

# Let's talk about employee engagement

Measuring a German company's initiatives to increase their employees engagement

BSc. Communication Science Graduation Thesis

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to examine the factors influencing employee engagement and to review whether the initiatives of a German Manufacturing Company to increase employee engagement and their attractiveness as an employer are effective. For this, the effect of (1) perceived organizational support, (2) the opportunity to feed views upwards, (3) the senior management receptiveness to verbal contributions of employees, (4) and the satisfaction of provided engagement related resources on the intention of employees to engage within a German Manufacturing company, and whether that has an effect on the perceived employer attractiveness. Further, the mediating role of employee engagement between the predictors and outcome is investigated. A paper survey among the employees of the German Company (N=153) was conducted. The participants were asked for their evaluation on their satisfaction with the provided resources by the company. The results show that in a traditional auto manufacturing German company employees prefer to have resources where they could engage with the organization as well as direct praise having an influence on the employee's engagement. This research provides insights into the theoretical limitation of engagement's definition and how can the German company reevaluate their engagements project in the light of the new findings on what motivates employees to engage with their organization.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, employer attractiveness, employee voice, perceived organisational support

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, organizations have recognized human capital as a competitive advantage in the global economy (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012). Companies that are not aware of their employees' needs and are not able to provide good treatment will eventually lose talented people (Sundarary, 2010). In an attempt to keep their talented people, companies are increasingly working on being an attractive employer by increasing their employee's engagement. Berger (2014), Gubman (2004), and Marcey and Schneider (2008) regard employee engagement as a predictor of the perceived attractiveness of an employer. However, Kular et al. (2008) emphasize that the degree employees choose to engage with the organisation depends on the resources they receive from their organisation. This position is shared by the Institute for Employment Studies, which recognizes engagement as reciprocal relationship where organizations have to put in work to actively engage their employees, who in turn decide on the level of engagement they give back (Robinson et al., 2004). Dai and Qin (2016), Kular et al. (2008), May et al. (2004), and Saks (2006) argue that the support employees perceive to receive from their organization influences the level of engagement they show. Another factor that is argued to influence employee engagement is the concept of employee voice. More specifically, the opportunity to feed views upwards and a positive receptiveness to the voiced views of employees are associated with a perceived feeling of value and involvement (Ruck et al., 2017; Truss et al. 2006) and have a positive influence on employee engagement (Rees et al., 2013; Beugré, 2010; Purcell, 2014; Ruck et al., 2017; Truss et al., 2017). Sundarary (2010) claims that companies who understand the conditions that enhance employee engagement in their own workforce have achieved something that most competitors will not be able to imitate. The reason for this is, that engaged employees are known to excel at their work by willingly adapting their behaviour to achieve organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Nevertheless, the challenge as an employer is to understand the factors that influence employee engagement in their own individual organizational context. Especially, as different groups of people in different organizational contexts express different needs and are influenced by different factors (Kular et al., 2008).

## 1.1 DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

This thesis is written in cooperation with a German Manufacturing Company that aims to enhance their attractiveness to their current production workers by facilitating opportunities to engage with the company. They have recognized the importance of keeping employees engaged, while also acknowledging, that they need to create an environment that supports employee engagement. For this reason, they have been working on a project with the title “Digital Ecosystem” to provide their production workers with the necessary resources to better engage with the company. Within the project, large monitors will be installed in every break room, accessible to all teams from the production line. The monitors allow the team leaders to connect their laptops during team meetings, which enables digital working, for example with tools such as Microsoft Teams. The technological features create a variety of possibilities for internal communication purposes, e.g. communication between production workers and the management. Microsoft Teams meetings can be streamed to the monitors via the laptops, making it easier for all team members to participate during team meetings.

Additionally, the project also enables managers to directly communicate with the employees, creating a two-way communication stream. Besides, the monitors increase the flow of available information for the employees. When the monitors are not being used for meetings or streaming, a variety of content will be continuously displayed in rotation. The scope of content includes corporate news, corporate strategy and goals, upcoming events, employee initiatives, weekly news, and pressing news that are of immediate relevance (e.g., severe weather warnings, changes in COVID-19 measures). In summary, the technological features of the project are intended to increase the flow of information to employees from the production line, and to enable communication between the employees and the management, focusing on the possibility for employees to feed their views upwards. These features are aimed to serve as a base to foster employee engagement and consequently increase the attractiveness as an employer.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the factors influencing employee engagement and to review whether the characteristics of the project positively influence the intentions the employees to

engage with their company, as well as whether it enhances the perceived attractiveness of the company as an employer. Thus, to investigate the topic at hand, the following research question has been formulated:

*RQ1: To what extent do these factors ((1) perceived organizational support; (2) opportunity to feed views upwards; (3) senior management receptiveness; (4) satisfaction with provided resources) have an effect on the intention of employees to engage in a German Manufacturing Company, and does that have an effect on the perceived employer attractiveness?*

Besides the relevance this research poses for the cooperating company, there is also added value to the existing literature and research corpus. While a great amount of research regarding employee engagement can be found, less research has been conducted that critically examined the concepts of employee engagement from an academic perspective while applying and testing it based on specific practices from the industries. This is in line with the suggestions made by Kular et al. (2008), that future research should not only measure the level of engagement, but also consider the factors that facilitates or hinders engagement in an employee's opinion. Furthermore, the findings of this report contribute to a better understanding of what resources are suitable to facilitate employee engagement in certain organizational settings, as suggested by Rees et al. (2013).

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following theoretical framework, the concepts that are of relevance for this study will be elaborated on and the hypotheses will be proposed. First, employee engagement will be introduced and defined. Followed by the factors that influence engagement, employer attractiveness, and employee engagement as a mediator. Lastly, the conceptual model will be presented.

## 2.1 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In their review on the concept of employee engagement, Kular et al. (2008), identified a lack of a universal definition for employee engagement and argue that the differences in definition make it increasingly difficult to compare studies as each study examines engagement under a different protocol. Especially, as some studies focus their research on how employees engage in their work (Harter et al., 2002), while others focus on engagement that goes beyond an employee's daily work (Ariani, 2013). For this reason, Saks (2006) made the relevant distinction between job engagement and organizational engagement, where the latter revolves around how employees engage on an organizational level with their company, unrelated to their job or daily tasks. These types of engagement have different antecedents and outcomes (Marcey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Nevertheless, defining employee engagement raises the question of the difference in comparison to related construct. Some authors have addressed those problems surrounding the concept of employee engagement and have concluded that organizational satisfaction, commitment, and involvement are part of organizational engagement, advocating it as a mega-construct that may hold greater empirical utility for predicting individual work behaviour (Iyer & Israel, 2012; Little & Little, 2006; Marcey & Schneider, 2008; Zigrami, 2009).

Although the definitions and meanings of engagement throughout the corpus of literature varies, there are shared opinions among researcher from the field. After their extended review of common conceptualization of employee engagement, Shuck and Wollard (2010) define it as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes." (p. 103). This definition shares the position that engagement is manifested, observed, and measured through an employee's behaviour, but has no physical properties in itself (Kahn, 1990; Marcey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Marcey and Schneider (2008) understand this behavioural manifestation as "behaviours that extend beyond typical or expected in-role performance" (p.15) by e.g. demonstrating attentiveness and proactively seeking opportunities aimed at organizational outcomes (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). However, the behavioural outcomes build upon the cognitive and emotional engagement of an individual employee (Marcey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Cognitive engagement refers to the understanding of



their purpose or mission within the organization, while emotional engagement refers to the emotional ties an employee can have with their organizations (Ferrer & McWilliams, 2006). The relationship between the three dimensions can be better explained by acknowledging employee engagement as a reciprocal relationship, or two-way relationship, between employees and their employing organization (Ferrer & McWilliams, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004). Here, the organization provides their employees with something “extra”, and the employees respond with increased engagement that goes beyond a mere transactional relationship (Ferrer & McWilliams, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004). In agreement to this, Gupta and Sharma (2016) identify engagement as a two-way process in which the organizations themselves have to take extra steps and effort to expect engagement from their employees in return. These “extra steps”, as Gupta and Sharma (2016) call them, can be realized in form of e.g. provided resources, support, policies, or projects, that aim to stimulate the cognitive and emotional dimensions of engagement (Gupta & Sharma (2016).

Based on the above, this paper considers employee engagement as a reciprocal relationship or two-way process between employees and their organization, where organizations can stimulate the cognitive and emotional dimension of engagement through initiatives, and employees respond to these by demonstrating engagement behaviours. Behavioural manifestations of engagement are considered any action of an employee that goes beyond the behavioural outcome of their field of responsibility at their workplace, directed towards organizational outcomes.

## 2.2 ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As previously discussed, the different dimensions of engagement are influenced by different factors that ultimately predict the behavioral outcomes that can be observed and measured as employee engagement. To illustrate, Robinson et al (2004) highlight that Initiatives that provide employees with a feeling of being valued by organization stimulates emotional engagement, which in turn leads to higher engagement as a response within the reciprocate relationship.

Thus, organizations should aim to facilitate the conditions that stimulate the engagement dimensions of their employees, befitting the individual context of their organizations. As a result, organization can expect an increase in their employee’s willingness and intention to adapt their behaviour to contribute to the

organizational success, in other words show behavioural engagement (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

## 2.3 PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Perceived organizational support describes the perception of employees that their organization values their efforts and cares about their well-being (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Karanges, 2014). Work environments that are characterized by openness and supportiveness allow employees to voice opinions without fearing for the consequences, making them feel safe (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Additionally, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found, that organizational support is being perceived as such, when employees receive the necessary resources to perform their work efficiently and effectively. What resources are perceived as necessary depends on the organizational context and the individual employees' perception especially (Karanges, 2014; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). To illustrate, being given the opportunity to voice concerns, reach out to the management and being listened to are commonly perceived as support by employees (Kular et al., 2008). Therefore, the effort organizations put into supporting their employees stimulated the emotional dimension of employee engagement. Moreover, supportive management promote psychological safety which is a significant predictor of engagement according to the model developed by Kahn (1990; see also, Saks, 2006; Dai & Qin, 2016; Kular et al., 2008). Additionally, a study conducted by Afzali et al. (2014) found that when employees feel organizational support, they also feel more empowered, which has further been identified as a predictor for employee engagement (Berger, 2014). Furthermore, multiple studies have shown that when employees perceived their organizations as supportive, it significantly affects their level of engagement (Dai & Qin, 2016; May et al., 2004; Saks, 2006).

While there are a variety of ways how organizations can convey their support to their employees, Karanges et al. (2015) suggests that they can convey their support and promote a supportive environment by means of internal communication practices. In particular, the way managers communicate with their employees, and communication mechanisms that enable employees to partake in dialogues can be perceived as supportive of the organization (Allen, 1995). Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

*H1: Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on the intention of employees to engage.*

## 2.2.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

In this study, internal communication and employee engagement are taken from the stakeholder approach based on the conceptualization of Welch and Jackson (2007). This approach underlines the importance of treating employees as internal stakeholders and considering the employees perspective, or in general the receiver's point of view, in managing internal communication practices or strategies (Ruck & Trainor, 2012). Internal communication has been substantially studied to be a key determinant of employee engagement (Welch, 2011; Karanges et al., 2015; Bandarkar & Pandita, 2013). However, while the relation and role of internal communication regarding employee engagement has been studied extensively by academic and practitioner literature, less focus has been set on understanding which internal communication practices and mechanisms drive and predicts employee engagement. Additionally, the distinction between job engagement and organizational engagement made by Saks (2006) further decreases the amount of empirical research done on this subject.

A first step to identify which communication practices support engagement, is by approaching organizations as an environment composed of communication units in hierarchical relations to each other (Jakubiec, 1990). For this environment to function effectively, a dialogue between employees and management needs to be established, by means of integrated communication practices (Lee, 2010; Gruning, 1992). To capture the complexity of communication processes within organizations, Welch and Jackson (2007) established an Internal Communication Matrix. Within that matrix, they distinguished different dimensions of internal communication, one of them being internal corporate communication. Internal corporate communication describes the "communication between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims" (Ruck et al., 2017; Welch & Jackson, 2011). Additionally, it is critical, that organizations do not misinterpret the internal corporate communication concepts as a one-way discipline, but rather it encourages managers to provide opportunities for dialogue through two-way upward communication (Tourish & Robson, 2006;

Ruck et al., 2017). Ruck et al. (2017) recognize the challenge of facilitating dialogue between employees and managers and suggest to complement management voice channels by promoting opportunities for upward communication and dialogue via employee voice channels.

### **2.2.2.1 EMPLOYEE VOICE**

In the process of examining engagement as an outcome of internal communication practices, employee voice has been identified as an effective supporter of engagement (Rees et al., 2013; Beugré, 2010; Purcell, 2014; Ruck et al., 2017). Managers and organizations can create conditions or organizational factors that foster behavioral engagement, such as by giving employees a “voice” (Beugré, 2010). Similar to internal communication, Van Dyne et al. (2003) recognize employee voice as a multidimensional construct, which describes the practice of employees to intentionally express work related ideas, information and opinions. In line with that, Morrison et al. (2011) add that the “voice” is used with the intention to improve organizational or unit functioning. The presence of voice can contribute to a positive overall outcome for organizations. For example, by creating opportunities for employees to express critical feedback and discontent about current happenings within their organizations, managers can take corrective actions to improve the organizations and thus adding to the effectiveness of organizational outcomes (Beugré, 2010).

For this study, two particular aspects of “voice” are of interest in regard to engagement, namely upward communication from employees, and senior management receptiveness. Both of these dimensions are associated with a perceived feeling of value and involvement (Ruck et al., 2017; Truss et al. 2006) stimulating the emotional dimension of engagement (Rees et al., 2013; Beugré, 2010; Purcell, 2014; Ruck et al., 2017; Truss et al., 2017).

#### **2.2.2.1.1 OPPORTUNITY TO FEED VIEWS UPWARDS**

There has been a reoccurrence of the findings suggesting the relevance of upwards communication as predictor of employee engagement. Stevanovi and Gmitrovic (2016) emphasise the important role upward communication has for effective internal communication processes. They describe upward communication as the process where “employees of the organization communicate information to the superiors about their ideas, requests, suggestions, complaints, and the like” (p.32). Wilkinson et al., (2004) add that upward communication can involve opportunities for employees and managers to exchange views about issues, as well as upward problem-solving with opportunities for employees to provide feedback on specific topics.

This also emphasizes the value critical upward communication poses for organizations, as it can prevent unrealistic views of opinions within an organization of senior management (Ruck et al., 2017; Tourish & Robson, 2006). Truss et al. (2006) found that providing employees the opportunity to feed their views upwards has a significant influence on engagement. Additionally, Purcell and Hall (2012, as cited in Ruck et al., 2017): state that employees are much more likely to engage with their organization, by being given a “voice” and being listened to. Similarly, Ruck et al. (2017) have found that employees who are satisfied with opportunities to feed views upwards, as well as to communicate ideas to senior management positively influence their engagement with an organization. They explain, that by providing employees with the opportunity of voicing their input upwards, they feel more valued as individuals, providing a deeper level of communication within the organization (Ruck et al., 2017), stimulating the emotional dimension of engagement. Thus, by integrating internal communication methods that are designed to maximize opportunities to feed views upwards, organizations can profit from a higher level of employee engagement (Ruck et al., 2017; Tourish & Robson, 2006; Truss et al., 2006). Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

*H2: The opportunity to feed views upwards has a positive effect on employee engagement.*

#### **2.2.2.1.2 SENIOR MANAGEMENT RECEPTIVENESS**

The other side of the employee voice coin, as Ruck et al. (2017) call it, concerns the commitment of senior management to listen and responding to the “voices” of employees. Employee can feel discouraged of expressing their voice if they perceive that senior manager do not want to hear their views (Ruck et al., 2017). Beugré (2010) argues, ignoring employee voices could negatively influence the relationship between voice and engagement. He describes the negative reactivity of senior management as “deaf-ear” syndrome and emphasized that besides preventing employees to voice their views, it could even lead to active disengagement (Beugré, 2010). When providing the opportunity to feed views upwards or exercise voice otherwise, employees can arguably expect to receive a response to it or ideally witness resulting changes (Beugré, 2010). However, if their voices are ignored, Beugré (2010) posits that it may even lead to cynicism or frustration. In an organizational context, it can be expected that employees have witnessed themselves or through the experiences of colleagues, that some managers are not committed to listening to voices expressed by their subordinates. This is a relevant consideration to acknowledge

when establishing opportunities for employee voice with the aim to increase engagement, as based on prior experiences, employees critical voice can place employees' feelings of psychological safety at risk (Ruck et al., 2017). As discussed in a previous section, psychological safety is one of the conditions identified by Kahn (1990) to significantly influence the intention of engagement. On the other side, a positive receptiveness of senior management to employee voices have been found to add to employees' perception of being valued, stimulating the emotional dimension of engagement, and thus increasing an employees' intention of engaging with their organization (Ruck et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

*H3: Feeling valued by a positive receptiveness of senior management has a positive effect on employee engagement.*

## 2.4 Resources for a supportive engagement environment

In previous sections, the relevance of providing employees with the necessary resources and environment to support engagement has become apparent (see; Chandrasekar, 2001; Kappert & Meachen, 2012; Kular et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2004). This poses the questions, what do these scholars exactly mean by resources, and which resources can be considered as necessary. In a structured literature review, Lee et al. (2020) examined how the current engagement literature positions and defines resources. Even though, there is a vast amount sources linking resources to employee engagement (e.g. Kular et al., 2008), they discerned that there is not a general contextualization of what a resource could be and no boundary around the meaning of the resource term. Hence, to further understand what resources can be considered necessary and relevant, the organizational context, employees' subjective perception, and fit of the resource to the best one function should be considered (Lee et al., 2010). The significance of physical and technological resources, depend on the subjective experience of the employees who receive them (Lee et al, 2010). This implies, that the value of those resources can be enhanced based on the perceived support and help they pose to archive goals (Lee et al., 2010). Lee et al. (2010) add, that if employees have insufficient access to resources they could feel poorly supported, which in turn reduces the intention of engagement. This highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to the resources among all employees. In response to the question, what resources are necessary to facilitate the possibility for employees to engage, this study

considers the characteristics of the project (the “Digital Ecosystem”) and identifies these as the necessary “resources” mentioned by previous research as facilitators for employee engagement. Here, the resources provide the employees of the German company with large monitors in their breakrooms, accessible to all employees, offering them the possibility to communicate with their management, and inform themselves about internal news and happenings.

Furthermore, employees are believed to expect the provision of resources from their organization, and if these expectations are not met, a reduction in their engagement with their organization can be expected (Iyengar & Montealegra 2019; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). In particular, the provision of resources that increase the flow of information for employees, making knowledge more accessible, is argued stimulate the cognitive dimension of employee engagement (Saks, 2006). This argument is in line with the findings of Iyengar and Montealegra (2019), who show that technological resources that improve the flow of information lead to greater cognitive employee engagement with their organization (Iyengar & Montealegra 2019). Hence, the following hypotheses is proposed:

*H4: Satisfaction with the provided resources by the organizations has a positive effect on employee engagement.*

## 2.4 Employer Attractiveness

In recent years, organizations and scholars have increasingly shown interest in exploring the topic of employer attractiveness and the factors influencing it. Aiman Smith et al. (2001) define employer attractiveness as “an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organizational as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship” (p. 221). Furthermore, the internal marketing concept argues for employees to be seen as internal customers (George, 1990) and anything an organization is offering to them are internal products (Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). Applying that approach in practice implies that organizations should constantly try to make themselves as attractive as they try so for external customers. However, the classification of internal and external can also be applied for internal and external employer attractiveness. The distinction of internal to external employer attractiveness concerns the degree of attractiveness among an organization’s current employees, while external employer attractiveness focuses on prospective employees (Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). Internal employer attractiveness focuses on retaining current employees within the organizations and reducing

turnover rates, by reinforcing that the organizations is a great place to work for (Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2019; Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). Exploring and defining the exact factors that measure the level of attractiveness from the eyes of current employees is still a field that requires further research. To start, a person could view different factors as attractive for an employer or organization, depending on whether they are interested in applying for work, or intent to continue their current employment (Hedlund et al., 2010). Therefore, depending on what perspective a person or employee is asked to rate the attractiveness of their employer, the factors influencing the perceived attractiveness also vary. For example, Marcey and Schneider (2008) argue, that engaged employees are more loyal to their employer which reduces the desire to leave the organization voluntarily. Additionally, Berger (2014) examined the findings of previous empirical studies on the topic of employee engagement and summarized, that employees who feel well informed, listened to and valued, are less likely to leave the organizations and more likely to show engagement. In support of that, a study by Gubman (2004) also found that engaged employees want to stay with their employer and say positive things about them. It can be assumed here, that the desire to stay with one's employer and to say positive things about them are results that someone would not pursue if they perceive their employer as not attractive. Therefore, organizations that aim to increase their level of attractiveness as an employer should consider and facilitate factors that support their employees in engaging with their organization. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Intention of employees to engage has a positive effect on the perceived attractiveness of their employer.*

## 2.5 Employee Engagement as a Mediator

On numerous occasions have previous research indicated that there are significant relationships between antecedents of engagement and the consequences for employee engagement (Saks, 2006, Tkalac Vercic et al., 2010). Moreover, multiple studies have investigated the mediating role of employee engagement between antecedents and consequences (Al-Tit & Hunitie, 2015; Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Saks, 2006, Tkalac Vercic et al., 2010). For instance, Tkalac Vercic et al. (2010) analyzed the quantitative data of over 1.800 employees from 12 companies and found that communication satisfaction correlated positively with perceived organizational support, and both employee engagement and employer attractiveness as outcomes. They further found that perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between



internal communication satisfaction and both employee engagement and employer attractiveness (Tkalac Vercic et al., 2010). Furthermore, the findings of Alias et al. (2014) suggest that employee engagement mediates the relationship between managerial support and employee retention. Hence, it can be expected that organizations who show support towards their employees, create opportunities to exercise voice, and are committed to respond seriously to employees' voices, are also viewed as more attractive by their employees. Consequently, it can be expected that the determined predictors of engagement also have an effect on the attractiveness of an employer. Thus, this study proposes that the intention of employees to engage with the organization mediates the effect of the mentioned predictors on the perceived employer attractiveness. Based on the above, a second sub-research question has been posted, together with the following hypothesis:

*SQ1: How does the intention of employees to engage mediate the effect between the factors and the perceived employer attractiveness?*

*H6: The intention of employees to engage mediates the effect of the other factors (perceived organizational support, opportunity to feed views upwards, receptiveness of senior management, and satisfaction with the provided resources) on employer attractiveness.*

## 2.6 Research Model

Figure 1 depicts the research model that was created based on reviewing the relevant literature. The model visualizes the determined predictors ("perceived organizational support", "opportunity to feed views upwards", and "senior management receptiveness to voice") of engagement, and engagement as a mediator between the predictors and the perceived employer attractiveness. Additionally, the different hypotheses are added to show their relation to the different constructs within the model.

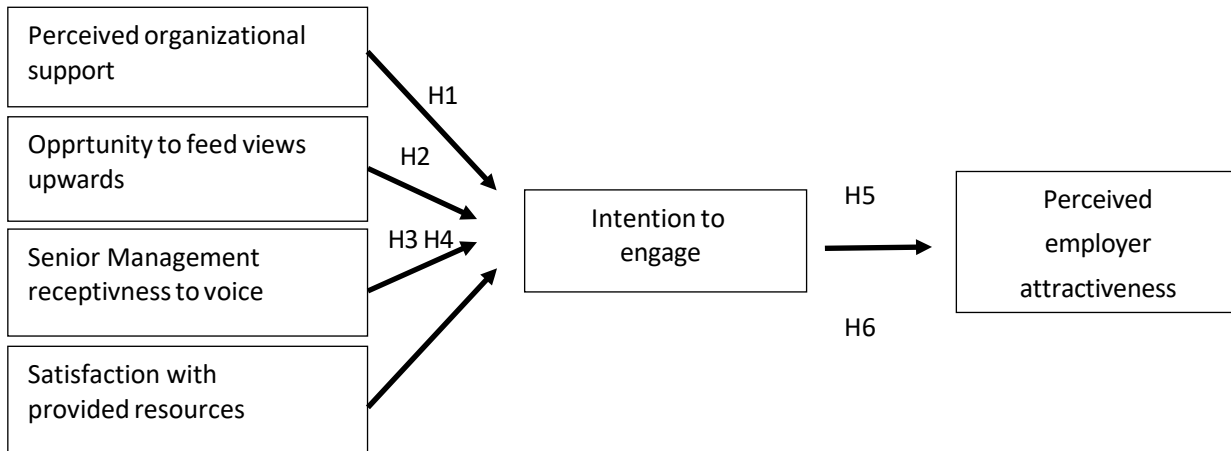


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 Research Design

In order to answer the research question and test the hypotheses posed, a quantitative survey in the form of a standardized paper questionnaire was used. A quantitative approach was chosen because of the precision provided by quantitative and reliable measurements, statistical techniques for advanced analyses, and reproducible results with this method.

Moreover, a quantitative approach allows generalization from a sample population, allowing for global comparisons and validation of results (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, a quantitative survey allows to gather a larger sample, which in the context of this study is desirable as the more responses of employees can be gathered, the greater the value of the gathered insights for the company. Furthermore, Gupta and Sharma (2016) argue that employee surveys are the most suitable method to measure employee engagement as they also mediate essential values and priorities of an organization to the participants.

### 3.2 Procedure

Before starting the data collection, several steps have been taken to ensure the scientific integrity of this study. First, to ensure that the research project complies with ethical standards, the research was submitted and approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral Management Science (BMS) of the University of Twente. In the beginning of the questionnaire, two demographical questions

were asked, including the question about the age and the participants time working at the company. Afterwards, the main part of the survey started, by first asking questions related to the independent variables within the research model, namely “Satisfaction with provided resources”, “Senior management receptiveness”, “Perceived organizational support”, “Opportunity to feed views upwards”, and “Intention to engage”. Secondly, questions were asked about the dependent variable of the study, namely “Employer Attractiveness “. At the end of the survey, the participants were able to indicate suggestions for the enhancement of the overall project. This open question served as a means to an end and was not included in the data analysis. The question is only relevant for the company. The collected data used for this study was gathered within the time period of May 25.2022 to June 01.06.2022.

### **3.2.1 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The sample consisted of current employees from the production line of a German Manufacturing company, as their responses are of great importance for the development of implications at the end of this study. Besides the criteria of working at the production line, there were no further restrictions in the selection of participants given. Hence, a convenience sampling approach was used. Convenient sampling defines the selection process of participants on the basis of convenient availability Panacek and Thompson (2007). The sample was reached by the researcher approaching them in teams during their working hours.

Firstly, all teams that were part of the sample population were introduced to the study, followed by an invitation to participate. Secondly, the paper surveys (see Appendix B) were handed out to every employee together with an information paper where the aim and nature of the research, a description of the project (see Appendix C), as well as the expected response time. Thirdly, it was explained that the participation in the survey, as well as answering individual questions, is voluntary and anonymous, so that it is not possible to draw conclusions about individuals.

Lastly, the participants were informed about the possibility to withdraw from the study at any given time and were asked to consent to the participation. The filled-out survey could be placed in an envelope and placed in a ballot box. The ballot boxes locked and placed in the break rooms and were accessible throughout the duration of data collection. Additionally, it was ensured that the participants

would be able to fill out the surveys alone without the knowledge of their supervisors.

### 3.3 PRE-TEST

To prevent any potential confusion for the participants while answering the questions, a pre- test was conducted. Prior to the pre-test of the questionnaire items, five employees from the sample population were given three different versions of the project description to determine which version is the most understandable und suitable for the actual study. Hereby, it is important to note that multiple items are building up on the description and information given about the project, therefore it is especially important to ensure that the provided information serve as a sufficient base for filling out the questionnaire items. All five employees favoured the same version, which subsequently was used for the pre-test study.

For this pre-test, ten employees from the sample population were provided with the project description. After giving consent, the participants received the template, filled out the questionnaire and were asked to provide the researcher with oral feedback afterwards. Upon the given feedback, adjustments for the phrasing of single words or whole statements were made. For example, some wording in the items were changed to more internally used terms that re more commonly known among the employees. After the implementation of the adjustments, the same ten participants reviewed the questionnaire again to ensure that their recommendations were implemented in the correct way. Furthermore, the employees who participated in the pre-test were later excluded from participating in the questionnaire, to prevent bias.

### 3.4 RESPONDENTS

In total, 154 participants participated in the survey within this research, whereas one participant had to be deleted as the company's internal policy states that every response needs to be given at least by four other participants, for it be included in an analysis. The excluded respondent was the only with a unique response to certain questions. Consequently, the used data set from this study resulted in a total of 153 respondents, representing 31.5 % of the total sample population (see Table 1)

*Demographics*

Items	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age category	21 - 25 years	17	11.1
	26 - 30 years	39	25.5
	31 - 35 years	43	28.1
	36 - 40 years	17	11.1
	41 – 45 years	15	9.8
Duration of employment	46 – 50 years	16	10.5
	>50 years	6	3.9
	<5 years	29	19.0
	6 – 10 years	64	41.8
	11 – 15 years	39	25.5
	16 – 20 years	8	5.2
	20 – 25 years	7	4.6
	>25 years	6	3.9

### 3.5 INSTRUMENT

To measure the performance of items compared to other variables, a validity analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis is to identify if the selected variables load on the intended factors asked in the distributed questionnaire. Therefore, a “KMO and Bartlett’s Test” was conducted. Next to the validity measurements, the reliability of items got tested. Thereby, the item’s Cronbach’s alpha was calculated.

#### 3.5.1 VALIDITY

In total, the validity factor analysis contains 26 items, which are separated by six factors. The six factors

were set by the researcher, and the factor analysis also resulted in six factors loading on the items. To be determined as a valid study, the “KMO and Bartlett’s Test” had to score over .50. As the score in this study was .88, the data was qualified for the factor analysis. Moreover, each factor provided an eigenvalue of over and above 1, which proved the validity of the items again.

Furthermore, all items showed a significant loading on their component. However, three of the items also loaded significantly on other factors, which resulted in their exclusion for further analysis. Hence, the item “My organization is interested in my opinion and feedback”

and the item “The project enables me to voice criticism to the management”, were not taken into account anymore for the following analyses. The same procedure was applied for the variable “The project enables me to voice ideas to the management”, which got excluded for the same reason as the other before mentioned items (see the table in Appendix E)

### **3.5.1 RELIABILITY OF MEASUREMENTS**

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked about their demographics. Due to the internal company policies, the number of demographical questions asked were limited to a range of two to three questions per questionnaire. Hence, the selection of demographics was determined on the estimated importance of demographics needed for this studies analysis, resulting in the focus on age and the participants years of working at the company.

Next to the demographics, the satisfaction level of an employee with the provided resources was measured using the five items „How satisfied are you with the possibilities of the project to communicate with the management?”, “How satisfied are you with the possibilities to inform yourself about the company and internal happening?”, “How satisfied are you with the opportunities for digital participation in the company through the project?”, “How satisfied are you with the planned provision of information through the project?”, and “How satisfied are you with the provided possibilities by the project to engage yourself within the company?”. The scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .89. The described variable, was measured by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from „Very dissatisfied“ to „Very satisfied“.

Furthermore, the perceived senior management receptiveness was measured using the three

items “I can expect that my comments (feedback, suggestions, criticism, ideas, etc.) will be listened to seriously by management or supervisors”, “It is possible for me to ask critical questions and address possible problems”, I find the open-mindedness of the management and my superiors towards my opinions to be appreciative”. The variable was measured using a 5-point Likert scale using the items “Fully disagree” to “Fully agree”. The measured Cronbach’s alpha was .78 and the items were partially retrieved from a survey done by Hayase (2009).

„Perceived organizational support“ was measured on a 5- point Likert scale using five items “My organization is willing to help me with problems”, “The support of this organization encourages me to engage outside my area of responsibility”, “My organization forgives mistakes”, “My organization supports their employees to make their own decisions”, and “Employees are supported by this organization to take initiatives”. The items were retrieved from a study by Albrecht et al. (2017) and Saks (2006) and were adjusted to fit the context of the study. The variable was found to be reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha of .82.

Thereafter, the variable “Opportunity to feed views upwards” was measured using three items „I believe that my voiced input has a real impact in my organization“, “Voicing my opinion has an impact on decisions that affect my daily work”, and “I see the possibility of communicating to the management as appreciative and participatory”. The items were inspired and partially received from Ruck et al. (2017). This variable’s items reached a Cronbach’s alpha of .84.

Additionally, the variable “Engagement” was measured using four items “I would like to inform myself more for the current internal topics of this company”, “I would like to get more engaged with internal topics through the improved flow of information”, One of the most exciting things for me is being part of the transformation in this company”, and “I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization.”. The scale has a Cronbach’s Alpha of .88. The variable’s items were partly retrieved and from Mowday et al. (1979) and adjusted to fit the context of the study.

In the end, the variable “employer attractiveness” was measured using three items “The initiatives I can take are valuable for me.”, „ The opportunities offered by this project increase

the attractiveness of the company as an employer”, and “The opportunities offered by the company increase the attractiveness of the company as an employer”. The variable was found to be reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha of .84. The items were partly retrieved from the employer attractiveness scale by Berthon et al. (2005).

## 4. RESULTS

To be able to test the hypotheses of the theoretical framework, the results of the survey were analyzed. The analysis was conducted with the help of SPSS. First, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine how the variables correlated with each other. Afterwards, a multiple regression analysis was executed to determine the effects on the two dependent variables.

### 4.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The following scores were generated from the computed variables on SPSS. To begin with, the „Engagement” (M=3.93, SD= .83, see Table 2) scored as the highest variable. This means that on average, the participants seemed to be relatively interested to engage themselves in the company. In contrast “Opportunity to feed views upwards “(M=3.21, SD=.84) scored relatively low, suggesting that participants had the perception of not being able to communicate their feedback and opinions to higher positions within their company. Furthermore, the participants agreed on “Satisfaction with provided resources” (M= 3.54, SD= .79) and “Senior Management receptiveness” (M= 3.34, SD= .79) which stated that, on average, participants were satisfied with the provided resources to engage with their organization and additionally, perceived the receptiveness of the senior management as sufficient enough, but worthy of improvement. Moreover, the score of „Perceived organizational support “(M=3.31, SD= .67) is relatively low, demonstrating that the participants felt rather unsupported by their work provider. The last variable of “Perceived employer attractiveness” (M= 3.7, SD= .75) scored the second highest, displaying that on average the company is overall perceived as a relatively attractive employer.



Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	M	SD
Engagement	3.93	.83
Opportunity to feed views upwards	3.21	.84
Satisfaction with provided resources"	3.54	.75
Senior Management receptiveness	3.34	.79
Perceived organizational support	3.31	.67
Perceived employer attractiveness"	3.7	.75

## 4.2 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson's correlation analysis was computed with an alpha level of .05 for the indication of significance of and in between variable correlation (see Table 3). As the correlation has to score under  $p < .05$  to be defined as significant, in total 15 correlations could be identified to meet this criterion. Furthermore, no negative correlations were examined.

The strongest correlation was the one between the variables "Senior management receptiveness" and "Perceived organizational support" ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ), which was followed by the correlation between "Engagement" and "Employer Attractiveness" ( $r = .59, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, a significant correlation was found between the variables "Satisfaction with provided resources" and "Opportunity to feed views upwards" ( $r = .57, p < .01$ ), and "Opportunity to feed views upwards" and "Perceived organizational support" ( $r = .54, p < .01$ ), as well as between "Perceived organizational support" and "Satisfaction with provided resources" ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ). The rest of correlations were below .50 and can be found the Table 3.

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Satisfaction with provided resources	3.5	.76					
2. Senior management receptiveness	3.4	.79	.49				
3. Perceived Organizational Support	3.3	.67	.53	.62			
4. Opportunity to feed views upwards	3.2	.86	.57	.47	.54		
5. Engagement	3.9	.83	.33	.36	.30	.24	
6. Employer attractiveness	3.7	.76	.48	.47	.46	.49	.59

## 4.3 Regression Analysis

To test the formulated hypotheses in this research, three multiple regression analyses were conducted. As the model shows, the dependent variable of “Employer attractiveness” is influenced by “Engagement”, which in turn is predicted by different antecedents, making “Engagement” a mediator variable (see Appendix D for the the regression analysis results).

In the first step of the regression analysis, the independent variables explained significantly 14.1% of variance on the, here, dependent variable “Engagement” ( $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(4, 152) = 7.2$ ,  $p <$

.01). The results further show, that the variables “Perceived organizational support”, and “Opportunity to feed views upwards” did not have any significant effect on “Engagement”, meaning that neither the perceived support of the organization, nor the opportunity to feed views upwards had a positive effect on engagement. However, the variables “Senior management receptiveness” and “Satisfaction with provided resources” did have a positive significant effect on “Engagement”, which indicates that employees were more likely to engage at their workplace, when a positive receptiveness from the senior

management was given and the necessary resources to engage were satisfactory. In regard to the predetermined hypotheses, this means that H1, and H2 cannot be supported, while H3 and H4 can be supported.

In the second step of the regression analysis, the independent variables, without “Engagement” as a mediator”, explained significantly 33.1 % of variance on the dependent variable ““Employer Attractiveness” (R2 = .33, F(4, 152) = 19.8, p < .01). The findings show that the variable “Perceived organizational support” did not have a significant effect on “Employer Attractiveness”. However, the variables “Opportunity to feed views upwards”, variable “Senior management receptiveness”, and “Satisfaction with provided resources” did have a significant, and therefore, positive effect on “Employer Attractiveness”.

In the third step of the regression analysis, the independent variables, including the mediator “Engagement”, explained significantly 50 % of variance on the dependent variable “Employer Attractiveness” (R2 = .5, F(5, 152) = 29,6 p < .01). The variables “Perceived organizational support”, “Senior management receptiveness”, and “Satisfaction with provided resources” did not have a significant effect on “Employer Attractiveness”. On the other hand, “Engagement” and “Opportunity to feed views upwards” did have a significant effect on “Employer Attractiveness”. Thus, these results support the hypothesis 5 that the intention of employees to engage has a positive effect on the perceived attractiveness of their employer. Furthermore, there is statistical support that the intention of employees to engage mediates the effect of the opportunity given to employees to feed views upwards on the perceived employer attractiveness. Hence, the hypothesis 6 can be partly supported. Furthermore, despite the medium strong explanatory value on the dependent variable, the model could be improved to reach a better variance score.

#### 4.4. HYPOTHESES OVERVIEW

From the results, Table 3 gives an overview of all hypotheses and whether they could be supported or not.

Table 3: *Hypotheses with Support*

Hypothesis		Supported
H1	Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on the intention of employees to engage	H

	The opportunity to feed views upwards has a positive effect on employee engagement	no
H3	Feeling valued by a positive receptiveness of senior management has a positive effect on employee engagement	no yes
H4	Satisfaction with the provided resources by the organizations has a positive effect on employee engagement	yes
H5	Intention of employees to engage has a positive effect on the perceived attractiveness of their employer	yes
H6	The intention of employees to engage mediates the effect of the other factors	no
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ perceived organizational support</li> <li>▪ opportunity to feed views upwards</li> <li>▪ receptiveness of senior management</li> <li>▪ satisfaction with the provided resources on employer attractiveness</li> </ul>	yes no no

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Discussion of the results

This paper examined the effect of possible predictors on the intention of employees to engage with their organization, and whether this has an effect on employer attractiveness. The results of this study show that feeling valued by a positive receptiveness of the senior management and overall satisfaction with provided resources has a positive effect on an employees' intention to engage. Furthermore, it was found that the intention of employees to engage has a positive effect on the perceived attractiveness of their employer. The results also show that the organizational support as perceived by the participants of the German Company, and the opportunity to feed views upwards did not have a positive effect on their intention to engage. The results offer insights into how these factors trigger the cognitive and emotional dimension of engagement, adding to a better understanding of the resulting behavioral manifestation of employee engagement as part of a reciprocal relationship.

To begin with, the organizational support, as perceived by the participants, did not impact their intentions for engagement. This result is contrary to the findings of Afzali et al. (2014), Dai and Qin (2016), and Mey et al. (2004), who found that when employees perceive their organization as supportive, it significantly predicts their level of engagement. It was expected that the participants would feel valued and empowered by the support provided by their organization, and as a response reciprocate to the organization by increased engagement behaviour (Robinson et al., 2004). The fact that the participants of this study rated the organizational support as relatively low, indicated that they felt rather unsupported, or did not recognize the intentions of their employer as supportive. This could further be explained by a failure of the organization to present its engagement initiatives as being supportive towards employees' engagement. That the organization did not foster the feeling of caring and valuing their employees' feedback or support individual decisions and initiatives. This could explain why the employees did not feel supported, and the emotional dimension of engagement was not sufficiently stimulated. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that if those points are improved and if the company takes a hard look at its organizational culture regarding the manner of listening, supporting and encouraging employees to voice their opinions in a safe environment then the feeling of being valuable within the company could be conveyed to every individual. Thus, leading to higher scores in emotional and cognitive engagement.

Furthermore, while the overall perceived support from the organization was not a sufficient trigger for engagement in this study, the positive receptiveness of the senior management towards employee voices positively influenced the intention of employees to engage. This result possibly serves as a base to support the argument of Ruck et al (2017) that a positive receptiveness of the management covers Kahn's (1990) psychological need for safety and therefore, positively triggers the intention of employees to engage with their organization. Interestingly, while employees might not feel overall supported enough, the fact that a positive receptiveness towards voiced input triggers engagement could be a first indicator of a successfully conveyed form of support.

To continue, in the case of "opportunity to feed views upwards", it is surprising that this construct did not show any remarkable effect on employee engagement. Afterall, Ruck et al. (2017) suggested to compliment management voice channels by promoting opportunities for upward communication and dialogue via employee voice channels, the results of this study underline the importance of this approach. However, the results show that the possibilities of the Digital Ecosystem were not sufficient for the employees to trigger their intention for engagement. A possible explanation is a lack benefits or meaning for employees to make use of the opportunity communicate their input upwards. Possibly, if employees know that their verbal contributions will lead to different outcomes or changes at their workplace, they will feel be more inclined to engage with their organization through voice channels. Another possible speculation for this result is that the opportunity to feed views upwards is viewed as a possibility long overdue, and less as an opportunity that is granted to them. Hence, the argument of Ruck et al. (2017) stating that employees feel more valued by given the opportunity to feed views upwards, might not apply for the sample population of this study.

Moving on, it was expected that the resources provided by the Digital Ecosystem would stimulate the cognitive dimension of employee engagement and positively influence the employee's intention to engage. The results of this study are consistent with the arguments of Kular et al. (2008) that employee engagement correlates with the resources provided by the employer. As discussed in an earlier part of this paper, while the necessity of the provision of resources for engagement is stressed by several scholars, specific characteristics or descriptions of those resources are spare, increasing the difficulty of understanding why certain resources trigger employee engagement. The positive effect of the provided

resources has on engagement could be explained by the induced feeling of reciprocity for employees, as explained by Robinson et al. (2004). The results also support the conceptualization of Gupta and Sharma (2016), that engagement is a two-way process between employees and employer. Thus, the results of this study contribute to the findings of Pundt et al. (2010) that employees respond to the provision of engagement relevant resources with engagement behaviors.

The second aim of this research was to examine the whether the intentions of employees to engage mediates the effect of the other factors on the perceived attractiveness of the employer. First of all, the results demonstrate a strong correlation between an employee's intention to engage with their organization and the perceived attractiveness of their employer. While it might appear as reasonable to assume that when employees perceive their employer as attractive, an increased intention to engage would follow as an outcome and not the other way around, the multiple regression analyses offer a possible explanation for the contrary postulation of this study. To begin, the results present that employee's view their employer as more attractive when, on the one side, they are given the opportunity to communicate their opinions and criticism upwards, and on the other side, when their views are also listened to and taken seriously by their senior management. Similarly, the results indicate that when employees feel supported by their organizations and are offered enough resources that allow them to engage with the organization, the attractiveness is positively influenced. However, as the last step of the regression analysis showed, engagement has the strongest influence on the perceived attractiveness and also mediates the effect of the other predictors. This implies that the effect of engagement on attractiveness is strengthened by the other predictors, as without them, employees would be less able and willing to engage with their organization. Additionally, all predictors did have a significant correlation with employer attractiveness. However, the presented model with engagement as a mediator only explains 50% of the variance. Thus, there are more underlying factors that affect employee engagement and employer attractiveness. Since engagement is considered to be a multi-construct concept and this study only examined a small part of them, it is recommended for future research to expand the model with other factors such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, clarity of expected behaviour and collecting well being.

## 5.2 Theoretical implications

The research, while focused on one company and its attempt to engage with its employees, offers a clear indication that reciprocity is essential when talking about the engagement. Furthermore, that quantitative method should be supported in future research with qualitative in order to understand the reasoning behind the low scoring concept such as 'opportunity to feed views upwards'. The case of the manufacturing company offers a potential resource example (Digital Ecosystem) which unfortunately, within the literature, giving concrete examples of 'satisfaction with provided resources' is close to absent. Also, emotional dimension of the engagement, where employees' engagement is triggered by emotional stimuli, proved to be more relevant than expected. Thus, this paper provided an exploration of the delimitations of engagement within an organization, especially in a traditional company which struggles with innovation and modernization.

Additionally, Little and Little (2006) explain, that existing literature, often fails to (a) clearly distinct engagement from other related concepts, (b) include in their definition, whether engagement is an attitude or behaviour, and (c) that practitioners commonly do not report on the differences and strength of relationships between measured constructs. These concerns are still relevant when exploring today's literature and should be taken into consideration by any researcher that aims to understand the complexity of defining and measuring employee engagement based on prior research. In this study, similar obstacles were met in defining engagement as a singular variable as well as taking into consideration both sides of the coin, upper management, and employees.

## 5.3 Practical implications for the German Company

The most relevant implications for the German Company and their evaluation of the Digital Ecosystem is:

The provided resources trigger their employees intention to engage with the organization however it is not a „holy grail “ solution. If the company is providing engagement related resources in terms of the characteristics of the Digital Ecosystem, the employees are more willing to reciprocate by demonstrating greater engagement behaviors, which subsequently lead to higher attractiveness as an employer.

### *Upper management*

It is clear that for a traditional company, being seen and feeling valuable by the superiors is how engagement within the workplace happens most efficiently. For most employees, organizational engagement comes



secondary to employee engagement, which means employees see engagement as method to be more efficient in their job and not a way to align their work values with the company's mission. Together with having the necessary resources to voice their opinion and having feedback from the management on the implementation of suggestions given by employees, the organizational engagement can be stimulated in working together towards cooperation between managers and subordinates. However, upper management needs to actively desire to take action in tackling the issues correlated with emotional and cognitive engagement in order to see the results of behavioral engagement within the company and its goals and achievements.

### *Digital Ecosystem*

The project has great potential in setting up a first attempt for engagement resources. The recommendation, based on participants' answers, would be to slowly introduce such project while iteratively adapting to both employees' and employer's needs and requirements. The project is not a solution to all problems because, as seen in the results for „Feeling valued by a positive receptiveness of senior management has a positive effect on employee engagement“ hypothesis, employees would participate more if there are directly seen by the management and praised on their initiatives thus stimulating the behavioural engagement. The main limitation of just implementing technology, such as Digital Ecosystem, and hope for organizational engagement, is that in a very passive manner to inform the employees about the organization's mission and purposes as well as ongoing internal project. If the Digital Ecosystem would incorporate more interaction such as QR codes to get involved in this weekend's volunteer session or showcase the results of a potential innovation contest where each department competes against the other, then employees would be emotionally engaged better with the presented content.

### *HR recommendation*

The main solution for the German Company is to assign a role with Human Resources department which is responsible for encouraging and monitoring employees' engagement while collaborating with the other departments (such as Technical Innovation department and upper management). In layman words, having a bridge between employees and management which can point out and communicate what are the needs from both sides (management and employees) in order to optimize engagement. The recommendation is based on the low scores on the „The opportunity to feed views upwards“ and „perceived organizational

support“ which fall under the external engagement constructs umbrella. Thus, this role provides a support to future employees’ engagement project in clearly communicating through visual guides or introduction seminars the intention of the projects as well as providing aid in case employees’ have questions on more delicate matter. For example, an employee might worry that by using the Digital Ecosystem for voicing his/her feedback, it might carry consequences such as being punished by management or other colleagues for attempting to express their opinion.

## 5.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the present results offer valuable insights, it is relevant to recognize and consider several limitations. A first limitation is the status of the project “Digital Ecosystem” as it is not yet implemented. As a result, the participants had to evaluate the characteristics and their satisfaction without experiencing it. This might have resulted in lower levels of realism, limiting the outcome of this study. Hence, it would be useful and more insightful to the company, if the study is reintroduced after the participants had the chance to try out the different functionalities of the project. Moreover, it would be advisable to compliment the findings obtained through quantitative method with a follow-up qualitative study.

Another limitation is, that the concept of engagement was not clearly defined to the participants, leaving a lot of room for interpretation. The term “engagement” is a commonly used word in German, similarly to the use in English. Without engagement being defined to the participants within the questionnaire, prior associations with the term could have influenced the participants responses. This should be taken into consideration when comparing the outcomes measured in this study to responses provided within other studies. Although the present results offer valuable insights, it is relevant to recognize and consider several limitations. A first limitation is the status of the project “Digital Ecosystem” as it is not yet implemented. As a result, the participants had to evaluate the characteristics and their satisfaction without experiencing it. This might have resulted in lower levels of realism, limiting the outcome of this study. Hence, it would be useful and more insightful to the company, if the study is reintroduced after the participants had the chance to try out the different functionalities of the project. Moreover, it would be advisable to compliment the findings obtained through quantitative method with a follow-up qualitative study. Another limitation is, that the concept of engagement was not clearly defined to the participants, leaving a lot of room for interpretation. The term “engagement” is a

commonly used word in German, similarly to the use in English. Without engagement being defined to the participants within the questionnaire, prior associations with the term could have influenced the participants responses. This should be taken into consideration when comparing the outcomes measured in this study to responses provided within other studies.

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## APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Constructs	Questions/Statements
Demographics	<p>What is your age group?</p> <p>For how long have you been working at this company?</p>
Satisfaction with provided resources	<p>How satisfied are you...:</p> <p>With the possibilities of the project to communicate with the management?</p> <p>With the possibilities to inform yourself about the company and internal happening?</p> <p>With the opportunities for digital participation in the company through the project?</p> <p>With the planned provision of information through the project?</p> <p>With the provided possibilities by the project to engage yourself within the company?</p>
Senior management receptiveness	<p>I can expect that my comments (feedback, suggestions, criticism, ideas, etc.) will be listened to seriously by management or supervisors.</p> <p>It is possible for me to ask critical questions and address possible problems.</p> <p>I find the open-mindedness of the management and my superiors towards my opinions to be appreciative.</p>
Perceived organisational support	<p>My organisation cares about my opinions and feedback. My organisation is willing to help me with problems.</p> <p>The support of this organisation encourages me to engage outside my area of responsibility.</p> <p>My organisation forgives mistakes.</p> <p>My organisation supports their employees to make their own decisions.</p> <p>Employees are supported by this organisation to take initiatives.</p>
Opportunity to feed views upwards	<p>Through the project I can voice criticism with the management.</p> <p>Through the project I can voice ideas with the management. I believe that my voiced input has a real impact in my organization.</p>

Voicing my opinion has an impact on decisions that affect my daily work.

I see the possibility of communicating to the management as appreciative and participatory.

#### Engagement

I would like to inform myself more for the current internal topics of this company

I would like to get more engaged with internal topics through the improved flow of information.

One of the most exciting things for me is being part of the transformation in this company.

I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization.

#### Employer Attractiveness

The initiatives I can take are valuable for me.

The opportunities offered by this project increase the attractiveness of the company as an employer.

The opportunities offered by the company increase the attractiveness of the company as an empl

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## Appendix B – Questionnaire in German

### Umfrage zur Erhebung der Anforderungen an das „Digitale Ökosystem“

#### Demografische Fragen

##### 1. Bitte wähle deine Altersklasse aus:

- ☐ < 20 Jahre      ☐ 21 - 25 Jahre      ☐ 26 - 30 Jahre      ☐ 31 - 35 Jahre  
☐ 36 - 40 Jahre      ☐ 41 - 45 Jahre      ☐ 46 - 50 Jahre      ☐ > 50 Jahre

##### 2. Wie lange arbeitest du bereits bei Volkswagen Emden?

- ☐ < 5 Jahre      ☐ 6 -10 Jahre      ☐ 11 - 15 Jahre  
☐ 16 - 20 Jahre      ☐ 21 - 25 Jahre      ☐ > 25 Jahre

#### Abschnitt 1

Bitte beantworte die folgende Frage mithilfe der dieser Bewertungsskala:

Bin gar nicht zufrieden	Bin nicht zufrieden	Bin eher nicht zufrieden	Bin eher zufrieden	Bin zufrieden	Bin völlig zufrieden
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

##### 3. Wie zufrieden bist du...:

		1	2	3	4	5	6
3.1	Mit den Möglichkeiten durch das Projekt dich mit dem Management auszutauschen?						
3.2	Mit den Möglichkeiten dich über das Unternehmen und internen Geschehnissen zu informieren?						
3.3	Mit den Möglichkeiten an der digitalen Teilhabe im Unternehmen durch das Projekt?						
3.4	Mit der geplanten Informationsbereitstellung durch das Projekt?						
3.5	Mit den durch das Projekt bereitgestellten Mitteln, um dich innerhalb des Unternehmens zu engagieren?						

## Abschnitt 2

Bitte beantworte die folgenden Aussagen mithilfe der dieser Bewertungsskala:

Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab	Stimme zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.

		1	2	3	4	5
4.1	Ich kann erwarten, dass meine Äußerungen (Feedback, Vorschläge, Kritik, Ideen, etc.) vom Management, bzw. Vorgesetzten ernsthaft angehört werden.					
4.2	Es ist mir möglich, kritische Fragen zu stellen und mögliche Probleme anzusprechen.					
4.3	Die Aufgeschlossenheit des Managements und meiner Vorgesetzten gegenüber meiner Meinung empfinde ich als wertschätzend.					

5.

		1	2	3	4	5
5.1	Das Werk Emden interessiert sich um meine Meinungen und Feedback.					
5.2	Das Werk Emden ist willig mir bei Problemen zu helfen.					
5.3	Die Unterstützung des Werks Emden bestärkt mich, mich außerhalb meines Aufgabenbereiches zu engagieren.					
5.4	Das Werk Emden lebt eine offene Fehlerkultur					
5.5	Das Werk Emden unterstützt seine MitarbeiterInnen eigene Entscheidungen zu treffen.					
5.6	MitarbeiterInnen werden von dem Werk Emden unterstützt Initiativen zu ergreifen					

6.		1	2	3	4	5
6.1	Durch das Projekt kann ich Kritik mit dem Management kommunizieren.					
6.2	Durch das Projekt kann ich Ideen mit dem Management kommunizieren.					
6.3	Ich bin der Meinung, dass meine Äußerungen einen tatsächlichen Einfluss in meiner Organisation (Werk Emden) haben.					
6.4	Das Äußern meiner Meinung wirkt sich auf Entscheidungen aus, die meine tägliche Arbeit betreffen.					
6.5	Die Möglichkeit in die Managementebene zu kommunizieren, sehe ich als wertschätzend und beteiligend an.					

7.		1	2	3	4	5
7.1	Ich möchte mich mehr für die aktuellen Werksthemen informieren.					
7.2	Ich möchte mich mehr durch den verbesserten Informationsfluss für Werksthemen engagieren.					
7.3	Eines der aufregendsten Dinge für mich ist die Teilhabe an der Transformation in diesem Unternehmen.					
7.4	Ich äußere mich gerne positiv zu Volkswagen, wenn ich mit Freunden rede.					

8.		1	2	3	4	5
8.1	Die Initiativen, die ich ergreifen kann, sind für mich wertvoll.					
8.2	Die Möglichkeiten, die dieses Projekt bietet, steigern die Attraktivität des Unternehmens als Arbeitgeber.					
8.3	Die Möglichkeiten, die Volkswagen bietet, steigern die Attraktivität des Unternehmens als Arbeitgeber.					

**9. Gibt es weitere Vorschläge von dir, wie man das Projekt noch weiter optimieren kann?**

## **Appendix C – Description of the project for participants**

Das Projekt „Digitales Ökosystem“ hat das Ziel alle Teams an den digitalen Kommunikations- Plattformen teilhaben zu lassen. Die digitale Teilhabe wird durch die Installation von Bildschirmen in den Teamräumen ermöglicht, wo Laptops der Teamsprecher angeschlossen werden können. Der Bildschirm bietet die Möglichkeit, Plattformen wie z.B. Microsoft Teams zu nutzen, Themen im Teamgespräch besser zu visualisieren (z.B. aktuelle Q-Probleme mit Bildern und Videos darzustellen) oder die Unterweisungen (z.B. Arbeitsschutz) anschaulicher zu machen.

Wenn die Monitore nicht zum Anschließen eines Laptops verwendet werden, sollen dauerhaft verschiedene Inhalte im Wechsel gezeigt werden. Das Spektrum an inhaltlichen Themen beinhaltet u. A. Konzernnachrichten, Unternehmens-Strategie, der Volkswagenweg, Status der Transformation, Wocheninfo, sowie ad-hoc Information (z.B. Unwetterwarnungen, Top News, Ankündigung von Kurzarbeit).

## Appendix D – Regression Tables

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16,965	4	4,241	7,216	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	86,994	148	,588		
	Total	103,959	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunity\_to\_feed\_views\_upwards, Senior\_Management\_Receptiveness, Satisfaction\_with\_provided\_resources, Perceived\_Organizational\_Support

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	2,151	,354		6,071	<,001
	Satisfaction_with_provide d_resources	,201	,108	,183	1,864	,064
	Senior_Management_Rece ptiveness	,241	,104	,231	2,332	,021
	Perceived_Organizational_ Support	,083	,129	,067	,641	,522
	Opportunity_to_feed_view s_upwards	-,005	,095	-,005	-,050	,960



a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,590 <sup>a</sup>	,349	,331	,61734

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30,194	4	7,549	19,807	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	56,404	148	,381		
	Total	86,598	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Employer\_Attractiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunity\_to\_feed\_views\_upwards, Senior\_Management\_Receptiveness, Satisfaction\_with\_provided\_resources, Perceived\_Organizational\_Support

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	1,339	,285		4,695	<,001
	Satisfaction_with_provide d_resources	,192	,087	,192	2,215	,028
	Senior_Management_Rece ptiveness	,196	,083	,206	2,356	,020
	Perceived_Organizational_ Support	,116	,104	,104	1,123	,263

Opportunity\_to\_feed\_view ,201 ,076 ,228 2,642 ,009  
s\_upwards

a. Dependent Variable: Employer\_Attractiveness

### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,715 <sup>a</sup>	,512	,495	,53640

a. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement, Opportunity\_to\_feed\_views\_upwards, Senior\_Management\_Receptiveness, Satisfaction\_with\_provided\_resources, Perceived\_Organizational\_Support

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	44,302	5	8,860	30,795	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	42,296	147	,288		
	Total	86,598	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Employer\_Attractiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement, Opportunity\_to\_feed\_views\_upwards, Senior\_Management\_Receptiveness, Satisfaction\_with\_provided\_resources, Perceived\_Organizational\_Support

### Appendix E - Factor Analysis Component Matrix

#### Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Mit den Möglichkeiten durch das Projekt sich mit	,586		-,468		

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dem Management auszu- tauschen?				
Mit den Möglichkeiten sich über das Unternehmen und internen Geschehnissen zu informieren?	,728		,308	
Mit den Möglichkeiten an der digitalen Teilhabe im Unternehmen durch das Projekt?	,726			
Mit der geplanten Informationsbereitstellung durch das Projekt?	,641		-,358	
Mit den durch das Projekt bereitgestellten Mitteln, um sich innerhalb des Unternehmens zu engagieren?	,722		-,362	
Ich kann erwarten, dass meine Äußerungen (Feedback, Vorschläge, Kritik, Ideen, etc.) vom Management, bzw. Vorgesetzten ernsthaft an- gehört werden.	,581		,383	-,400
Es ist mir möglich, kritische Fragen zu stellen und mögliche Probleme anzusprechen.	,668			
Die Aufgeschlossenheit des Managements und meiner Vorgesetzten gegenüber meiner Meinung empfinde ich als wertschätzend.	,610		,379	-,388
Meine Organisation interessiert sich um meine Meinungen und Feed- back.	,451	-,313	,436	

Meine Organisation ist willig mir bei Problemen zu helfen.	,576				,364
Die Unterstützung meiner Organisation bestärkt mich, mich außerhalb meines Aufgabenbereiches zu engagieren.	,545	-,346	,309		
Meine Organisation lebt eine offene Fehlerkultur	,588		,396		
Meine Organisation unterstützt seine MitarbeiterInnen eigene Entschei-dungen zu treffen.	,650	-,341			
MitarbeiterInnen werden von meiner Organisation unterstützt Initiati-ven zu ergreifen	,616		,359		
Durch das Projekt kann ich Kritik mit dem Management kommunizieren.	,621		-,440		
Durch das Projekt kann ich Ideen mit dem Management kommunizieren.	,713		-,391	,302	
Ich bin der Meinung, dass meine Äußerungen einen tatsächlichen Einfluss in meiner Organisation (Werk Emden) haben.	,604		-,480		,305
Das Äußern meiner Meinung wirkt sich auf Entscheidungen aus, die mei-ne tägliche Arbeit betreffen.	,575	-,347	-,413	,336	
Die Möglichkeit in die Managementebene zu kommunizieren, sehe ich	,750		-,323		

als wertschätzend und  
beteiligt an.

Ich möchte mich mehr für  
die aktuellen Werksthemen  
informieren. ,525 ,660

Ich möchte mich mehr  
durch den verbesserten  
Informationsfluss für  
Werksthemen engagieren. ,474 ,723

Eines der aufregendsten  
Dinge für mich ist die  
Teilhabe an der Transfor-  
mation in diesem  
Unternehmen. ,554 ,606

Ich äußere mich gerne  
positiv zu Volkswagen,  
wenn ich mit Freunden  
rede. ,507 ,566

Die Initiativen, die ich  
ergreifen kann, sind für  
mich wertvoll. ,650

Die Möglichkeiten, die  
dieses Projekt bietet,  
steigern die Attraktivität  
des Unternehmens als  
Arbeitgeber. ,665 ,349 -,336

Die Möglichkeiten, die  
Volkswagen bietet,  
steigern die Attraktivität  
des Unternehmens als  
Arbeitgeber. ,615 ,410 -,403

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.<sup>a</sup>

a. 6 components extracted.