employer Branding improves profitability significantly. A positive Employer Brand image attracts not only talent but also more customers, thus, contributes to the increase in profitability. Moreover, it indirectly has a substantial on the collaboration decision of stakeholders with the company and eventually supports the business growth.

Why is Employer Brand necessary?

The talent market is facing a big issue of a large talent shortage, which eventually creates a war for talent and makes the competition for talent more severe than ever before. An obvious evidence is that 54% of companies globally have reported being suffered from the scarcity of talent. Although the war for talent is seemingly a universal issue, each company is fighting different battles depending on what size they are, the industry and the market they are operating in, and types of talent they are looking for. For example, big international companies might fight for all types of talent because their business structure requires talents from all sectors, so they might have to fight with the best marketing agency in the market to fill in a Marketing Manager position. Another example is that if one is operating in an industry that has many competitors, they have to work hard to differentiate how working with them is better and more unique than working at competitor's companies.

Employer Branding is believed by many experts and is mentioned in many books, scientific articles to be the most effective tool to fight against the war for talent. Employer Branding can help in two ways. Firstly, it helps you with knowing who you are and be aware of your uniqueness as an employer, and by knowing your unique selling point, you are unlikely to lose because you are unique. Secondly, Employer Branding also means communicating clearly about your strengths, weaknesses, and knowing what type of talent you are looking for, which makes it easier for the employer to attract the right talent.

How to build an effective Employer Brand?

A comprehensive overview of the process of building an effective Employer Brand is presented in figure 8. It consists of four phases: Discover, Analyze & Creation, Implementation & Communication, and Measurement.



Figure 8: Process of building an effective Employer Brand by author

The first phase is Discovery, in which data is collected from three layers of perspective: management board, internal employees and external talent market to answer questions such as: to which direction management board wants their company to grow? What are the business strategies? And What are the perceptions of internal employees and potential recruits about you as an employer?

The second phase is Analyze & Creation, where the insight collected from the first phase will be analyzed to create an Employer positioning model and Employer Value Proposition. The positioning model answers questions of what employer wants to become and whom they want to recruit. Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is the package of functional and emotional offers from employer to employee.

The next phase is to implement and communicate the brand internally and externally. In terms of internal branding, it is recommended to start from the top: get your management on board first. Following that, internal employees are the next

target audience. The most effective way to get them to buy the brand is to get them to understand the concept rationally and emotionally. External branding aims at potential talents and candidates who are participating in the recruitment process of any open position. Different channels and tactics can be used in this phase depending on budget and the Employer Brand strategy.

The last phase is to measure the brand through three main stakeholders: internal employees, candidate experience, and external talent market. There are different methods to measure internal employee experience with the brand, however, the most popular one is employee satisfaction survey. Other methods could be online review platform, retention rate, etc. Survey is as well the most effective method to measure candidate experience. In terms of external branding, there are two scopes to measure: Brand reputation and the effectiveness of recruitment marketing. While brand reputation can be measured by data provided by research agency, for example Universum; the latter can be measured by different metrics, such as quality of hires, cost per application, time to hire, etc.

The key element for an effective Employer Branding

The key element for an effective Employer Branding is believed to be being strategic in the very first step of establishing the brand. It means Employer Brand should be considered as a tool to support business strategy. If the Employer Brand is not a part of the business strategy, it is impossible to get management on board and the budget to even start the project.

6.2 Author's reflection on Validity and Reliability

In this research, validity is guaranteed by the tight connection between the questionnaire design to the theoretical framework to generate the most relevant result. In the end, the result from empirical research was corresponding to the theoretical findings.

In terms of reliability, five interviews were conducted to ensure the stability and repeatability of the result. Moreover, the primary data is collected from high quality

and certified sources as interviewees are experts in the field with a profound understanding of the research concept. In short, the validity and reliability of this research is guaranteed.

6.3 Limitation and Recommendation for further researches

As the main motivation of the author to research the topic of Employer Branding is to get familiar with the concept which was new to her, the research approach, therefore, was limited on the surface of the topic. The author only presented a big picture of the whole process of building an effective Employer Brand and did not go deep into of each phase of the process. Many topics within Employer Brand management can be developed into a more detailed and completed research. The author recommends some topics below:

- How to build an effective Employer Value Proposition (EVP)
- How to build Employer Brand Positioning model
- Internal Employer Branding: most effective channels/activities/tactics to promote the brand and measurement metrics
- External Employer Branding/ Recruitment marketing: most effective channels/activities/tactics to promote the brand and measurement metrics
- The importance of Candidate Experience to Employer Brand and how to build and deliver an excellent Candidate Experience.

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APPENDIX 1



Research question: How to build an effective Employer Branding

Research Objective: Defining the concept to build an effective Employer Branding

List of questions

1/ How do you define Employer Brand?

2/ In your perspective, how are the talent war and talent shortage affecting your company or other business in general? How Employer Branding can help to solve the problem?

3/ What did you hope that Employer Brand development would deliver for your organization?

How is Employer affecting your organization so far?

4/ How did you measure your organization's status before taking action?

5/ How did you develop your employer brand? Were there any formal established process that you followed? Could you outline the basic stage?

6/ What are the key elements in your Employer Brand positioning?

7/ How did you define your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)? What are the key components of your EVP?

8/ How did you launch the brand in the beginning? Internally: How did get your employee, stakeholders and the leader team to buy-in and live the brand? Externally: How did you communicating your brand externally in term of recruitment campaign or online and offline channels/platforms ?

9/ How are you measuring the effectiveness of the brand internally and externally? What are the metrics you are using?

10/ What do you think is the key element for a successful employer branding?

APPENDIX 2

Dear Sir/Madame,

My name is Vivian Nguyen, a student from Vaasa University of Applied Science in Finland, currently pursuing bachelor degree in International Business. At the moment, I am working on my thesis about the topic on '*How to build an effective Employer Brand*'. As part of the empirical research, I need to conduct interviews with experts within the field to collect professional opinions about the research topic.

I got your contact information from my professor, Irena Miljković, who is currently teaching at VERN University of Applied Sciences. Based on Irena's brief introduction and a short research I did, I believe that your experience in Employer Branding makes you an ideal person to provide valuable first-hand information from your own perspective.

Main purpose of the interview is to capture your thoughts and perspectives on the process of building an effective employer branding, the key elements to success and challenges/risks that might embark. Your personal information and professional background will be introduced in the research in order to increase the reliability and validity of the research. Your answers will be mentioned in the research analyze part. However, if you wish to remain anonymous, I can assure the confidentiality of all the provided information.

The interview includes 11 questions, takes around 30-45 minutes and is very informal. It can be conducted either face-to-face or through online video call platforms (Skype, Zoom, etc.). In case you are not able to participate in an interactive interview, written answers would be very much appreciated.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your shared knowledge and experience would be a valuable asset to this study and would lead to a greater public understanding of Employer Branding and the people in the field.

Please find attached the interview questionnaire and brief summary of the theoretical research.

If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to ask.

I am looking forward to your response.

Best regards,

Vivian Nguyen.

APPENDIX 3

HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER BRAND

The concept

'...a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organization distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture' (CIDP, 2008)

Talent war & Talent Shortage

- 54% companies report talent shortage
- High demand for complex skills
- Job mobility is increasing



Benefits of Employer Branding

- Increase retention rate
- Improve profitability
- Attract the right talent



Discovery

- Discovery is to collect an insightful input about the current status of the employer brand from three groups: top management, Internal employees and external talent market
- How to collect: workshop, focus group interview, survey
- Expected outcome: Brand reality model (current values, cultures, personalities, proposition, differentiators, talent profile)



Analysis & Creation

Defining how you want to be seen through two models:

- Brand Positioning models: proposition sentence, brand values, personalities, target employee profile
- Employee Value proposition: defining the key positioning, defining 3-5 priorities (Key pillars), translate key pillars into different messages that relevant to different target groups.



The guide



Implementation & Communication

- Internal Branding: Starting from the top: get the top and line managers briefed on the EVP and understood the roles they have to play; Employee Engagement: three stages of engagement: Think, feel and do
- External Branding: Launch the brand on company website, social medias; Keep track of unprofessional channels such as employer review website; Use your employee as brand ambassador
- Manage candidate journey: deliver a positive impression even in the case of unsuccessful candidate



Measurement & optimization

- Internal measurement: Make sure EVP is up-to-date and relevant with target group by conducting survey; measure employer engagement and retention rate; customer satisfaction rate
- External measurement: Measuring brand image and reputation by conducting survey; keeping track of how relevant EVP to target audience, monitoring closely competitor's offering, measure return on investment, effectiveness of marketing activities and recruitment process.
- Candidate experience: asking for feedback from candidate

Key Elements to success

Management board buy-in



Clear and Compelling EVP

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