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Master Thesis

Same, same but different?

A strategic framework for attraction-oriented employer branding strategies under the consideration of employee preference profiles

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, (People) may be said to resemble not the bricks of which a house is build, but the pieces of a picture puzzle, each differing in shape, but matching the rest, and thus bringing out the picture. ‘

– Felix Adler

ABSTRACT

Companies have begun to brand themselves as attractive employers to counter the increasing struggle of attracting valuable employees to their businesses. Although the perception of employer brands is dependent on workforces in the labor market and prone to be influenced by individual characteristics, current employer branding research provides almost no suggestions on how to acknowledge differences of potential employees in employer branding strategies. This thesis examines what role employee preference profiles play in employer branding by integrating insights from a mixed-methods approach. The findings of this thesis suggest that employee preference profiles based on demographic characteristics create different assessments on the importance of employment benefits and usefulness of communication channels. The thesis clarifies that these profiles can be used to create customized strategies for target populations with the aim of attracting a diverse, strategically flexible workforce needed in today’s dynamic markets. Further, empirical research advances the understanding of employer branding as a strategy and includes findings on the use of social media for related endeavors. Implications of the findings are discussed regarding theory and practice, limitations noted, and future research directions suggested.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

e.g. – *exempli gratia*

EVP – Employer Value Proposition

HR – Human Resources

i.e. – *id est*

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

LQ – Leading question

PCA – Principal Component Analysis

RQ – Research question

1 INTRODUCTION

Employees, their expertise and social networks are valuable resources that ensure the viability of businesses (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Reports on talent and skill shortages, in Germany for example, prospect deficits in the labor market of 1.2 to 4.9 million individuals with academic education by 2030 (German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2017; Korn Ferry, 2018; Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft e.V., 2015). But even now, more than half of German employers express having difficulties to hire new staff, especially in engineering, sales, IT and business administration (ManpowerGroup, 2018). Labor market supply is heavily influenced by demographic changes, increased global mobility and dynamic developments of technologies and professions. The term ‘war for talent’ expresses that companies have to go out of their way to keep their employees engaged and committed and is used as a buzzword in recruiting for the last 20 years (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Micheals, 1998). Hence, today’s highly-qualified and in-demand workforce uses this fight of employers over them to find companies that fit their expectations and values (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005; Chambers et al., 1998).

Therefore, companies must convince these individuals that their organization will cater to their expectations and values by providing information about the employment and create HR management that is able to do exactly that. To attract valuable workforces, impressions of attractive employment need to be advertised externally (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011; Stahl et al., 2012). Hence, companies use employer branding to convince potential employees that their organizations are better places to work than competing organizations (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Biswas & Suar, 2016). Employers with attractive brands access a greater pool of suitable and motivated employees at a lower price compared to companies with less favorable employer brands. So, how can employer branding be utilized the right way?

Employer branding is based on the concept of employer brand equity (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Theurer, Tumasjan, Welppe, & Lievens, 2018). This concept describes the creation of value for employees rooted in their knowledge about employers (Cable & Turban, 2001). The main goal of employer branding efforts is to influence this knowledge by communicating desirable employment experiences and, consequently, creating perceptions of attractiveness on the side of potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, firms need employer branding strategies to influence these evaluations of attractiveness. Associated research discovered several reoccurring elements for employer branding strategies. Employer branding literature extensively examined the creation of employer attractiveness through employment benefits (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian, Kietzmann, & Diba, 2017; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Roy, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014) and information channels for employer branding (Backhaus, 2004; Cable & Yu, 2006; Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002). However due to the relatively young age of the employer branding field, there are under-researched areas regarding the integration of research findings, influences on employer branding and newer media.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF TOPIC

The central focus of this thesis lies on perceptions of employees regarding the attractiveness of employers. However, evaluations of employer attractiveness may not be the same in the group of potential employees because of different experiences, life stages or characteristics. Previous research in this field suggests that a different treatment in the attraction of workforce might benefit the success of recruiting highly-qualified individuals (Moroko & Uncles, 2009)

but fails to provide an understanding of how to acknowledge this suggestion for employer branding strategies. Therefore, the central research question (RQ) of this thesis is:

RQ: What is the role of employee preference profiles in attraction-oriented employer branding strategies?

Essentially, I argue that differences in the workforce described by employee preference profiles take a central role in employer branding strategies because they influence perceptions of potential employees. Thus, employee preference profiles can mitigate the success of companies' efforts in employer branding if neglected by employer branding strategies and facilitate it if differences of those profiles are acknowledged. Several leading questions (LQ) help to come to this conclusion, contribute to the stated research problem as well as structure this thesis. Those are phrased as follows:

LQ1: What is the current understanding of employer branding in research?

LQ2: What aspects can describe attraction-oriented employer branding strategies?

LQ3: What are characteristics that determine employee preference profiles?

Answering the research and leading questions provides contributions that will be presented in section 5.2. This thesis advances a holistic understanding of employer branding strategies to initially attract employees to organizations. Further, it provided insights into the development of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies based on employee preference profiles. Thus, findings of this thesis contribute to the understanding of how segmentation based on employee preference profiles can be applied to attract a diverse workforce.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Current employer branding research mostly focusses on single aspects of employer branding activities. This focus creates a lack of recommendations for the design of coherent and effective strategies to attract a diverse workforce (Biswas & Suar, 2016; Deepa & Baral, 2017). Moreover, previous research rarely provided empirical insights regarding employee's influence on employer branding as reviewed in section 2.4. Therefore, this thesis will advance a holistic understanding of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies and how potential employees influence it. This approach will cater to solve the disconnect for companies between the recognition of employer branding as a necessary tool to attract talent and developing concrete employer branding strategies (Maheshwari, Gunesh, Lodorfos, & Konstantopoulou, 2017). Rather than focusing on one aspect of employer branding, the integration of findings creates a strategic framework with detailed insights on the influence of potential employees as described by employee preference profiles. This framework will help practitioners to manage their employer brands and advances the current understanding of employer branding in research. Insights on employee preference profiles can help to create a more inclusive strategy for attracting a diverse workforce that fosters strategic flexibility.

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research is embedded into a pragmatic research philosophy which uses pluralistic methods to understand research problems (Cresswell, 2014). The German job market is a suitable backdrop for the research problem because local employers perceive a shortage of talents (Wallace, Sommer, & Specht, 2018). A concurrent triangulated mixed-method research approach contributes to understand two actors in employer branding – employers and employees. The selected research approach contributes to a more diverse palette of methodology in the employer branding field. Semi-structured qualitative interviews with four practitioners in different industries seek to provide insights on companies' employer branding strategies. Further, a quantitative cross-sectional online survey among individuals in the

German labor market will advance the understanding of employee preference profiles in relation to employer branding activities. The questionnaire is developed from tested scales in the employer branding field as discussed further in section 3.2.3 and is distributed to a diverse convenience sample. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the sample composition and assessments of employer value propositions (EVPs) and information channels as employer branding activities. An exploratory factor analysis will be conducted to identify value drivers among participants. Differences in response patterns based on demographics will be analyzed with Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests to provide insights into employee preference profiles.

1.4 DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts and definitions of them are given in the following Table 1 for a common ground throughout this thesis. These concepts will be further discussed in chapter 2.

Table 1 Overview of concept definitions for this thesis

Concept	Definition
Employer Brand	Employer brand is the ‘package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company’ (1996, p. 187).
Employer Branding	Employer branding is a ‘strategic branding process which creates, negotiates and enacts sustainable relationships between an organisation and its potential and existing employees under the influence of the varying corporate contexts with the purpose of co-creating sustainable values for the individual, the organisation and society as a whole’ (Aggerholm et.al., 2011, p.113)
Employer Knowledge	Employer knowledge is analogously defined as ‘a job seeker’s memories and associations regarding an organization’ (Cable & Turban, 2001, p. 123)
Employer Brand Equity	Cable & Turban (2001) theorize that brand equity in the employment context is ‘the value of job seekers’ employer knowledge, which is derived from job seekers’ responses to recruiting organizations during and after the recruitment process’ (p. 121).
Talents	Talented employees are individuals with high potential, strategic importance or high levels of human capital expressed in competency, certain personalities or motivation (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Tarique & Schuler, 2010).
Market Segmentation	Analog to consumer marketing, the underlying belief of market segmentation is that different treatment of individuals is assumed to be more profitable than treating them all equally (Backhaus, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009).
Employee Preference Profile	Characteristics of an individual that may influence evaluations of employer attractiveness.

Source: **Review of employer branding literature**

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

This research is focused on attraction-oriented employer branding strategies that are efficient in times of talent shortages and will, therefore, not discuss retention of employees through employer branding (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon et al., 2005; Chambers et al., 1998; Schuler et al., 2011; Stahl et al., 2012). Further, this thesis is focused on the initial attraction of employees in early-recruitment stages as employer branding is mostly applied to trigger interest and influence decisions to apply (Breaugh, 2008; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002). Moreover, the scope for this research lies on highly-qualified and valuable individuals that can be called talents. This delimitation is made since competition over this group is high in talent shortages (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005). The German job market is selected as a regional focus due to the high concentration of dynamic and innovative companies in knowledge-intensive industries that are struggling to acquire valuable workforces due to talent shortages (Whiting, 2018). Further, there are relatively few publications, especially catered to the employer branding in Germany

(Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Rampl & Kenning, 2014; Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). A focus on one specific country is also necessary as the cultural context is suspected to influence evaluations of employer attractiveness (Berthon et al., 2005; Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). Lastly, differences among potential employees are examined in regard of observable characteristics as values and attitudes need tested scales that are currently not provided by employer branding research.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

The previous introduction to the topic laid the foundations for this thesis. It introduced the research problem and related research issues through questions that this thesis is trying to answer. In the following, the structure of this thesis is outlined. This research is arranged in five chapters with several sections. In the beginning, a thorough literature review is conducted to establish a theoretical framework. The context of employer branding is outlined before discussing central concepts and the evolution of research in this field. Current literature on employer branding strategies is reviewed to identify reoccurring elements and create a conceptual framework for the following empiric analysis. The mixed-methods research approach will be justified, and the qualitative and quantitative designs will be discussed in consideration of reliability and validity of the research. Results will be presented and implications for research and practice as well as limitations and opportunities for further research will be pointed out.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework gives overview over current literature in relation to employer branding considering a mix of disciplines. Therefore, this chapter suggests integration of concepts to achieve a common understanding serving further analysis of the research question. The methodology of literature review is discussed before outlining sections of this chapter.

2.1 METHODOLOGY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough literature review was conducted to position the research question in light of literature related to employer branding (Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, & Wilderom, 2013). The iterative stages of systematic reviewing – define, search, select, analyze and synthesize – were used to identify relevant concepts and integrate current research findings in relation to employer branding (Wolfswinkel et al., 2013).

2.1.1 Preparation and process of literature review

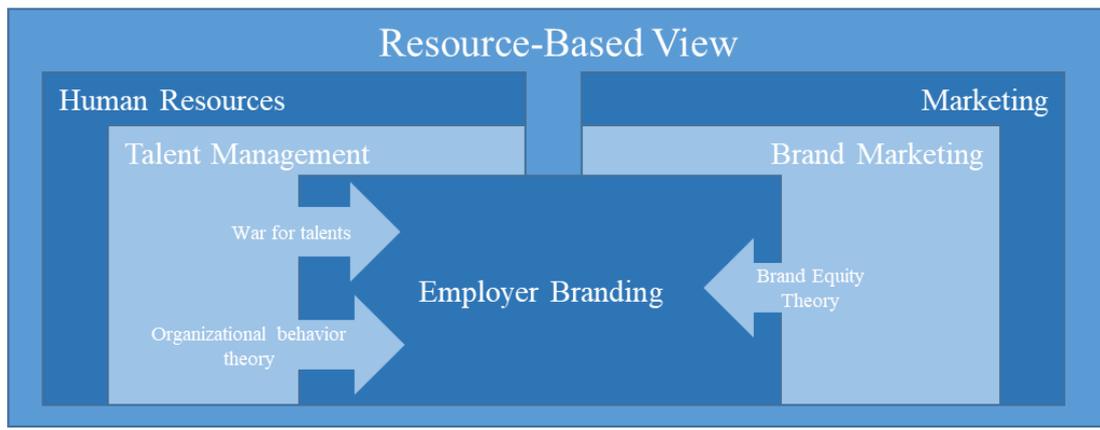
First, inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined mainly based on the core concepts of employer branding. Inclusion criteria for publications were relevancy to the topic, currency and publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, also older contributions were included if they established concepts and frameworks. The quality of the paper as well as the publishing journal were not necessarily exclusion criteria since valuable insights from conceptually sound articles would not have been included. Consequently, a list of search terms and keyword combinations was created, and keywords were iteratively added (see Appendix 0). Scopus and ‘web of science’ were used as databases to conduct research of literature between April and September 2018. The identified publications were used to extend the knowledge base by including forward and backward citations. All references were imported to Mendeley Desktop v. 1.19 including information about title, authors, dates, publishing journal, key words, abstracts as well as the full text. The analysis of papers was conducted using the process of open coding meaning that relevant findings, insights and concepts were marked throughout

texts. The data was then synthesized into higher-order themes represented in the structure of the theoretical framework.

2.1.2 Structure of theoretical framework

The field of employer branding is of multidisciplinary nature. Concepts and theories from human resources and recruitment literature, organizational behavior theory as well as brand marketing help to understand employer branding as a holistic concept (Edwards, 2009) as illustrated in Figure 1. First, the context of employer branding is set in the resource-based view highlighting that employees are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources necessary for competitive advantage. However, the struggle to attract employees described by the term ‘war for talent’ is discussed focusing on the reasons of talent shortages. After, talent management theory is shortly reviewed to explore how employer brands serve the purpose of convincing individuals to work for certain employers. Next, concepts of employer branding are defined. Then, employer branding activities are discussed by drawing analogies to consumer brand marketing. Lastly, current research is explored on how to design employer branding strategies under consideration of employee preference profiles. The literature review is used to establish a framework for attraction-oriented employer branding strategies to answer the research question in the empirical part of this thesis.

Figure 1 Classification of literature streams contributing to employer branding



Source: Literature streams deducted from literature review, own depiction

2.2 A WAR FOR TALENT – THE CONTEXT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

When considering employees as resources, the resource-based view gives employer branding a general context and highlights the purpose of the concept for businesses. The field of talent management integrates employer branding into a set of strategies and practices to attract highly-skilled employees.

2.2.1 Employees: resources of competitive advantage

The resource-based view suggests that having rare, valuable, non-substitutable and non-imitable resources helps to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). A sustainable competitive advantage can be defined as a value-creating strategy that cannot be used or duplicated by competitors (Barney, 1991). Next to capital or machines necessary to develop, produce and market products or services, workforces are directly tied to the success and viability of companies (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Not only acquired education and professional expertise but also their social networks make employees valuable and unique to businesses (Backhaus, 2016). Thus, if companies fail to attract and retain employees, they risk losing their competitive advantage and viability of business (Maheshwari et al., 2017; Maurya & Agarwal, 2018).

2.2.2 Reasons for talent shortages

However, employees are difficult to acquire in times of talent shortages. Chambers et al. (1998) coined the term ‘war for talent’ for the struggle to attract and retain talented employees while demand for them is increasing in labor markets. Reports on talent and skill shortages prospect deficits of employees in varying proportions. Human resource service provider Korn Ferry assumes a deficit of 4.9 million workers in Germany by 2030 (Korn Ferry, 2018). The Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft (2015), a German institute, projects a shortage of 3.9 million employees by 2040. Regarding persons with an academic degree, a deficit of 1.2 million is expected. The German government expects a shortage of 1.4 million academics (German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2017). While the future paints a picture of difficult hiring situations, 51% of German employers already face difficulty in recruiting (ManpowerGroup, 2018).

This shortage of talent has several interlocking reasons (Berthon et al., 2005; Biswas & Suar, 2016; Chambers et al., 1998). On the one side, demographic changes shrink the available workforce in developed countries (Schuler et al., 2011). Additionally, this smaller workforce is more focused on finding an employer that fits their expectations and values (Berthon et al., 2005; Chambers et al., 1998). On the other side, more globalized and dynamic markets increase job and geographic mobility. Further, demand for specific skills increases quickly as new business fields and technologies tend to grow fast while supply of employees tends to develop slower (Berthon et al., 2005; Schuler et al., 2011). It can be concluded that that job seekers tend to have more leverage in the labor market than employers as the demand is higher than supply. Consequently, employees become more particular in choosing their employers.

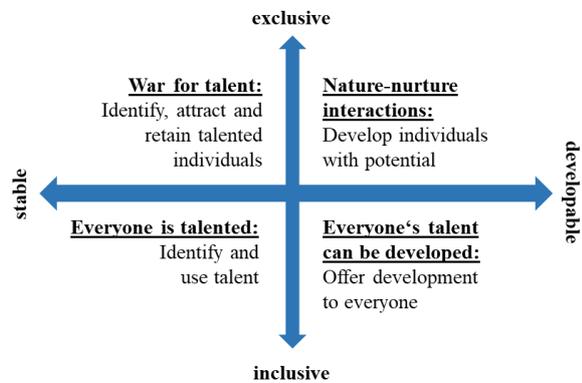
2.2.3 Talent management in the war for talent

Companies constantly risk to lose their competitive advantage if they do not attract and retain valuable employees (Chambers et al., 1998). Talent management theory is specifically focused on valuable employees (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). A successful talent management implies that companies have the right amount of talent at the right location and price responsive to dynamic environments (Schuler et al., 2011). In this regard, talented employees are individuals with

high potential, strategic importance or high levels of human capital expressed in competency, certain personalities or motivation (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Companies can adapt four underlying philosophies along the dimensions of exclusivity and stability that determine the respective management activities as illustrated in Figure 2.

While other talent management philosophies focus on talent as a potential that needs to be developed or used in the right place, the exclusive/stable perspective considers talent as a scarce, stable characteristic that only a small proportion of individuals possess (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013). Practices in relation to the exclusive/stable philosophy focus on the attraction and retention of highly-competed talents (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Hence, taking this perspective helps to elaborate on the purpose of employer branding and integrates the concept in a set of tools to attract talent in ‘wars for talent’.

Figure 2 Talent management philosophies



Source: Adaptation from Meyers & van Woerkom (2014, p. 194)

To tackle talent scarcity in the labor market, it is suggested to highly prioritize talent management in general, develop existing talents through training and feedback as well as attract external talents (Chambers et al., 1998). The development of talent potentials comes with heavy investments in individuals, requires a long-term perspective and is dependent on the cooperation and intention of employees as well as the efficient allocation of training and development budgets (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Only relying on development could be problematic in times of high job mobility leading to companies being unable to skim off benefits from developed talent. It might also be more efficient to acquire talent externally that already has the required qualifications instead of trying to develop internal capabilities.

To attract talents to companies, employers must invoke attention of job seekers and influence decisions to apply. It is suggested that employer branding is used as a strategic tool to develop reputation and attractiveness influencing talents' intention to apply by providing information about the expected employment experience early in the recruitment process (Baum & Kabst, 2014). When done right, employers with attractive employer brands can benefit from accessing a greater pool of employees at a lower price compared to companies with less favorable employer brands (Berthon et al., 2005; Collins & Han, 2004; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Theurer et al., 2018). Thus, employer branding takes a central role in the attraction of talented employees in the early stages of the recruitment process.

2.2.4 Summary: context for employer branding

In the following, the context of employer branding is shortly summarized. The resource-based view suggests that employees are sources of competitive sustainable advantage (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). In talent shortages, employees are more particular in choosing their employers and need to be convinced to accept job offers. The term 'war for talent' describes the struggle of organizations to attract and retain a talented workforce. As a response to this situation, companies engage in talent management to attract, retain and develop valuable employees (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). In this regard, employer branding helps to facilitate reputation and attractiveness of employers among individuals in the labor market influencing their decisions in early stages of recruitment processes. When done right, employers with attractive employer brands can benefit from greater talent pools at a lower price compared to companies with less favorable employer brands.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYER BRANDING

Deducing from the previous considerations, firms' employer branding efforts need to spark interest of valuable human resources. The leverage of power on the side of employees suggests that they might have an influence on employer branding strategies. However, individuals in the job market are not a homogeneous group but a conglomeration of different experiences, values and expectations. Thus, perceptions of employer brands may not be the same because of individual experiences, life stages or demographic characteristics. Therefore, the central research question of this thesis is:

RQ: What is the role of employee preference profiles in attraction-oriented employer branding strategies?

First, a common understanding of employer branding lays foundation for further considerations throughout this thesis. Thus, the first leading question is:

LQ1: What is the current understanding of employer branding in research?

The following section seeks to define key concepts by reviewing definitions of publications in the employer branding field.

2.3.1 Defining employer branding

Ambler & Barrow (1996) introduced the term '*employer brand*' with the assumption that marketing practices can be applied in the human resource management context. In marketing, brands are defined as personalities of products or product ranges by which consumers identify and differentiate them from those of competitors (Keller, 1993). In line with these analogies, Ambler & Barrow defined '*employer brand*' as the '*package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company*' (1996, p. 187). This definition has been widely adapted in the employer branding field (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2009; Theurer et al., 2018) and will be used for this thesis as well. Employer brands are employment-specific identities of companies where the experience of working in organizations is the product advertised (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). With employer brands, a promise of a certain experience is made to employees that take the role of consumers in this constellation (Backhaus, 2016; Edwards, 2009). Thus, job seekers can use the employer brand as a source of information about the quality, associated risks and trustworthiness of the expected employment experience. Therefore, employer brands can result in positive or negative brand associations and influence decisions of employees (Backhaus, 2016). Ambler & Barrow's (1996) definition further indicates that these employment experiences have distinctive benefits which will be discussed further in section 2.4.2.

In distinction to the employer brand, '*employer branding*' can be defined as '*the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity*' (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 502) which relates to active management of the brand. Thus, employer branding can be considered as a goal-oriented, long-term strategy that tries to influence employees (Edwards, 2009). Activities in this regard relate to the development of a desired employer identity as well as the marketing of it (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2009). Originally, employer branding was assumed to be a one-way communication of a stable employer brand from the organization to employees. But with advancement of the field, criticism emerged regarding the underlying belief that individuals would simply accept the brand offering in every labor market situation (Aggerholm, Andersen, & Thomsen, 2011). Not only the intent of employer branding activities on the side of companies influence employer brand associations but also how potential and current employees cognitively perceive the offered employment experience (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Backhaus, 2016). This is backed by the consideration that employers have employer brands even if they are not actively managing their image (Backhaus, 2016). Therefore, employer branding should be considered an iterative and interactive process in which employees are involved in employer branding activities of companies. Thus, an updated definition of employer branding as a

'strategic branding process which creates, negotiates and enacts sustainable relationships between an organisation and its potential and existing employees under the influence of the varying corporate contexts with the purpose of co-creating sustainable values for the individual, the organisation and society as a whole' (Aggerholm et al., 2011, p.113)

is adapted for this thesis. In this perspective, success of employer brands requires continuous efforts of employers to remain at this state (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). The previously given definition implies that organizations should stay informed by involving their employees, monitoring relevant KPIs and success of their employer brands (Berthon et al., 2005; Cascio & Graham, 2016; Dabirian et al., 2017; Deepa & Baral, 2017). Collected data should be used for continuous adaptation of employer branding in a long-term perspective requiring constant efforts and resources (Berthon et al., 2005; Cascio & Graham, 2016; Deepa & Baral, 2017).

In conclusion, employer brands are employment-specific identities of companies giving promises about experiences of employees and associated benefits. In contrast to employer branding being a one-directional communication of a stable employer identity, current definitions characterize it through activities that aim to create and negotiate relationships to potential and current employees with the aim to create value for individuals, the company and society in dynamic environments.

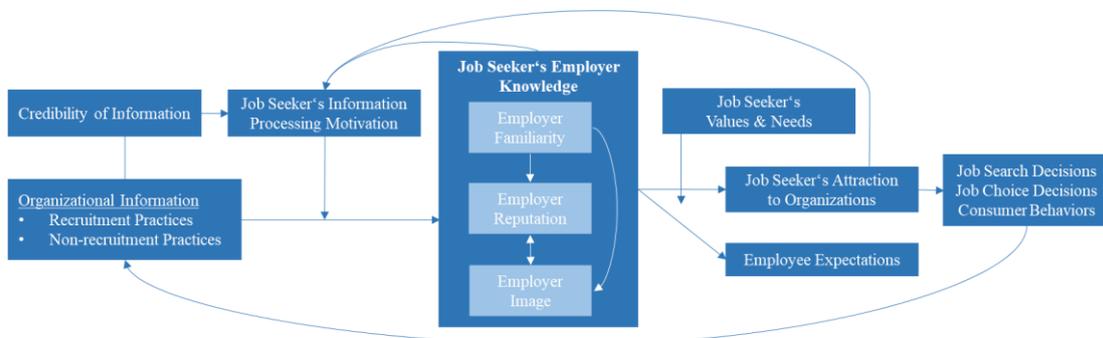
2.3.2 Employer brand equity: value of employer branding

As the previous section indicated, the creation of value through employer brands is crucial to attract valuable human resources. The concept of employer brand equity describes this creation of value and is taken from the marketing field. For companies, positive brand equity can increase effectiveness of marketing and facilitate competitive advantage in comparison with an unbranded product (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). For customers it is a decisive element whether they feel attracted to the brand (Alshathry, Clarke, & Goodman, 2017). Applying these explanations from the marketing to the employment context, Cable & Turban (2001) theorize that brand equity is *'the value of job seekers' employer knowledge, which is derived from job seekers' responses to recruiting organizations during and after the recruitment process'* (p. 121). Companies primarily aim to influence this knowledge of potential employees to create a favorable perception in the labor market (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002). Thus, the primary goal of employer branding strategies is the development of employer knowledge and, through that, positive employer brand equity. A framework by Cable & Turban (2001) describes the creation of brand equity as depicted in Figure 3. This model serves as a foundation for the following discussion of employer branding strategies. Generally, this framework assumes that information sources affect employer knowledge and its dimensions in an ongoing feedback loop depending on credibility of information and the job seekers' motivation for processing further information. In turn, the job seeker's employment knowledge affects their behaviors towards organizations. The components are reviewed in detail in the following section, beginning with the dimensions of employer knowledge.

2.3.2.1 Employer knowledge: familiarity, image and reputation

To develop attractive employer brands, companies must consider that attraction to employers is the result of job seekers processing information about them. *Employer knowledge* is defined as *'a job seeker's memories and associations regarding an organization'* (Cable & Turban, 2001, p. 123). This knowledge can be described along three aspects – employer familiarity or awareness, employer image and employer reputation.

Figure 3 Theoretical model of recruitment equity



Source: Adaptation from Cable & Turban (2001, p. 122)

Employer familiarity indicates how easy the brand comes to mind (Keller, 1993; Theurer et al., 2018). Without an initial awareness of employers, no further knowledge regarding the employer image and reputation can be developed (Cable & Turban, 2001). If there is no awareness of the employer, its legitimacy could be questioned by potential employees and

positive associations are unlikely (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins, 2007). *Employer image* contains general associations and attitudes of individuals towards the employer (Berthon et al., 2005; Theurer et al., 2018). Backhaus (2016) implies that '*a well-differentiated employer image enables job seekers to understand the organization's values and to find similarities between themselves and the organization*' (p. 194). Thus, these associations contain subjective beliefs about what it is like to work in a company and companies' personalities (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007). *Employer reputation* refers to what job seeker's think about public opinions of companies in comparison with competitors (Cable & Turban, 2001). This dimension serves a legitimizing function in a way that employers are validated by positive public evaluations (Cable & Turban, 2001). The previous discussion implies that employer image and reputation are based on beliefs about the organization. If companies want to create successful employer brands, they must actively try to influence these beliefs and create desirable content as a basis for employer knowledge. This can only be done when initial familiarity with employers is developed. Thus, the organization's desired perception among job seekers needs to be considered as a strategic elements of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies and is discussed in section 2.4.2.

2.3.2.2 Information sources of employer knowledge

For the development of employer knowledge, information about organizations is crucial for employees. Therefore, organizations should consider sources of information and their influences on potential employees. Cable & Turban (2001) establish four assumptions in their discussion of information sources. First, individuals start developing employer knowledge even before they intent to apply to organizations. Second, all information sources can influence the employer knowledge of individuals regardless if they are in a recruitment context. Third, job seekers have varying motivation to process information about employers that is influenced by previous employment knowledge, their initial attraction to the employer as well as the credibility and company-dependence of information source. Lastly, motivation to process information about employers, in turn, impacts the change and development of employer knowledge. These assumptions imply that employer knowledge is dependent on several information sources with different characteristics. If companies want to create successful employer brands, they must actively try to manage information via the selection of suitable information channels. Therefore, section 2.4.3 discusses the management of information channels as a strategic element of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies.

2.3.2.3 Outcomes of employer knowledge

Employer knowledge plays a crucial role in the attraction of employees because it influences the behavior of job seekers towards organizations (Cable & Turban, 2001). First, employer knowledge influences the motivation to process further information about employers. Familiarity is necessary to get job seekers initially interested in doing this and a great extent of employer knowledge will decrease processing motivation. Second, employer knowledge influences job seekers' attraction to organizations. Attraction is also crucial to maintain motivation for further processing information about prospective employers. However, and more importantly, attraction influences decisions to apply for, pursue or accept a job at organizations. For this, employer reputation and image are particularly important. A good reputation contributes to the self-concept of job seekers and influences their decisions positively while a negative public opinion does the opposite. Employer images matching expectations and values of individuals contributes to decisions for working at organization whereas mismatches rather result in omissions of applications or rejection of offers. This notion is supported by the concept of *person-organization fit* describing that potential employees compare their perception of employer brands to their expectations, values and personalities to determine employer attractiveness based on value congruence (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2009). If employer brands match and feel 'right', job seekers are more

likely to perceive the employer as attractive (Backhaus, 2016). Therefore, it is very important to acknowledge the expectations and values of individuals when advertising employments. Lastly, employer knowledge influences expectations regarding experiences with their employer. Individuals possess beliefs about employment right after they are recruited and even before they start working at organizations. The concept of psychological contracts is useful to explain this circumstance. *Psychological contracts* are implicit beliefs about the terms and conditions of the employer-employee relationship that exist next to explicit contracts (Rousseau, 1989). Employees implicitly expect rewards, training and career opportunities, trust and fairness as well as aspirational values from their employer in exchange for their loyalty, skills and performance (Backhaus, 2016). Given these expectations, organizations should communicate accurate and realistic information (Cable & Turban, 2001) that match these expectations to actual employment experiences (Edwards, 2009) in order to avoid shock and disappointment after recruitment. In conclusion, employer knowledge can generate a motivation to process further information about employers, evaluations of attractiveness and expectations about employment experiences. In the following, implication on employer branding definitions as well as the employer brand equity framework is summarized and the structure for following discussions of employer branding strategies is determined.

2.3.3 Summary: understanding employer branding

Employer brands are employment-specific identities that describe experiences employees are likely going to have working in a company and expected benefits of the employment relationship. In distinction, employer branding is characterized through related activities that aim to create and negotiate relationships with potential and current employees aiming to create value for individuals, companies and society in dynamic environments. The creation of value is expressed by ‘employer brand equity’ and rooted in employer knowledge of job seekers. Companies must actively try to create desirable content as a base for job seekers’ employer knowledge with their employer branding activities. The following sections discuss the development of employer value propositions as well as the use of information channels to influence employer knowledge and, consequently, behaviors of job seekers towards organizations (Cable & Turban, 2001). Since attraction to employers is not only evaluated on employer knowledge but also on the perceived match of employment experiences with individuals’ expectations and values (Cable & Turban, 2001), their role in employer branding strategies is reviewed.

2.4 EMPLOYER BRANDING STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTION

Following, this section elaborates on aspects of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies required to create employer brand equity contributing to the following question:

LQ2: What aspects can describe attraction-oriented employer branding strategies?

To create a holistic review of employer branding literature and not only rely on one framework, the first sub-section focusses on the evolution of associated research and integrates several frameworks to structure employer branding strategies. Following that, findings on employer branding activities of companies are reviewed in connection to needed capabilities, differentiation from competitors and accuracy of employer brands. Lastly, the influence of job seekers on employer branding strategies is reviewed by introducing employee preference profiles.

Before diving into the discussion of literature, the concept of strategy is shortly explained. Mintzberg (1987) referred to 5 P’s when defining strategies. First, strategy can be defined as a plan of action which is made in advance and purposefully developed. Second, strategies can be general long-term plans or specific ploys to outwit competitors. Third, strategy is consistent

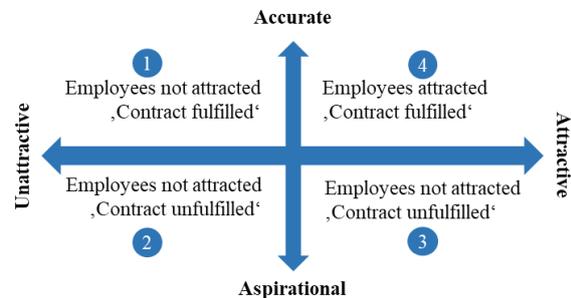
behavior that emerges as patterns. Fourth, strategies can be considered a mediating force between the environment and an organization where niche companies create returns because of their unique position. Fifth, strategy refers to common thinking and behavior. Thus, it can be assumed that strategies contain more or less planned activities towards a goal. These activities are mostly consistent over time, emerge to patterns, are supposed to optimally fit to the environment of an organization and involve individuals of an organization based on a shared understanding of the intended or emerged strategy. Thus, employer branding strategies will be individual for companies but may contain reoccurring aspects. In the following, the evolution of employer branding research is discussed before exploring these pattern-creating aspects.

2.4.1 Strategic frameworks for employer branding – then and now

When Ambler & Barrow coined the term ‘employer brand’ in 1996 and asked practitioners how they manage theirs, no respondent explicitly did. As the popularity of the concept grew, recommendations on managing employer brands emerged as well. In 2004, Backhaus & Tikoo described the employer branding process in three steps derived from practitioner literature. In the first step, a value proposition is developed which contains information about the employer. In the second step, this information is advertised to potential employees external to the firm. In the third step, internal marketing fulfils the promises made in the recruitment process to develop a loyal and committed workforce. For the attraction of employees, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) indicated that employer brand associations are developed from employer branding that result in employer image and, lastly, in employer attraction. This employer branding process depicts the core of employer branding from the organizational perspective but does not involve influences that might mitigate or facilitate success of employer brands.

Moroko & Uncles (2008) presented a typology of characteristics of successful employer brands involving these aspects in part. Their research discussed marketing and human resource management strategies for four states of employer branding success. Following their argumentation, successful employer brands can create employer familiarity, provide relevant and attractive information with their value proposition, be positively different from competing employer brands and realize pre-recruitment promises because they were accurate. The authors mapped their findings in a typology of four strategic issues along the dimensions of accuracy and attractiveness as depicted in Figure 4. In cell 1, organizations have attractive and accurate employment offerings but need to externally advertise them to improve familiarity and differentiation from competitors. In cell 2, companies develop employer knowledge via marketing but are unable to follow through with promises because of inaccurate information and, therefore, need to focus on the accuracy of employer brands. In cell 3, both the marketing and employment offering need revision to initially attract employees and make them stay. In cell 4, the desirable state of employer brands is depicted as being able to attract and retain employees well. However, success is not static and needs maintenance by measuring and readjusting employer branding strategies. Findings of Moroko & Uncles (2008) correspond with findings from Botha et al. (2011) who developed an employer brand predictive model for talent attraction and retention. The authors identified influences on employer brands which they call building blocks. In this regard, target group needs should be considered by employers to identify appropriate contents for employer brands. Companies should also ensure that brand promises are delivered and are differentiated from competitors.

Figure 4 Typology of employer brands



Source: Adaptation from Moroko & Uncles (2008), own depiction

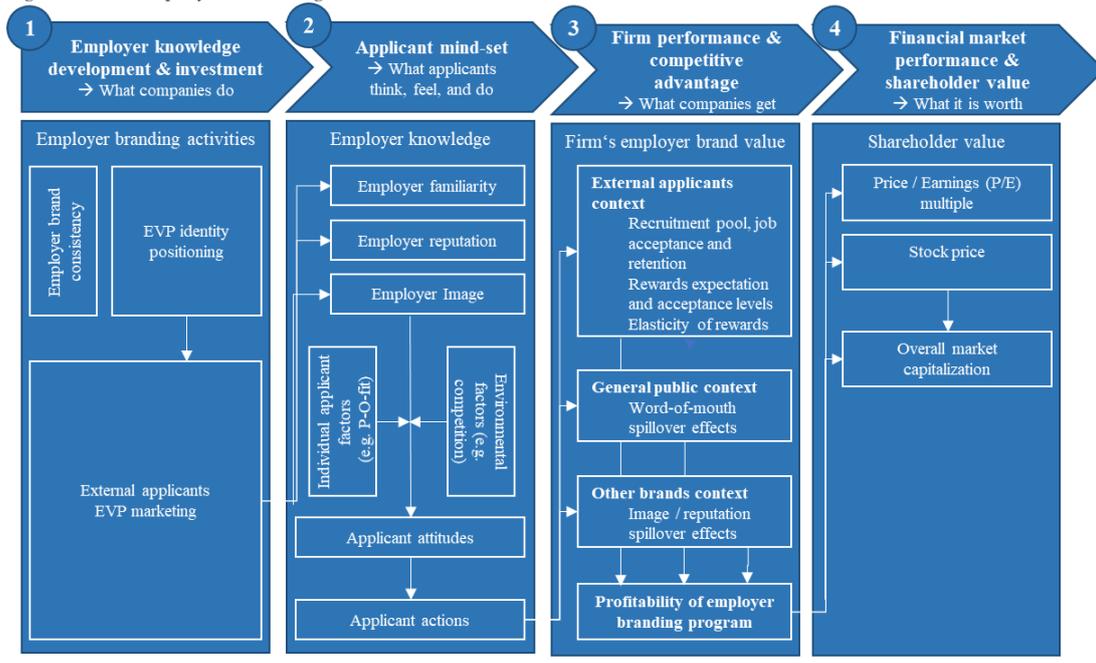
Lastly, suitable channels distribute information to potential employees while metrics helps to control the success of the employer brand.

Moroko & Uncles (2009) further explored the application of market segmentation to employer branding. Findings suggested that companies used segmentation factors such as age, profitability of employees and preferred career benefits to tailor their employer branding strategies to specific groups of valuable employees. Moroko & Uncles (2009) hypothesized that market segmentation can not only be used to focus to recruit one potential employee group with certain characteristics – such as focusing on only graduates – but rather to create an understanding what a diversity of employees expects and demands from an employer. Following this notion, Aggerholm et al. (2011) reviewed former conceptualizations of employer branding, criticizing the static, one-directional notion of employer branding strategies where the employer is the sender and (potential) employees are the receiver as described by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) or Ambler & Barrow (1996). As already discussed when defining employer branding in section 2.3.1, Aggerholm et al. (2011) emphasize the co-creation and relational aspect of employer brands as well as the iterative nature of employer branding approaches. These findings indicate that employers are supposed to acknowledge the influence of employee characteristics and connected expectations and values to create attractive employer branding approaches and are further discussed in section 2.4.4.4.

A framework by Deepa & Baral (2017) creates a map consisting of nine building blocks for the long-term employer branding strategy of a company. ‘Key partners’ describes the involved parties in employer branding while ‘key activities’ involves necessary activities in relation to development and marketing of employer brands. ‘Key resources’ refers to physical, financial, intellectual and human resources necessary to implement strategies in this regard. ‘Value propositions’ comprises the benefits of EVPs relative to defined target segments. ‘Channels’ contains considerations regarding information sources for employer knowledge. ‘Employee relationships’ refers to the intended nature of relationships with employees while ‘employee segments’ describes the segmentation of employees based on needs, behaviors or other attributes. Lastly, ‘cost structure’ and ‘revenue streams’ give ideas about the financial value of employer branding. These elements mostly match previously discussed conceptualizations. Again, it must be noted that (potential) employees and their relationship to employers are conceptualized to be an important part of employer branding.

Lastly, Theurer et al. (2018) developed a four-stage model of the employer branding value chain from literature review and explore future research needs. While the first stage describes what companies do, the second stage focusses on how applicants or employees react to the actions of companies. In the third stage, the framework shows what companies can get from employer branding and, lastly, the fourth stage describes the monetary value of these outcomes. For this thesis, I focus on the first two stages as depicted in Figure 5 as they relate most to the creation of employer branding strategies. The model emphasizes the influence of several aspects on employer branding activities such as target segments of potential employees, competing employer brands and consistency as well as accuracy of the employer brand. Further, Theurer et al. (2018) identify under-researched areas regarding the segmentation of potential employees, use of social media for communicating information about employment as well as questions regarding the integration of information channels into effective marketing mixes. Therefore, these areas will be points of discussion in the following sections.

Figure 5 The Employer Branding Value Chain



Source: Adaptation from Theurer et al. (2018), p. 166

In summary, employer branding literature discovered several reoccurring aspects for employer branding strategies. The following sections are used to discuss and integrate current knowledge of employer branding in relation to these aspects. For companies, the definition of a desired employer brand through EVPs and marketing of it through information channels is at the core of employer branding activities. These topics are reviewed first in the following sections. Next, organizational partners and accuracy of employer brands as influences from within companies are examined. Then, influences external to the company such as job seekers and competitors are discussed. In this regard, the role of potential employees in employer branding strategies is extensively examined. At the end of the chapter, research issues for the empirical part of this thesis are summarized.

2.4.2 Employer value propositions: foundation of employer knowledge

Crafting an attractive EVP is the basis for developing employer knowledge on the side of job seekers. The *employer value proposition* can be defined as ‘a desired or ideal employer identity, i.e. how the company wants to be perceived by (potential) employees as an attractive employer’ (Theurer et al., 2018, p. 166). In this regard, the symbolic-instrumental framework adapted from marketing research serves to describe benefits and information that may be included in companies’ EVPs (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Companies need to develop their EVPs in two regards – the selection of relevant tangible benefits of the employment experience that companies want to convey to their potential employee and intangible personality traits inferred onto employers. It is important to note that the symbolic-instrumental framework rather works as a continuum. Thus, attributes can have characteristics of both ends of the continuum and, therefore, are classified differently by a variety of authors which can be illustrated by an overview in App. II (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Roy, 2008; Sutherland, Torricelli, & Karg, 2002; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014).

2.4.2.1 Symbolic attributes of EVPs: the personality of employers

Individuals ascribe personality traits to organizations and favor employers that have personality traits similar to their own (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Hoye, & Schreurs, 2005; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Van Hoye, Bas, Cromheecke, & Lievens, 2013). Symbolic meanings are individual associations regarding personality of employers. They help potential employees to evaluate person-organization fit to companies and influence their assumptions about employer reputations. Personality traits like *sincerity*, *cheerfulness*, *innovativeness*, *competence*, *prestige* and *robustness* contribute to developments of attractiveness if they match the self-concept of the potential employee (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Thus, symbolic meanings are related to the need of individuals to maintain their identity, express themselves or enhance their self-image. Further, innovativeness, sincerity and prestige serve as points of differentiation. Hence, especially emphasizing these personality traits may be beneficial when included in advertisements and information material (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). In conclusion, symbolic attributes are personality traits inferred to employers and help to explain employer attractiveness for individuals. Therefore, it is suggested that companies use information in the marketing of employer brands that invoke attributions of innovativeness, sincerity and prestige. This should trigger perception of benefit for individuals to express themselves, enhance their self-image or maintain their identity.

2.4.2.2 Instrumental attributes of EVPs: organizational and job benefits

Next to symbolic attributes, employers have to determine which tangible benefits can be offered to potential employees (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This goes hand in hand with the integration of information about HR practices and policies into an attractive and marketable employment experience (Edwards, 2009). Instrumental attributes are specifically focused on utility in a way that (potential) employees can maximize benefits from them. Ambler & Barrow (1996) initially identified economic, functional and psychological benefits of an employer brand that provide value to employees. These dimensions served as a starting point for the identification of instrumental EVP dimensions in employer branding literature. (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Roy, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014). Table 2 gives an overview about benefit dimensions that are most attractive to potential employees while Appendix III contains an extended version to compare description of benefits throughout the publications. In the following, benefit dimensions are discussed and categorized along the initial conceptualization by Ambler and Barrow (1996).

Table 2 Instrumental benefits of employer brands

Benefit dimensions	Description
Functional benefit	<i>'developmental and/or useful activities'</i> (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187)
Development Value	<i>'employer that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 162)
Application Value	<i>'employer that provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer orientated and humanitarian'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 162)
Work-Life-Balance	<i>'proper work/life balance allows people to manage their work in harmony with all their other identities (e.g., parent, friend, traveler, club member) without conflict or stress'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)
Psychological benefit	<i>'feelings such as belonging, direction and purpose'</i> (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187)
Social Value	<i>'positive work atmosphere; coworkers who are fun and collegial, and who share similar values; a team approach to problem solving; and a people-focused organizational culture'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)
Interest Value	<i>'employer that provides an exciting work environment, novel work practices and that makes use of its employee's creativity to produce high-quality, innovative products and services'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 159)

Ethics & CSR	<i>'employer which is ethical, and the work culture is strong and clear'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121)
Economic benefit	<i>'employer that provides above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities'</i> (Berthon et al. 2005, p. 159)

Source: Author's own depiction derived from literature review

2.4.2.2.1 Functional benefit dimensions

Functional benefit of employer brands comprises the characteristics of the job itself including development opportunities, challenges as well as the usefulness of activities in the job (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Frequently, development and application value are used as more detailed sub-dimensions attributed to functional benefit (Berthon et al., 2005). Development value can be offered by an employer who provides recognition for employees' performance as well as career-enhancing possibilities (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Roy, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). Application value is perceived when employees can apply their knowledge and transfer it to their colleagues. The importance of work-life-balance as the ability to arrange work and private life in harmony is also emphasized by current publications (Dabirian et al., 2017; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014).

2.4.2.2.2 Economic benefit dimensions

Economic benefit contains compensation and other offered rewards for performance of employees (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Mostly, economic value is characterized by a competitive salary, an attractive compensation package, job security and opportunities for promotion (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005). Additionally, pension programs are also identified in line with economic benefit (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

2.4.2.2.3 Psychological benefit dimensions

Psychological benefit centers around feelings like belonging as well as purpose and concern company cultures along with its external perception (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). This type of benefit seems to have partial overlaps with the previously discussed symbolic personality traits (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Psychological benefit can be further categorized in interest value, social value as well as benefits arising from ethical behavior of the companies. Interest value can be provided by exciting work environments and can lead to the perception of innovativeness as an ascribed personality trait (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Further, interest value also comprises feelings of self-confidence resulting from working for a company with a good reputation and can be perceived as cues for the perception of prestige and in relation to employers (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Roy, 2008). Moreover, ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) can also be considered as psychological benefit as employees feel good when their organizations contribute to a better society and have ideological values. This gives signals about sincerity as a trait inference (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Roy, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). Lastly, social value is high when there are good relationships with colleagues and, generally, great team atmosphere (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017).

2.4.2.3 Summary: employer brand development

The previous section aimed to gain understanding of EVPs as ideal employer identities, which information they convey and how these relate to each other. According to the symbolic-instrumental framework, EVPs can be developed in two regards –instrumental benefits and symbolic personality traits. Instrumental attributes are objective aspects of the job or organization that have utility for potential employees while symbolic traits rely heavily on the perception of individuals and perceived match to those of (potential) employees (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Instrumental EVP attributes are suggested to be integrated into attractive and marketable employment experiences (Edwards, 2009). In the employer branding field, economic, functional and

psychological benefits describe instrumental attributes that provide value to employees and can be characterized through refined sub-dimensions (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Roy, 2008; Sutherland et al., 2002; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014). In the following, employer brand marketing through different online channels as information sources are examined.

2.4.3 Communication channels: sources of employer knowledge

Communication channels are used in employer branding to develop or influence employer knowledge. Messages via these information sources serve as promises and signals indicating the nature of the employment experience and help forming beliefs and expectations about employers (Rousseau, 2001). This section aims to understand how online communication channels can be used for employer branding to distribute information and increase interest to develop employer knowledge among job seekers in early stages of recruitment processes. The restriction to early recruiting stages is made since employer branding is used to ignite initial attraction before being replaced by interviews and site visits (Breugh, 2008; Cable & Turban, 2001). Additionally, the review of communication channels will only focus on online media as most of information processing of private and business topics is increasingly done online (Dabirian et al., 2017; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In this regard, it must be noted that any information can influence the job seeker's employer knowledge and, therefore, recruitment-specific and general channels are considered (Cable & Turban, 2001). First, characteristics of communication channels will be reviewed before discussing concrete sources of information. Lastly, the strategic creation of marketing mixes is reviewed.

2.4.3.1 Characteristics of communication channels

Information sources can be characterized regarding their locus of control and the cognitive effort to process information by potential employees (Baum & Kabst, 2014; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

2.4.3.1.1 Control of communication channels

Control as a characteristic has implications on credibility and trustworthiness of the respective channel. Company-dependent communication channels are directly controlled by employers making it easy for them to distribute information (Cable & Turban, 2001; Hoye & Lievens, 2007). In contrast, company-independent information channels are published and edited by third parties and cannot be directly sanitized or sanctioned by the employer (Cable & Yu, 2006). The latter is typically considered more credible as they convey negative as well as positive information (Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Therefore, individuals may be skeptical about information from company-dependent sources and seek complementary information of company-independent channels (Sivertzen et al., 2013). However, findings indicate that job seekers can perceive company-dependent information sources as more credible than third-party ones when information is presented in a balanced manner including positive and negative aspects of employment. (Cable & Turban, 2001; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015).

2.4.3.1.2 Cognitive effort required to process information

Categorizing communication channels regarding their cognitive involvement of potential employees helps to explain how individuals are exposed to organizational information. This characteristic determines which employer knowledge dimensions are influenced and also has an impact on motivations of individuals to seek further information (Collins & Han, 2004). Low-involvement channels do not require individuals to search and process information extensively because of incidental exposure (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Unknown employers can use these information sources to create initial familiarity and increase motivation to process further information (Collins, 2007). High-involvement channels require increased

cognitive effort and motivation of job seekers to identify and process detailed information about companies. These are best suited for known employers that want to influence their image by providing extensive information about the employment experience (Collins & Han, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). Individuals with a motivation to process information about employers will rather turn to high-involvement sources to complement their employer knowledge as these provide more detailed information.

2.4.3.2 Online communication channels

The marketing of employer brands follows two main objectives: (1) increase general employer familiarity and (2) create the perception of a great place to work through positive employer image and reputation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Various online information sources such as recruitment advertising, company websites and social media as well as their respective characteristics are reviewed in connection to these two goals.

2.4.3.2.1 Online recruitment advertising

Online recruitment advertising can be defined as any form of recruitment-specific promotion online that is paid by the employer to convey a positive message to potential applicants (Jaidi, van Hooft, & Arends, 2011). Therefore, recruitment advertising is a company-dependent communication channel. These promotions can be distributed through different outlets such as job boards and social media and advertise employment easily and cheaply (Girard & Fallery, 2011). General recruitment advertisements demand low cognitive involvement on the side of potential employees and, thus, only increase employer familiarity (Collins & Han, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). In contrast, detailed recruitment advertising can be considered high-involvement information sources that individuals have to actively search for (Collins, 2007). Detailed recruitment advertising, for example, for specific jobs can influence beliefs about employers (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). However, this is only the case if individuals are initially aware of and interested in employment opportunities of companies. It can be assumed that after processing a detailed recruitment advertisement, potential employees seek more information to complement their initial employer image (Cable & Turban, 2001).

2.4.3.2.2 Company career websites

Companies' career websites can include different types of media such as text, pictures and videos. Websites can contain several sections and categories customized to demographics, needs and situations of potential employees (Cable & Yu, 2006). It is suggested to provide as much information as possible about employment experiences via this channel (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007). The effectiveness of influencing employer image is dependent on familiarity and initial interest of potential employees because individuals must actively visit company websites to obtain information. Therefore, this information source can be considered a high-involvement practice (Baum & Kabst, 2014; Collins & Han, 2004). Contrary to consumer branding research, authors in the employer branding field found that job seekers perceive information on company websites as more credible than information from third parties (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015).

2.4.3.2.3 Social media

Next to companies' career sites, employers can also be present on social media platforms. In contrast to other sources of information, social media in relation to employer branding is an under-researched area due to its relatively recent emergence (Backhaus, 2016; Theurer et al., 2018). Employer branding research assumed that social media opens up new possibilities for 'interactive and targeted employer branding' (Theurer et al., 2018, p. 167). Authors emphasize to be present on career-oriented social media sites such as LinkedIn and Xing for employer branding activities because it seems to be more effective in providing information about employers (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Nikolaou, 2014). However, it is assumed non-career

oriented social media also influences the employer knowledge of job seekers as well according to the conceptualization of Cable & Turban (2001).

Further, Kissel & Büttgen (2015) distinct company-dependent social media presences of employers from company-independent word-of-mouth on social media. Social media provides a platform to discuss employment experiences either in interaction with employers, current or former employees of employers or other job seekers (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Credibility of employer social media presences is increased as they are subject to close social control by users (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). This means that wrong or inaccurate statements can be criticized and corrected endangering the credibility of employers. Company presences on social networking sites like LinkedIn, XING or Facebook allow for interactions between employers and individuals and facilitate the building of relationships between these two parties (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015).

If organizations do not actively interact, job seekers can also use company-independent discussions of employment experiences to obtain information. *Word-of-mouth* in the employer branding context can be defined as ‘interpersonal communication, independent of the organization’s recruitment activities, about an organization as an employer or about specific jobs’ (Hoye & Lievens, 2007, p. 373). When word-of-mouth is distributed on the Internet, it referred to as word-of-mouth and can reach thousands of people through social networking sites and communities (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Results of earlier studies indicated that job seekers favor information about employers from university contacts as well as from current and former employees (Breugh, 2008). The ratings of former applicants and employees on employer rating websites can enhance or undermine the credibility of employer brand and recruitment messages (Breugh, 2008). However, fear of false information and oversharing of negative experiences can mitigate the credibility of word-of-mouth on social media and employer rating websites (Cable & Yu, 2006; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). Individuals can search actively for discussions about certain employers or be exposed to them incidentally if the network of the individual engages in these resulting in a varying degree of cognitive involvement. Therefore, employer branding on social media reaches active and passive job seekers with varying motivation to process information (Sivertzen et al., 2013). Further, current research on social media in relation to employer branding concludes that job seekers rather complement their employer knowledge with information found on company social media presences than only relying on them to develop their employer knowledge (Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska, 2017; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). This might also be the reason why the importance of social media in relation to job seekers’ efforts in obtaining information is relatively low as it does not deliver a holistic picture of the employment experience on its own (Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska, 2017). Therefore, current publications call for further research in relation to the combination of different online information sources (Nikolaou, 2014), determination of job choices (Sivertzen et al., 2013) and distinctive target groups (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). The notion of targeting specific groups of potential employees relates to the influence of potential employees and is discussed further in section 2.4.4.4.

2.4.3.3 Combination of communication channels and employer knowledge

As the discussion of social media in relation to employer branding indicated, combinations of information sources are more effective in developing a holistic employer knowledge regarding its three dimensions (Backhaus, 2016; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Theurer et al., 2018). A marketing mix seeks to integrate information sources acknowledging the employer’s current image situation (Backhaus, 2016; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Theurer et al., 2018). First, this section discusses benefits of combining online sources for information before reviewing employer brand marketing strategies based on different situations of employer knowledge.

Potential employees combine impressions from different communication channels with their existing perceptions and, thereby, expand and evaluate their employer knowledge constantly (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins & Stevens, 2002). Research on the combination of communication channels stays on an abstract level based on characteristics of cognitive involvement and locus of control. Especially regarding social media, there is little research on which specific platforms to use. Almost no findings indicate combinations of specific channels to develop employer knowledge (Backhaus, 2004; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Theurer et al., 2018). It is suggested that combinations of information from the company as well as from third parties create a more credible and complete image than only using company-dependent channels alone (Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska, 2017; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). Further, research developed suggestions for practitioners to acknowledge current employer image situations (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Four current employer knowledge situations are identified and illustrated in Table 3. The suggestions imply that there are no ‘best practices’ beneficial for all employers (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Table 3 Suggestions for combining channels based on employer knowledge situations

Current situation of employer knowledge	Practical suggestion
Unfamiliar employer with no image	Use low-involvement practices (e.g. general recruitment advertisements) to raise awareness and encourage current employees to distribute word-of-mouth. After familiarity is established, use high-involvement channels (e.g. company website) to give specific information and differentiate from competitors.
Familiar employer with no image	Use more high-involvement practices (e.g. company website) to develop employer knowledge and less low-involvement practices. Company-independent practices like positive word-of-mouth sustain credibility of employer.
Employer with negative image	Causes for negative associations either need to be changed by modifying the EVPs or reinterpreted by claiming uniqueness and responsibility. Negative associations can only be changed with persistent effort. Rebranding campaigns create new associations and give updated information, low-involvement practices maintain familiarity.
Well-known employer with positive image	The priority is to maintain as well as monitor awareness and positive image. High-involvement practices help to increase applicant pool quality by providing possibilities to assess personality-organization fit.
Source: Literature review of employer branding research	

2.4.3.3.1 Combinations of sources for unfamiliar employers with no image

If potential employees are not familiar with employers, familiarity must be created in the first step to establish a foundation for employer knowledge before delivering detailed information (Cable & Turban, 2001). Practices requiring low cognitive involvement such as general recruitment advertising help to boost familiarity and trigger motivation to process information about employers (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004). Further, current employees should be encouraged to distribute positive word-of-mouth to increase credibility of information. In the next step, companies should give as much realistic information as possible about the employment experience on high-involvement channels like company websites to create a positive image associations (Allen et al., 2007). Specific benefits and points-of-difference should be emphasized to create perceptions of uniqueness as discussed further in section 2.4.4.3 (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

2.4.3.3.2 Combinations of sources for familiar employers with no image

If potential employees are aware of employers but have not created specific associations about employment experiences, high-involvement practices need to be used. In this situation, job seekers are highly impressionable, and thus, need extensive, accurate and specific information to evaluate the attractiveness of employers (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). For example, detailed information on company websites can help to foster positive associations about employers (Cable & Turban, 2001).

2.4.3.3.3 Combinations of sources for employers with a negative image

If potential employees have negative employer images, these associations need to be changed or reinterpreted. Causes for negative images may be promoted as a claim of uniqueness and responsibility should be taken (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). In this line, companies may need to identify and focus on potential employees who are attracted to causes that are perceived negative by other segments. Alternatively, employers can also decide to modify negatively perceived aspects of employment. It is suggested to keep a low profile until the modification is completed (Cable & Turban, 2001). Afterwards, rebranding campaigns help to create new associations and give updated information about employments (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Further, low-involvement practices can help to persuade potential employees to reevaluate their fit to the company (Collins & Han, 2004). Existing negative association can only be changed with persistent effort in a long-term perspective (Collins & Han, 2004).

2.4.3.3.4 Combinations of sources for well-known, attractive employers

If potential employees are aware of employers and have positive associations with them, the priority is to maintain this desirable image situation (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). High-involvement information sources such as the company website can help to increase applicant pool quality by letting potential employees evaluate whether they fit to the company (Collins, 2007; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Low involvement channels help to maintain familiarity. Brand values should be recognized and reinforced internally to ensure that expectations of newly recruited employees are met (Cable & Turban, 2001; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Rousseau, 2001).

2.4.3.4 Summary: communication channels

This section seeks to summarize considerations regarding communication channels. Two characteristics classify and describe information sources – the locus of control and the cognitive involvement needed to process information. Information sources such as online recruitment advertising, employers' career websites, social media and online publicity were discussed in relation to early stages of the recruitment process. In the review of social media, the discussion revealed that there are not many contributions and current publications call for further research. Further, strategic combinations of sources are crucial to create a successful employer branding strategy. However, there are almost no findings indicating which specific communication channels are useful in combination (Backhaus, 2004; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Theurer et al., 2018). Next, influences and success factors of employer branding strategies are examined.

2.4.4 Success factors and influences of employer branding strategies

It is critical for the success of employer branding to consider several aspects next to the activities of companies in this regard. Involvement of companies' departments in these efforts, accuracy and consistency of employer brands, competitors and potential employees all influence the employer branding activities of firms. Thus, these aspects are reviewed in more detail now.

2.4.4.1 Involvement in employer branding strategies

Conceptualizing employer branding strategies not only involves capacities in the HR department because of multiple disciplines involved in this field (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Edwards, 2009; Martin, Gollan, & Grigg, 2011; Mölk & Auer, 2017). Employer branding activities demand knowledge in marketing and HR but also financial resources (Deepa & Baral, 2017). Further, support from the executive management signals the importance of this employer branding throughout the organization. HR departments are suggested to lead employer branding and build connections throughout the organization to coordinate efforts (Cascio & Graham, 2016; Mölk & Auer, 2017). Participating individuals have to define clear

responsibilities and find a general framework to conduct employer branding activities together (Mölk & Auer, 2017). Further, involved functions and individuals should support developed strategies, facilitate communication and ensure local adaptability in multi-national and large firms as lack of support or communication as well as mismatch to local labor markets could mitigate the effectiveness of employer branding strategies (Cascio & Graham, 2016; Martin et al., 2011; Mölk & Auer, 2017). Even though employer branding might be initiated in a top-down approach, employees should be involved in activities and be ambassadors of their organizations (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Cascio & Graham, 2016).

2.4.4.2 Consistency and accuracy of employer brands

The second aspect discussed is the consistency and accuracy of employer brands. Since employer brands create expectations among potential employees about the actual employment, messages of the employer brand itself should be realistic and consistent (Backhaus, 2016; Berthon et al., 2005; Cable & Turban, 2001; Theurer et al., 2018). Accurate information about employment reduces risks for potential employees associated with the acceptance of a new job (Backhaus, 2016). Thus, realistic previews of the employment experiences reduces unrealistic expectations and contributes to perceptions of honesty and authenticity (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Breugh, 2008; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Martin et al., 2011). Lack of accuracy could result in a low ability to retain employees as they are disappointed by the actual employment experience once recruited (Alshathry et al., 2017; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Further, alignment of employer, corporate and consumer brands should be ensured to facilitate positive spillover effects in terms of awareness and avoid contradicting messages when customers are also potential applicants (Collins & Han, 2004).

2.4.4.3 Competitors and differentiation of employer brands

Companies should analyze employer branding activities of competitors since developing differentiated employer brands is considered important to stand out and create attraction in the minds of potential employees (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). If there are no distinctive features, employer brands provide information about the same benefits as any other employment and fail create additional value for potential employees (Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Theurer et al., 2018). With the lack of additional value, risks connected to new employments are not reduced and, therefore, decisions for applications or acceptance of job offers will less likely be positive (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus, 2016; Collins & Han, 2004). However, it must be noted that complete differentiation in every aspect of employment may not be possible (Theurer et al., 2018). There is a tension between differentiation and social legitimation (Martin et al., 2011). Thus, employers may have points-of-parity, i.e. overlapping aspects of the employer brand, and points-of-difference, i.e. unique and distinctive elements. Points-of-parity describe benefits that are essential to potential employees and, therefore, are expected from every employment relationship. These benefits rarely act as sources for differentiation but provide social legitimation. On the other side, points-of-difference are used for differentiation. Possible sources of differentiation as proposed by literature might be combinations or emphasis of different EVP attributes (Backhaus, 2004; Botha, Bussin, & De Swardt, 2011; Ewing et al., 2002; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). In the following section, the influence of potential employees on employer branding is discussed.

2.4.4.4 Potential employees as influencers of employer branding

Employer branding strategies for attraction should be developed with a focus on the needs, expectations and behaviors of potential employees (Aggerholm et al., 2011). They equate to clients if employment experiences are products employer branding tries advertise (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). The framework of Cable & Turban (2001) suggests that job seekers' values and needs influence the evaluation of employer attractiveness. Further, individuals are not homogenous, and expectations might

differ. By applying concept of segmentation from the marketing to the employer branding context, these differences can be incorporated into employer branding strategies. The underlying belief of market segmentation is that different treatment of individuals is assumed to be more profitable than treating them all equally (Backhaus, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Treating potential employees differently might lead to the development of positive employer brand equity, increase the companies' talent pool and attract a sufficient workforce supply in talent shortages (Avery & McKay, 2006; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Moroko & Uncles (2009) propose observable factors such as age, seniority, job type, permanence, employee life-cycle, tenure and physical location or unobservable factors such as career focus, life stage and desired career benefits as bases for segmentation. Other authors seem to confirm the suitability of desired career benefits (Chambers et al., 1998) and job type (Rousseau, 2001). Further, concerns for social adjustment or value expression as values of potential employees might influence decisions for or against employers (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007). The same seems to be suggested regarding gender affecting perceptions of employer attractiveness (Avery & McKay, 2006).

Employer branding research provides propositions on how some of these segmentation factors influence evaluations of attractiveness. Regarding age, research indicates that younger people want to work in reputed companies. Further, social contribution and a good team atmosphere are more important to them in comparison to older individuals (Eger, Mičik, & Řehoř, 2018; Marini, Fan, Finley, & Beutel, 1996; Sutherland et al., 2002). Additionally, the emphasis of work-life balance could also help to attract young recruits (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Older individuals find economic benefit important and place more emphasis on possibilities of promotions (Marini et al., 1996; Sutherland et al., 2002). When looking at the use of communication channels to develop employer knowledge, younger individuals use social media for job-related activities more often (Nikolaou, 2014). Regarding gender, findings indicate that men put more emphasis on economic benefits (Sutherland et al., 2002) and leisure time (Marini et al., 1996) while women rather expect job diversity and training opportunities. Gender seems to also influence the use of information sources when developing employer knowledge (Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska, 2017; Nikolaou, 2014). However, there are also studies which did not find differences regarding age or gender (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Eger et al., 2018).

It must be noted that attitudes and values of individuals may influence attractiveness of employer brands more than demographic characteristics (Casper, Wayne, & Manegold, 2013). Findings of Casper et al. (2013) indicate that family and diversity values as well as attitudes toward homosexuals affect employer attractiveness. Research also implied that personal innovativeness moderates perceptions of employer attractiveness (Sommer, Heidenreich, & Handrich, 2017). Additionally, social identity consciousness seems to influence it as well (Highhouse et al., 2007).

Although, there are proposals on how to segment potential employees based on examinations of differences, a considerable low amount of insights exist and seem to be contradictory (Theurer et al., 2018). Further, current research, especially regarding employer attractiveness dimensions, is mainly focused on student-only or, in some cases, employee-only samples as depicted in App. II. This homogeneity in samples neglects differences in age, employment status and experience in the labor market (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). The selection of student-only samples was usually justified with the assumption that students are future talents who companies compete over (Berthon et al., 2005). In this regard, Moroko & Uncles (2009) argue that the over-emphasis of graduates could mitigate strategic flexibility in planning of workforces as fast-developing technologies and dynamic environments may require the ability to acquire more experienced employees quickly. Moreover, discrimination resulting from crafting EVPs that only cater to one desired target group can cause irritation of excluded

segments leading to negative evaluations of attractiveness (Avery & McKay, 2006; Backhaus, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). In connection to talent shortages, companies should try to include more than one segment of potential employees to attract suitable talents. Therefore, a broad understanding of benefit drivers for all kinds of employees contributes to sustaining competitive advantages of companies.

In conclusion, employer branding strategies for attraction should be developed with a focus on potential employees as they are the ones who are attracted. However, past employer branding research focused on relatively homogeneous samples possibly resulting in a lack of strategic flexibility of companies or irritated excluded groups (Avery & McKay, 2006; Backhaus, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). In situations of talent shortages, a different treatment of potential employees customized to their needs and values might lead to the development of positive employer brand equity (Avery & McKay, 2006; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Therefore, the concept of market segmentation has the potential to improve employer branding strategies but needs a broad understanding of all kinds of employees. Although there are proposals contributing to this understanding, few insights exist on differences in job seeker populations. This circumstance is discussed in relation to other research gaps in section 2.4.5 summarizing the review of current employer branding literature with a focus on the research question.

2.4.4.5 Summary: employer branding success factors and influences

To conclude the review of employer branding success factors and influences, it is suggested to not only consider employer branding activities of the company when planning employer branding strategies. The involvement of organizational capabilities, the accuracy of the employer brand as internal influences in the organizational context have an impact on the success of strategies in this regard. Competitors and potential employees influence employer branding efforts external to companies. Therefore, companies should strive to include several corporate functions to ensure required expertise and resources (Cascio & Graham, 2016). Further, realistic previews of the employment experiences including a balance of positive and negative aspects reduces unrealistic expectations and contributes to perceptions of honesty and authenticity (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Breaugh, 2008; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Martin et al., 2011). Analysis of competitors and the creation of points-of-differences ensures positive employer brand equity (Backhaus, 2004; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Lastly, the influence of potential employees is central in employer branding strategies as they are the ones who are attracted. A lot of studies focused on relatively homogeneous samples. Therefore, research on market segmentation as customized treatments of potential employees has the potential to improve employer branding strategies but needs to advance a broad understanding of benefit drivers and employer brand marketing for all kinds of employees.

2.4.5 Employer branding framework for attraction

In the following, the conducted literature review is summarized regarding the established research issues and as a base for the following empirical part of the thesis. The context of employer branding illustrated that employees are important resources for companies (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). However, these resources are not easily acquired in situations of talent shortages. Employer branding takes a central role in the attraction of employees by trying to persuade them with the promise of superior employment experience. However, it is unclear how differences among potential employees influence the employer branding efforts of companies. Therefore, the following research question was formulated for this thesis:

RQ: What is the role of employee preference profiles in attraction-oriented employer branding strategies?

The concept of employee preference profiles describes the characteristics of an individual that may influence evaluations of employer attractiveness in a way that employees with distinct employee preference profiles perceive employers differently. Therefore, the research goal of this thesis is to examine in what way differences among potential employees change perceptions on employer branding strategies. Literature review contributed to exploring the current understanding of employer branding in research (LQ1) and identifying aspects of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies (LQ2).

Research discovered several reoccurring elements for employer branding strategies as illustrated in the framework depicted in **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** This framework will be assessed in relation to the experiences of employer branding practitioners to examine elements of employer branding strategies in practice and acquire more insights about employee preference profiles. Further, the following empirical research also focusses on certain companies' employer branding activities in relation to these profiles. In this regards, EVPs as desired identities of employers serve as foundation for employer knowledge that is important to evaluate attractiveness of employers. As a surrogate for a candidate-driven labor market, the German labor market will be taken. The 'Employer Attractiveness' scale of Berthon et al. (2005) was validated throughout several contexts (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Roy, 2008; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017) and, therefore, maybe also suitable to explore drivers for employer attractiveness in Germany. However, it must be noted that the intent of this thesis is not to validate the scale for highly-qualified individuals in Germany as it is not the central research problem. Therefore, the following hypothesis is cautiously phrased:

H1: The 'Employer Attractiveness' scale of Berthon et al. (2005) can be used in the labor market of Germany to employer attractiveness for talented job-seekers.

Next to laying foundation for employer knowledge, companies influence it via communication channels and their management. These provide job seekers with information about the expected employment experience. Hence, it is important for employers to understand how to strategically combine information sources to influence employer knowledge of potential employees. In the review of online channels for employer branding, the discussion revealed that research is lacking regarding the use of social media and strategic combination of information sources. Employer branding and recruitment literature identified online recruitment advertisements, employer websites, social media presences of employers and word-of-mouth via social media as information sources used by job seekers (Breaugh, 2008; Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Eger et al., 2018; Nikolaou, 2014; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005). For the following research it is assumed that these sources are relevant for job seekers to develop their employer knowledge in two regards. First, these information sources are useful to develop employer familiarity for creating initial interest in getting to know employers. Second, these information sources are useful to develop employer image from further information for the evaluation of employer attractiveness. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are phrased:

H2a: Online recruitment advertisements, employer websites and social media are useful sources for job seekers to identify interesting employers.

H2b Online recruitment advertisements, employer websites and social media are useful sources for job seekers to obtain further information about employers.

Next to companies' activities in employer branding, literature suggested that influences should be considered. In this regard, potential employees seem to play a central role for employer branding. This is rooted in the influence of needs and values of job seekers on the evaluation of employer attractiveness. In situations of talent shortages where employees are considered

scarce resources, a different treatment of potential employees based on market segmentation might lead to more successful strategies (Avery & McKay, 2006; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Therefore, the goal of the following empirical research is to examine characteristics of talented employees described by employee preference profiles that create differences regarding the assessment of EVP attributes or use of information sources.

There are recommendations regarding characteristics which can be used as foundations for segmenting potential employees. For this research, the following hypothesis is assumed:

H3: Employee preference profiles influence employer attractiveness evaluations of talented individuals based on EVP attributes.

There will be no hypotheses regarding the directions of how employee preference profiles influence employer attractiveness as previous employer branding research was inconsistent and scarce on directive effects. The developed hypotheses are tested with a mixed-method research design contributing to the research and leading questions that is discussed in the following sections.

Figure 6 Framework for attraction-oriented employer branding strategies



Source: Author's own findings deducted from literature review

3 METHODOLOGY: A MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter discusses utilized research methods in more detail. Acknowledging the perspectives of, both, employer branding practitioners and potential employees in this research, a concurrent triangulated mixed method design is followed for this thesis to contribute to a better understanding of employer branding strategies. This means, that quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined simultaneously and not sequentially to examine the research problem. This research design was chosen as both methods will contribute to a holistic picture of employer branding in the end but were not dependent on the conduct of the other. However, an understanding from both perspectives helps to examine the established research question and, therefore uses a mixed-methods approach to make use of the advantages of quantitative and qualitative designs (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010; Cresswell, 2014). In both methodological designs, research is established on the micro level of analysis focusing on the experiences and attitudes of individuals. Qualitative data is used to gain understanding of practitioners' perspectives on employer branding strategy elements whereas quantitative data reveals benefit drivers of employment in Germany, useful information sources and differences in attitudes according to demographic characteristics. The

qualitative approach is utilized to provide more depth and detail about employer branding strategies through subjective descriptions and direct quotations (Babbie, 2012).

Research is set in the German job market which was chosen because companies perceive a shortage of talents there (Wallace et al., 2018). Employer branding research focusing on Germany either used in-depth interviews with practitioners (Heilmann, Saarenketo, & Liikkanen, 2013; Wilden et al., 2010) or surveys among individuals in the labor market (Baum & Kabst, 2013; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Rampl & Kenning, 2014) but mostly did not follow mixed-method approaches. First, the qualitative methodology is discussed by justifying and describing the research method as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis. After, the quantitative approach is explained by elaborating upon the sampling procedure, measurements of the questionnaire and data collection process. Lastly, validity, reliability and ethical considerations of the chosen methods are discussed.

3.1 EMPLOYER BRANDING FROM THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

Qualitative data collected by semi-structured interviews with employer branding practitioners seeks to provide insights about previously discussed elements of employer branding strategies and into companies' efforts in this regard. It is related to the third leading question that asked for elements of attraction-oriented employer branding strategies to consider next to the influence of potential employees in attraction-oriented employer branding. In this section, the research method in relation to the mentioned question is discussed before describing qualitative data collection and analysis.

3.1.1 Qualitative research method: semi-structured interviews

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were selected to gain an in-depth overview on the reality of developing employer branding strategies in companies. The interviews were held with four employer branding practitioners of companies in different industries, based in two German cities – Berlin and Munich. A semi-structured approach was followed to have a guideline of conversation topics and discuss the same topics with every interview partner. A list of talking points around these themes were developed from literature review (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Heilmann et al., 2013) and can be found in App. IV together with instructions and the informed consent form. The identification of specific elements and related challenges in the management of employer branding strategies were central points in these interviews. However, there was no determined order to create a natural flow of conversation and provide room for the interviewees to describe and explain their individual situations and employer branding strategies in their companies. Talking points were developed as a guideline to structure the interviews but not as an instrument.

3.1.2 Data collection and analysis

Careful documenting is required when conducting qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participants of the conducted interviews were identified from my personal network. Participants were selected because of their experiences yielding data that is subjective and allows a deeper understanding of talent attraction with the help of employer branding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Their personal data remains confidential. Synonyms for companies and letters identify the participants and are described as follows:

- **Participant A // Headhunter Company.** Participant A works at a globally-active British company that searches employees for external clients. Since more than three years, she is responsible for the Headhunter Company's employer branding in the German-speaking region to attract new consultants for the Headhunter Company.
- **Participant B // Engineering Company.** Participant B is responsible for employer branding and talent acquisition at Engineering Company since almost one year. The

Engineering Company is based in Munich, active in the automotive sector and offers niche products and services.

- **Participant C // Marketing Company.** Participant C works at Marketing Company since approximately three years. For two-and-a-half years, she recruited for Marketing Company before switching to employer branding approximately half a year ago. The company is based in Berlin and offers B-2-B cloud marketing solutions.
- **Participant D // Consultancy Service Provider.** Participant D was an intern for six months in the employer branding department at Consultancy Service Provider. She was part of a 12-head team. Consultancy Service Provider is based in Berlin and offers services in tax, advisory and financial audits.

Following, the process of interviewing is described. In the planning of interview dates, a short briefing containing the main topics of the interview, information about the research purpose as well as privacy and ethical considerations was provided to the participants. Before starting the interview, the participant signed an informed consent form as contained in App. IV to ensure his or her agreement to the recording and use of his or her data. Further, participants had the possibility to ask questions regarding the research and, if interested, could request results. Interviewees participated on a voluntary basis and were not compensated for it. The interviews lasted 20 to 40 minutes and were conducted at the end of November 2018 after completing the theoretical framework for this thesis. The completion of literature review was crucial for the determination of conversation topics and coding approaches. Three interviews were conducted via phone calls due to different locations of interviewer and interviewee as well as time and resource efficiency (Babbie, 2012). One interview was conducted on a written basis due to complications to schedule a telephone call. All participants were German and, therefore three interviews were conducted in German at the decision of the interviewee to ensure free expression without language barriers that impede important insights. The participant of the written interview completed the interview in English. Starting questions clarified informed consent and asked general questions about the job and employer of the interviewee that were aimed at achieving comfort in the situation for the interviewee. After, questions according to the interview guideline were posed. All interviews were documented carefully via audio recordings followed by transcribing them to ensure their validity if other individuals were to examine them. After, transcripts were translated from German to English and cleaned from filler words or incomplete sentences for improved readability. Identifying information was removed to ensure confidentiality. Translated transcripts of the interviews can be found in App. V.

After transcription, the interviews were coded manually with several coding methods to identify emerging patterns about what elements of employer branding strategies can be found within companies (Babbie, 2012). First, the interviews were coded with specific attributes to facilitate efficient data management and to provide basic information describing the interview setting and participant characteristics (Saldana, 2013). Attributes included the synonym, gender and professional experience of the participant as well as a synonym for their employer and the source of contact. Additionally, the date, length, language and type of interview was attributed to the four transcripts. In the next step, basic themes were identified and matched back to the original questions in the interview guideline via holistic coding to understand the structure of the transcripts and general attitudes of the participants in preparation for more detailed coding methods (Saldana, 2013).

The previously discussed conceptual framework, provided a set of 15 codes via the elements and sub-elements of employer branding strategies which were used for provisional coding (Saldana, 2013). Next to the provisional codes, the characteristics of the companies were also included as a code to compare the individual situations of the participants and their respective employers. Table 4 depicts these codes. The transcripts were then imported to Atlas.ti version 8.3.20.0 to make data more manageable and collect quotes about specific issues. Lastly, the codes were reviewed and compared throughout the four transcripts to identify similarities and differences as well as patterns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004; Saldana, 2013). Results of the coding processes are presented and discussed in Section 4.1. In the following section, the quantitative research design is described.

Table 4 Overview of codes in qualitative data analysis

Overview of codes in qualitative data analysis (alphabetical order)

Accuracy of employer brand
Attribute coding
Companies' definition of employer branding
Company characteristics
Competitors
Current employer knowledge situation
Description of employer branding role
Differentiation
Information Sources
Instrumental Attributes - Economic Benefits
Instrumental Attributes - Functional Benefits
Instrumental Attributes - Psychological Benefits
Management of Information Sources
Organizational Involvement
Symbolic Benefits - Excitement
Symbolic Benefits - Prestige
Symbolic Benefits - Sincerity
Target Segments

Source: Author's own findings

3.2 EMPLOYER BRANDING FROM EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

An online survey was developed as a cross-sectional, descriptive quantitative research design to identify preferences of EVP attributes and communication channels. The questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of individuals in the German labor market. In the following, the research method, sampling procedure, development of measurements and data collection procedure is deliberated.

3.2.1 Quantitative research method: a self-administered online survey

An online survey makes it possible to reach a variety of potential respondents without having their contact data necessary for mail or e-mail distribution. As questions about online communication channels are one section of the questionnaire, it made sense to use an online survey to recruit participants already familiar with moving online. Further, conducting an online survey costs less than distributing the questionnaire via conventional mail and are easy to complete as it does not require further actions like sending back the questionnaire in the case of a mail or e-mail survey (Gideon, 2012). The language of the questionnaire was English to make sure Non-German speakers can also participate in the survey. In the following section, the sampling procedure is described.

3.2.2 Sampling Procedure

A convenience sample consisting of individuals working in a German subsidiary of a Japanese automotive supplier, members of a research platform as well as personal contacts was compiled. The selection of possible respondent ensured that the questionnaire was completed by highly-qualified individuals that are competed over by many companies. The use of different channels to recruit participants resulted in a diverse sample structure that yields results for several ranges of age and professional experience.

For the intended participants from the Automotive supplier, the survey was sent to their company e-mail address as this way of contacting ensured delivery of the questionnaire to them. The inclusion criterion for employees to be selected was under five years of tenure to

receive responses mirroring to the current labor market situation. Additional to the selected employees of the automotive supplier, the survey was distributed via social networks as well as on the research platform SurveyCircle. While Facebook, Xing and LinkedIn yielded completed questionnaires from private and professional contacts, SurveyCircle reached respondents outside of my network. The selected approach to sampling fits the identified research issue and is cost-effective, time-saving and suitable to the resources of the author.

Due to a convenience sampling approach as a non-probability sampling method, the generalizability of the results will be restricted (Babbie, 2012; de Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008; Gideon, 2012). Although the existence of multiple sample frames, i.e. the employees of the automotive supplier and respondents from social networks, are taken, there is a coverage bias for web-based surveys as the sampling frame population and response rate can only be determined for the employees of the automotive supplier (de Leeuw et al., 2008). This circumstance contributes to a possible decrease of generalizability due to non-representativeness of the sample (de Leeuw et al., 2008; Gideon, 2012). Further, the sample does not represent the whole labor market population of Germany. Highly-qualified individuals are disproportionate to the total population as the channels were selected to specifically recruit them. However, this serves the purpose of the study. The individuals in the sample were, in fact, the subjects of measurements and did not serve as 'surrogates' for members of the total population (Berthon et al., 2005). In the following section, the design of the questionnaire is further described.

3.2.3 Questionnaire design: measurements of concepts

The measurements of the survey seek to gain insights on job seekers' preferences of employer attractiveness attributes on the one side and usefulness of communication channels to gain information about employers on the other side. Questions regarding demographic variables gain insights to describe the distribution of preferences in the sample. Regarding the identification employee preference profiles among respondents, the items relating to the assessment of employment benefits and communication channels are treated as dependent variables whereas demographic characteristics are treated as independent variables. Items and scales were deductively identified from previous publications in the employer branding field (see App. VI). Applying these instruments ensured reliability and validity of the questions and avoided biases (Schrauf & Navarro, 2005).

Questions were asked in a logical flow to ensure that declining attention can be used best for the more difficult questions such as preferences regarding EVP attributes before answering 'easy questions' regarding demographics last (Babbie, 2012). Instructions and questions were short and concise to facilitate understanding and avoid confusion among participants. Double-barreled questions and double negative questions were avoided to ensure understanding and clear answers from participants (Gideon, 2012). Close-ended questions dominated the questionnaire to keep the time to complete the survey short and avoid frustration of respondents. Items were mostly measured via Likert-type scales with five response categories allowing statistical testing of attitudes and preferences (Gideon, 2012). Five scale points not only allow for the assessment of a response direction but also allow to evaluate the strength of the response without tiring or frustrating the respondent by giving too many response options as the questionnaire contains 49 items with Likert-type response categories (Babbie, 2012). The option for selecting a neutral response was important to assess relevance of the items. In this regard, the response categories of items are treated as interval variables (Babbie, 2012). Additionally, participants were asked to imagine that they are on job search to assure that the context of questions was understood. In the following, contents of the questionnaire will be described.

3.2.3.1 Preferences of EVP attributes

Preference of EVP attributes are assessed with a combination of the Employer Attractiveness scale of Berthon et al. (2005) and additional dimensions of Tanwar & Prasad (2017). The Employer Attractiveness scale of Berthon et al. (2005) served as a base for publications in different cultural context and was repeatedly validated and modified (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013; Roy, 2008; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2014). The dimensions of work-life-balance and organizations' ethical behavior with items of Tanwar & Prasad (2017) were added as these were frequently identified as important benefit dimensions but not assessed with Berthon et al.'s initial scale (Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014). Thus, these dimensions are included to increase relevance to current employment situations. This resulted in a scale of 31 items to assess employment benefits in relation to a hypothetical ideal employer as depicted in App. VI. The request to assess importance of employment benefits regarding an ideal employer ensured that biases due to familiarity with certain employers could be controlled. The response categories ranged from 1 for 'not important' to 5 for 'very important'. Berthon et al.'s scale (2005) also included inferences about personality traits of the employer such as excitement and sincerity which were identified by research of Lievens & Highhouse (2003). However, an extra scale to assess these personality traits was not implemented in the questionnaire as the scale was always tested with specific employers and effects were not validated in relation to ideal employers of individuals (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Further, instrumental attributes were assumed to influence initial attraction to employers which was important to focus in research regarding the attraction of potential employees (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

3.2.3.2 Usefulness of communication channels

Next to EVP attributes, the questionnaire also assessed the usefulness of communication channels. The operationalization of these was focused on the selection of useful communication channels in two directions – identifying interesting employers and obtaining further information about them. Channels were identified by literature review discussed in section 2.4.3. Job listing websites, employer websites were identified by literature. I decided to not ask for assessment regarding specific job-listing websites as these can differ across regions, industries and job functions, thus, posing threat to neglect maybe important platforms. However, I decided to ask for specific social media channels with a focus on social networks and employer rating websites. Figures from practitioner-oriented studies show that companies as well as job seekers use job portals, the employer website, social media and company evaluation platforms for recruitment and employer branding related activities (Monster.de, 2014; Online-Recruiting.net, 2015) Regarding social networks, one study found that Xing, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter were used by companies and, therefore might be useful for job seekers as well (Staufenbiel Institut, 2016). This allows the examination of possible recommendations regarding the management of these channels. The first question in relation to these channels is asked to assess usefulness of information sources for identifying interesting jobs and companies using Likert-type response categories ranging from 1 for 'not at all useful' to 5 for 'very useful'. The second question about the usefulness of communication channels for obtaining further information about employers uses the same response categories. Lastly, participants are asked to rank information sources that determined their last decision for an employer most to also assess the relative importance of channels in combination.

3.2.3.3 Demographic information: base of employee preferences profiles

In the last section of the questionnaire, respondents are asked to give information regarding their age, gender, employment status and highest educational degree. The age of individuals is asked to be selected from ranges compiling ten years. Gender, employment status and highest educational degree of respondents were measured as nominal variables. Demographic

variables serve as descriptors to characterize individuals in relation to their assessments of EVP attributes and communication channels with employee preference profiles. Further, the variable education can be used to exclude individuals that are not subjects of research because they are not considered as talents per definition in section 2.2.3.

3.2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Before distributing the survey online, the questionnaire was pre-tested by eleven people working in the human resources department of the Japanese Automotive supplier to ensure content validity, eliminate grammar and spelling mistakes, identify design issues, as well as possible problems while filling out the questionnaire. Instructions and item descriptions were clarified. Lastly, spelling mistakes were eliminated. On Friday, November 30th, 2018, the questionnaires were sent out to the intended participants in the Automotive supplier company via e-mails containing a link to the questionnaire as well as explanations on the purpose and nature of the survey. Additionally, the initial mailing was supported by one follow-up on December 13th, 2018 to generate a higher response rate (Babbie, 2012). The author also reached out to personal and professional contacts via the social networking sites Facebook, XING and LinkedIn and used SurveyCircle to distribute the questionnaire and continuously advertised it before closing the survey on December 22nd, 2018. This variety of distribution channels was used to stimulate submissions of completed questionnaires and to counter the low response rate typically associated with internet-mediated surveys (Babbie, 2012; de Leeuw et al., 2008; Gideon, 2012). In the following section, considerations of validity, reliability and ethical behavior are discussed.

3.3 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The quality of research can be evaluated via the concepts of validity and reliability. Next to that, ethical considerations ensure that participants were not exposed to risks during research participation or have lasting disadvantages in their daily life. Reliability describes the degree to which a scientific tool provides consistent and stable results independent of the timing or researcher (Babbie, 2012). In this notion, it is important that data is used and analyzed correctly. On the other hand, validity evaluates the accuracy of the items in measuring what they are supposed to measure (Babbie, 2012). This includes using different concepts for explanation and selecting the best research methodology. To skim of benefits of both, quantitative and qualitative designs, a mixed-methods approach was taken to enable the researcher's ability for taking different perspectives on employer branding strategies.

For qualitative research, ensuring reliability includes that the research process is documented in detail and that the researcher is self-aware about biases to ensure the research to be valid and reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At the time of data collected, the researcher was self-described as a white, German, mid-twenties, tertiary-qualified female who had one-and-a-half years of experience in recruitment. Of course, preconceptions about the research problem came along as the struggle to attract new employees was experienced first-hand and, thus, motivated this kind of research. Despite, the aim of research should be the state of objectivity where validity and reliability exist to the greatest extent. A good interview frame based on employer branding research, knowledge of interview techniques and familiarity with the questions helped to improve quality of the qualitative research design. Translated transcripts are provided in App. V to ensure that readers can comprehend interpretations. Further, participants had different positions and worked for employers in different industries which ensured that qualitative data was triangulated across different individuals.

For quantitative research, the researcher also considered reliability and validity. Validity was increased by utilizing already tested scales and items in the questionnaire. However, it must be noted that the sampling procedure was problematic to achieve full validity and reliability.

A convenience sample does not have the ability for generalization and repeatability as probability sampling methods (Babbie, 2012; de Leeuw et al., 2008; Gideon, 2012). Therefore, section 4.2.1 will include a detailed description of the sample structure. Moreover, a web-based survey is connected to a lack of a sampling frame as everyone exposed to the survey link can participate and complete a questionnaire out of control of the researcher resulting in a coverage bias. This is partially countered by combining two ways of reaching respondents. The distribution of the survey via different channels increases reliability of the results (de Leeuw et al., 2008). Further, measures were taken to increase response and, thus reliability, by announcing the time needed to complete the survey, sparking interest with a catch phrase, and explaining purpose of the survey.

Regarding ethical considerations and the protection of participants' privacy, several precautions were taken. First, the research design was assessed by the Ethics Committee of the BMS faculty of University of Twente. Second, in the process of data collection explanations about the purpose of the research as well as ethical considerations regarding data protection were given. Additionally, confidentiality of data and anonymity of respondents were assured. The researcher's and Ethic Committee's contact data were provided for questions. The possibility to request results was intended to increase the perception of trustworthiness. Before taking part in the research, respondents were informed about the structure and contents of questions, data processing and usage as well as possible associated risks to ensure informed consent. Informed consent was confirmed by explicitly asking for agreement to the stated conditions of data processing. In case of disagreement, respondents could not participate in the research. Lastly, participation was voluntary and not compensated in line with an ethical conduct of the survey (Babbie, 2012).

3.4 SUMMARY: METHODOLOGY

This section aims to summarize the previous discussion regarding methodology of the research. A concurrent triangulated mixed method design is followed for this thesis to contribute to a better understanding of employer branding from both perspectives – employers and employees. Qualitative data collected by semi-structured interviews with four employer branding practitioners seeks to provide insights about the consideration of previously discussed elements of employer branding strategies. The data collection and analysis were carefully documented. The quantitative part of the thesis utilizes a self-administered online survey to gain an understanding of preferences regarding EVP elements, communication channels and their relation to demographic characteristics. The questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of highly-qualified individuals in the German labor market. Before distribution, the questionnaire was pre-tested to improve comprehension. Items and scales were deductively identified from previous publications in the employer branding field ensuring reliability and validity of the questions and avoiding biases (Schrauf & Navarro, 2005). Considerations of reliability, validity and ethical conduct of the research were also examined.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, results from qualitative and quantitative research of this thesis are presented. First, the findings of qualitative interviews with employer branding practitioners are discussed before reviewing results from the quantitative survey.

4.1 EMPLOYER BRANDING FROM THE EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Interviews with practitioners in employer branding were conducted to get insights into the employer branding strategies in practice. The interviews revolved around previously discussed strategic elements of employer branding. Three strategic issues were discovered from the interviews – low recognition of employer branding in companies, an imbalance in employer branding activities and problems to attract the right employees. These are discussed in the following.

4.1.1 Low recognition of employer branding in companies

The lack of importance attributed to employer branding within the company became apparent when respondents described their role and available resources. Two participants (C, D) worked solely in employer branding while two participants (A, B) were also responsible for tasks in recruitment. The responsibility for the employer brand mainly falls onto one person except in the company of Participant D which had a 12-head team for that. Nevertheless, employer branding is either going relatively unrecognized or unappreciated within the company which can be illustrated by the following quote by Participant D:

'Even though our task is quite essential for our company, the appreciation of our work within the organization is relatively little, as we are the ones who 'spend the money' instead of the other departments who 'earn the money'.'

Spending needs to be continuously justified to ensure efficiency in budgets as the results are mostly implicit and difficult to measure in monetary value (A, C, D). Three participants (A, B, C) described their strategies as rather emerging than being planned in a long-term perspective. For two of the interviewees (B, C), employer branding is a rather new topic and trial and error leads their efforts. Contrary to that, Participant D elaborated that her company management defined a global employer branding strategy based on market research and dedicated a team to manage and adapt the employer brand locally in a long-term perspective. In contrast, Participant B and C rather indicated that the need for employer branding was recognized and initiated by them. Thus, it seems that employer branding is treated rather as a nice-to-have topic for HR than a subject with company-wide importance. Despite, the respondents mentioned that the involvement of other departments in employer branding efforts as crucial for the success of strategies. Especially gaining support from management as well as involving employees to generate insightful content regarding the employment experience was important (C). Corporation between departments was rather low as interviewees either worked alone or within their team on employer branding. Explicit involvement of other departments was only described by Participant C and D. Participant D also mentioned the use of external agencies to facilitate employer branding activities and compensate a lack of knowledge regarding presentation design and market research. In conclusion, most participants struggled with budget and time constraints due to bundling responsibilities of employer branding in one person with partially additional responsibilities in the recruitment of new employees. This indicated a lack of recognition of employer branding.

4.1.2 Imbalance in employer branding activities

A strategic issue also emerged when following descriptions of employer branding activities. The main goals of participants mostly revolved around improving the external perception of the employer to attract talents. Shaping their employer value propositions as foundations of employer knowledge was secondary. Participant C even emphasized that the EVP was implicit and needed to be defined more explicitly in her company. Only Participant B mentioned that their employer brand consists of several unique selling points. However, the interviews yielded several employment benefits implicitly used by companies to attract new employees. Participant B emphasized products and services of the companies and challenging jobs as a

benefit while Participant A highlighted promotion and development opportunities. Participant C rather focused on team atmosphere and work-life-balance as convincing arguments for new employees. Participant D mentioned career advancement as well as rewards and additional material value to compensate for a lack of work-life-balance as reasons to accept a job at the company. Next to these, the perception of honesty of the employer seemed to be crucial for all interviewed practitioners for talent acquisition. Thus, accuracy of employer brands was found to be important for the success of the employer brand as illustrated by Participant A: *'You have to be authentic. It doesn't work to sell something on the outside which we don't show internally at all.'* Additionally, prestige (D) as well as innovative products (B) were utilized to attract candidates.

The management of communication channels was strongly put in focus by participants and their companies. Companies of the participants wanted to either increase their employer familiarity in the labor market (A, B), develop an image in the minds of potential employees (C) or manage their negative image into a more positive perception (D). A generalist approach towards communication channels was followed by all participants and can be illustrated by a quote of Participant B:

'I think it is important that you are present on different platforms with a roughly equal account or equally good representation, because you still can't look into people and people have too much choice. (...) in my opinion the generalist approach is the only correct way to make for a certain background noise on all media.'

Therefore, all participants used a variety of online channels such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Xing; Twitter and their companies' websites to make sure that their employer brand is exposed to potential new employees. However, the effect of these communication channels is not always clear, and channels are rather tried out and adjusted during communication campaigns (A, C, D). Practitioner A described that channels are reiterated yearly, whereas Participant D mentioned a monthly review of the media plan. Especially, social media seems to be an area where a trial-and-error strategy is utilized because of a lack of experience and knowledge regarding these channels as a quote of Participant A illustrates:

'So, you can use [social media] well, but you don't necessarily reach the target group you want to reach. (...) I see there, of course a future, because the target group is only moving online, so digitally. It's all just going digital. So that's really the only way. Still, you have to think carefully about how to do that so that it's also profitable and you don't shoot posts and articles into the void.'

Despite insecurities on how to use communication channels, practitioners emphasized that different platforms have distinctive functions for attracting new employees. The career page of an employer is an important tool to provide potential employees with information about the employment experience. Social media platforms also fulfil several functions in informing potential recruits. For example, Xing and LinkedIn serve as a connector to suitable candidates while Instagram provides visual insights on what it is like to work for the company (C). Additionally, Twitter can be useful for simple job announcements (D). Word-of-mouth recommendations are perceived as effective to convince candidates as they deliver an independent account of the employment experience. Thus, employer rating websites are important sources of information for individuals who consider applying in the eyes of practitioners and, therefore, carefully monitored (A, B).

In conclusion, participants described their EVPs implicitly by mentioning benefits, however, partly also recognized that EVP must be developed more explicitly to provide relevant information to potential employees. Practitioners rather focused on advertising their employers but were insecure about the effectiveness of channels and, therefore, chose a generalist

approach. Therefore, a variety of communication channels was managed with continuous adaptation to ensure exposure of potential employees to the employer brand. Next to the homepage and employer rating websites, social media platforms had different functions for participants in communicating the employer brand.

4.1.3 Problems to attract the right employees

Participants also described contextual factors that impact their efforts in employer branding and making it difficult to attract the right employees. On the one side, interviewees recognized the importance of employer branding to compete against other employers in the war for talent. Respondents felt standing out among competitors was complicated as *'almost every company is looking for new workers in Germany today'* (B). Competitors were either broadly described as *'top employers who have a name'* (A) or were identified in the same industry (B). Especially those competitors with a bigger employer branding budget were considered a threat because enough financial resources were considered as crucial for success (A). Participant B and D described competitors specifically and emphasized differences in the employment offering. According to the interviews, points-of-differences of companies can be created when selecting new or less used communication channels (A, B), avoid universal or often used phrases (C), specifically addressing benefits and incorporating something special that makes people remember the employer (B, C). Further, focusing on one specific target segment and fully customizing the employer brand strategy to this group of potential employees can also be differentiating from competitors (A). Regarding potential employees, participants classified them along a few broadly defined criteria. Criteria to describe target segments were age or seniority, industry, qualifications and fluency of German. Potential employees were mostly classified according to their seniority. In this regard, graduates were described to use social media extensively, being conscious of their work-life-balance and the company culture as well as prestige. Professionals are described by being able to choose who they like to work for and are especially interested in the contents and tasks of the job itself. Managers at the executive level were characterized by rather being interested in facts and figures instead of company cultures. However, these descriptions seemed to be based on gut feeling since studies or figures were not mentioned with these assumptions. In conclusion, participants try to stand out by finding innovative ways of employer brand communication and addressing specific benefits to stay in the minds of their potential employees. Further, interviewees also recognized differences among potential employees. Target groups mainly consisted of younger individuals such as students and graduates. Further, participants emphasized that there are differences between younger and older job seekers. However, it was not described how these target groups can be targeted specifically which indicates a lack of knowledge in this regard.

4.2 EMPLOYER BRANDING FROM THE JOB SEEKER'S PERSPECTIVE

For quantitative data analysis, the software SPSS Statistics v.25 was used. First, the sample was analyzed regarding demographic characteristics. Second, preferences in the importance of employment benefits are described. After, assessments of usefulness regarding information sources are examined. Lastly, analysis of group differences provides insights on possibilities of segmenting the sample by employee preference profiles.

4.2.1 Demographic profile of respondents

To get an understanding of the sample structure, demographics are used to describe respondents. 346 employees of the Automotive supplier were pre-selected and only employees with a tenure under 5 years that were not expatriates were included to ensure that respondents can remember their last job searches in the German labor market. 141 employees (50.5% of the total sample) completed the questionnaire resulting in a response rate of 40,7% which is reasonable for an online-mediated survey. The distribution via the research platform and to my personal network yielded 138 completed questionnaires (49.5% of the total sample). Due to an unknown sampling frame, the response rate for this sampling frame cannot be calculated (de Leeuw et al., 2008). The structure of the sample is reported in Table 5 and will be discussed in the following.

About 62,4% of the sample were male and 36,6% female while 1,1% chose not to respond or found these two categories not applicable. Regarding age, most of respondents (61.3%) were between 25 and 34 years. Moreover, a majority of respondents acquired either had a Bachelor's degree (41,6%) or a Master's degree (40,5%) as their highest level of education. Regarding employment status, over half of the respondents (51.6%) were full-time employed, the second largest group were students (39,1%). The sample does not resemble the total population of the German labor market. However, the present structure of the sample fits the research purpose as the focus were talented individuals with mainly academic education. Including students and employees as well as more age ranges contributes to a holistic picture of individual preferences that are not only focused on one group.

4.2.2 Preferred employment benefits as drivers for creating EVPs

The assessment of preferred EVP attributes related to the lack of research regarding employer attractiveness in Germany and base for findings regarding employee preference profiles. Item means indicate how important the

Table 5 Demographic structure of the sample

Source of Response	Response (%)	Response Count
Automotive Supplier	50.5%	141
Personal Network / Research platform	49.5%	138
		279
Age	Response (%)	Response Count
18 - 24	27.2	76
25 - 34	61.3	171
35 - 44	9.0	25
45 - 54	2.2	6
rather not respond / n.a.	0.4	1
		279
Gender	Response (%)	Response Count
Male	62.4	174
Female	36.6	102
rather not respond / n.a.	1.1	3
		279
Education	Response (%)	Response Count
Less than high school	0.4	1
High school graduate	11.1	31
Professional degree	4.7	13
Bachelor's degree	41.6	116
Master's degree	40.5	113
Doctorate	1.8	5
		279
Employment	Response (%)	Response Count
Employed full time	51.6	144
Employed part time	7.9	22
Unemployed looking for work	0.7	2
Student	39.1	109
rather not respond / n.a.	0.7	2
		279
Source: Author's own findings		

attribute was for respondents. It is noticeable that a lot of the items revolving around working atmosphere have a higher mean. Especially, the items 'The organization has a fair attitude towards employees' (4.48), 'Happy work environment' (4.47) and 'A good relationship with your colleagues' (4.43) score high whereas 'The organization provides an on-site sports facility' (2.53), 'Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations' (3.06) and 'Opportunity to apply what was learned at a university' (3.13) were considered as rather

unimportant. Table 6 illustrates these findings by depicting the five items with the highest and lowest means. Six items had means around 3 for indicating a rather neutral response for those items. Means for all the items can be found in App. VII, Table 11.

Next to the analysis of average ratings, an exploratory factor analysis seeks to explore benefit drivers of employer attractiveness for talented individuals in the German job market. First, a reliability analysis was conducted for the 31-items scale assessing preferred employment benefits to assess whether all items contribute to the internal consistency of the scale as depicted in App. VII, Table 12. Although the total sample size was a little under the recommended 300 responses for factor analysis (Field, 2009), the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .82$ ('great' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were $> .68$, which is well above the acceptable limit of $.5$ (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2 (465) = 2241.82$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for a principal component analysis (PCA).

After, a PCA was conducted with varimax rotation to identify patterns of correlations between scale items, diminish the amount of variables and, thus, enable the establishment of higher concepts for this sample (DeCoster, 1998). A varimax rotation was used as it increases the differences between high and low values of factor loadings and improves interpretation of results (Field, 2009). As the sample does not depict the total population of the German labor market and scale development was not the focus of the present research, a confirmatory factor analysis and, therefore, evidences for the validity of the scale are not provided in the following analysis. Rather the focus of the PCA was to identify drivers of employer attractiveness that might be useful to consider when developing an employer branding strategy.

An initial analysis was run to obtain the number of components. Nine components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 58.95% of the variance as depicted in App. VII, Table 12 together with Cronbach's Alpha, the KMO -measure and results of Bartlett's test of sphericity. Factor loading of 0.45 were suppressed for clarity of interpretation which lies in the range of cut-off values that are often used by researchers (Field, 2009). Nine items were eliminated due to factor loadings being below 0.45 or cross-loadings on two or more factors in the initial analysis. After elimination of the nine items, six components had Eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 explaining 58.66% of the variance. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure still verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .80$ ('great' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were $> .65$ which was still well above the acceptable limit of $.5$ (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2 (231) = 1600.79$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were still sufficiently large for PCA. Table 7 shows factor loadings after rotation. In the following, factors are described in more detail.

Table 6 Five employer attractiveness items with highest and lowest means

	Item mean (five-point Likert scale)
Five items with highest means	
The organization has a fair attitude towards employees	4.48
Happy work environment	4.47
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	4.43
The organization provides flexible working hours	4.25
Having a good relationship with your superiors	4.22
Five items with lowest means	
The organisation is customer-oriented	3.33
Humanitarian organization - gives back to society	3.17
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a university or similar	3.13
Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations	3.06
The organization provides an on-site sports facility	2.53

Source: Author's own findings

Social and Appreciation Value. Factor 1 labelled ‘Social and Appreciation Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to employers that have appreciative management, invoke good feelings, enable good relationships with colleagues and superiors as well as provide happy work environments. In this sample, ‘Social and Appreciation Value explained 15.21% of the total variance after rotation.

Economic and Career Advancement Value. Factor 2 labelled ‘Economic and Career Advancement Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to employers that provide promotion opportunities and career-enhancing experiences next to above-average basic salaries and attractive compensation packages. ‘Economic and Career Advancement Value’ explained 10.96% of the total variance after rotation in this sample.

Interest Value. Factor 3 labelled ‘Interest Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to innovative employers that have-quality standards regarding their products and services. In this sample, ‘Interest Value’ explained 9.79% of total variance after rotation.

Application and CSR Value. Factor 4 labelled ‘Application and CSR Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to customer-oriented and humanitarian employers that give opportunity to teach others obtained knowledge. ‘Application and CSR Value’ explained 8.79% of total variance after rotation in the present sample.

Self-Image Value. Factor 5 labelled ‘Image Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to employers that evoke self-worth and confidence. In this sample, ‘Image Value’ explained 7.03% of total variance after rotation.

Work-Life Balance Value. Factor 6, labeled ‘Work-Life Balance Value’ assesses the extent to which individuals are attracted to employer that provide flexible working hours, opportunities to work from home and an on-site sports facility. The explained total variance in the sample was 6.9% after rotation.

The six-factor solution shows parallels but also differences to previously identified scales of employer attractiveness that are discussed in more detail in chapter 5. The reliability of the scale assessed through calculation of Cronbach’s Alpha (0.81) indicated good reliability (Field, 2009). Additionally, all items contribute to the overall reliability since the elimination of the items would not increase it. The six subscales of preferred employment benefits all reported fairly high item-to-total correlation and good but not high reliabilities through Cronbach’s Alpha which are reported in App. VII, Table 13.

The relatively low reliability could emerge due to the relative small number between two and four items and the diverse topics covered by the subscales (Field, 2009). The elimination of nine items due to low and similar loadings on components indicates that some dimensions of the used scale were not distinct from other dimensions. The results yielded one more factor of Berthon et al.’s (2005) scale which makes sense due to the update with two more dimensions of Tanwar & Prasad (2017) regarding work-life balance and ethical behavior of the company. Four factors – namely Social & Appreciation Value, Economic and Career Value, Interest Value and Application & CSR Value showed similar structure to the dimensions identified by Berthon et al. (2005). However, items classified as development value loaded onto Social & Appreciation Value, Economic & Career Advancement Value or were singled out as Self-Image Value. The items regarding CSR & ethics of Tanwar & Prasad (2017) were rather combined into dimensions of Berthon et al. (2005) than they yielded a distinct factor. Next to the five factors who were fairly like Berthon et al.’s scale (2005), the value of work-life balance created an additional dimension confirming that this factor contributes to employer attractiveness. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is sustained because the five dimensions of the

Employer Attractiveness scale were useful to explore drivers of employer attractiveness in the German context and yielded reliable, although slightly altered results.

Table 7 Explanation of total variance and factor loadings of the six-component solution

Rotated component matrix ^a									
Component	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction of sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% variance	Cumulative %	Total	% variance	Cumulative %	Total	% variance	Cumulative %
1	4.81	21.86	21.86	4.81	21.86	21.86	3.35	15.21	15.21
2	2.30	10.46	32.32	2.30	10.46	32.32	2.41	10.96	26.16
3	2.00	9.08	41.40	2.00	9.08	41.40	2.15	9.79	35.95
4	1.39	6.32	47.72	1.39	6.32	47.72	1.93	8.79	44.74
5	1.26	5.72	53.44	1.26	5.72	53.44	1.55	7.03	51.77
6	1.15	5.22	58.66	1.15	5.22	58.66	1.52	6.90	58.66
				Factor					
				1	2	3	4	5	6
Having a good relationship with your colleagues				0.77					
Supportive & encouraging colleagues				0.71					
Happy work environment				0.70					
Having a good relationship with your superiors				0.68					
The organization has a fair attitude towards employees				0.62					
Recognition / appreciation from management				0.56					
Acceptance and belonging				0.55					
An above-average basic salary					0.80				
An attractive overall compensation package					0.72				
Good promotion opportunities within the organization					0.72				
Gaining career-enhancing experience					0.47				
Innovative employer - novel work practices & forward-thinking						0.70			
The organization produces innovative products and services						0.68			
The organisation produces high-quality product & services						0.59			
The organization both values & makes use of your creativity						0.55			
Humanitarian organization - gives back to society							0.76		
The organisation is customer-oriented							0.68		
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned							0.59		
The organization offers opportunity to work from home								0.84	
The organization provides flexible working hours								0.83	
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization									0.83
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization									0.75
Extraction method: principal component analysis									
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation									
^a Rotation converged in 6 iterations. (For clarity of interpretation, factor loadings <0.45 are suppressed.)									
Items sorted by loading.									

Source: Author's own findings

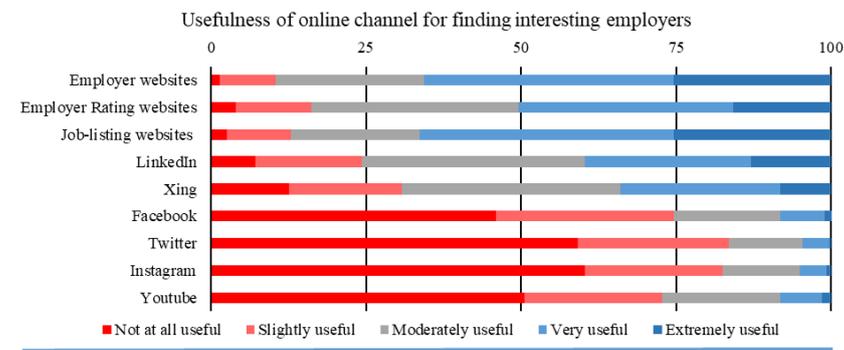
4.2.3 Usefulness of online information sources

The survey sought to find out which online information sources were suitable to develop employer knowledge in Germany by asking respondents to assess usefulness of them in job search. Further, the combination of information sources was assessed through a question ranking them regarding their influence on the determination of job choices.

Finding interesting employers. The sample mostly rated employer websites (65.5%), employer rating websites (50,6%), job-listing websites (65,4%) and LinkedIn (39.8%) as ‘very useful’ or ‘extremely useful’ for finding interesting employers as depicted in Figure 7. The usefulness of Xing was slightly ambiguously evaluated as the ‘moderately useful’ (35,1%) and the combination of ‘very useful’ (25.8%) and ‘extremely useful’ (8.2%) had comparable frequencies. In contrast, the sample mostly evaluated Instagram (60.2%), Twitter (59.1%), YouTube (50.5%) and Facebook (45.9%) as ‘not at all useful’ for finding interesting employers. Thus, employer websites, job-listing websites and career-oriented social networks were rated as rather useful for identifying interesting employers whereas other social networking sites that are mostly used outside of professional contexts are perceived as rather useless by the sample. This indicates that hypothesis 2a can be partly sustained. Whereas employer websites,

employer rating websites and job-listing websites were considered useful to develop employer familiarity, the same is not true for career-oriented and general social media platforms.

Figure 7 Descriptive analysis of usefulness of sources to find interesting employers

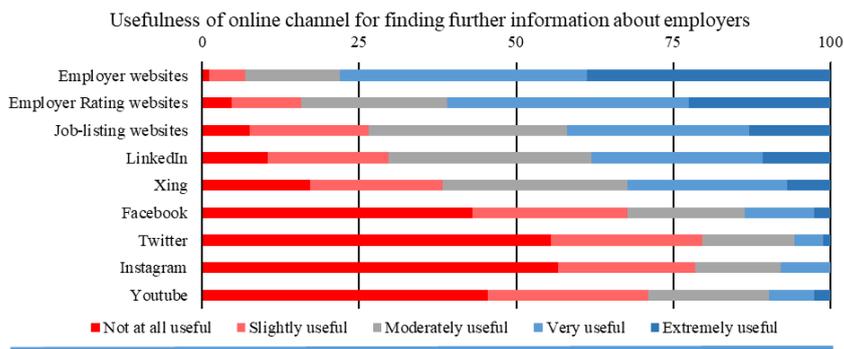


Source: Author's own findings

Finding further information about employers. The evaluations of usefulness of online communication channels regarding finding further information about employers followed the same pattern as evaluations regarding the identification of interesting employers. The sample mostly rated employer websites (78.1%) and employer rating websites (61%) as ‘very useful’ or ‘extremely useful’ for obtaining further information about employers as depicted in Figure 8. The usefulness of job-listing websites, Xing and LinkedIn was slightly ambiguously evaluated as response categories attributed to usefulness and uselessness had comparable frequencies. In contrast, the sample evaluated Instagram (56.6%), Twitter (55.6%), YouTube (45.5%) and Facebook (43%) as ‘not at all useful’ for retrieving further information about employers. Thus, respondents also rated the employer website, job-listing websites and professional social networks as rather useful for getting further information whereas other social networking sites that are mostly used outside of professional

social networks as rather useful for getting further information whereas other social networking sites that are mostly used outside of professional

Figure 8 Descriptive analysis of usefulness of sources to find employer information



Source: Author's own findings

environments were rather deemed as rather useless. For employer websites and employer rating websites, there is a considerable increase compared to usefulness for the identification of employers which implies that these sources might be used extensively to find further information about employers. Findings indicate that hypothesis 2b can be partly sustained. Whereas employer websites and employer rating websites were considered useful to develop employer knowledge, the same is not true for career-oriented and general social media platforms.

Ranking of online channels. The third question requested a ranking of online communication channels and their influence on the decision for an employer. Respondents had to choose at least one channel but were not required to include all. A descriptive analysis of responses gives insights on the preferences of online communication channels in relation to each other. Whereas employer websites (68.7%), job-listing websites (61.2%) and employer rating websites (57.2%) were mostly included in these rankings, social media platforms like Facebook (32.1%), Twitter (23.3%), Instagram (23.8%) and YouTube (29.9%) often were not. An average ranking of online communication channels can be obtained by the mean ranking of the channels when they are included. While employer websites (1.71), job-listing websites (2.46), employer rating websites (2.67) are averagely on the first three ranks, YouTube (6.21), Instagram (7.3) and Twitter (7.45) occupy the last three ranks on average as depicted in App. VII, Table 14. These findings follow the patterns in the responses of participants identified for the first two questions: channels that are strongly connected with employment have more influence in decisions for employers than social media platforms that are commonly used outside of professional environments. For the strategic combination of online communication channels, this would indicate to lay more focus on combining career-oriented ones to develop the employer knowledge of respondents.

4.2.4 Employee preference profiles

Examinations of differences among respondents contributed to the identification of employee preference profiles regarding assessments of employer attractiveness attributes and communication channels. Differences were assessed with Mann-Whitney U tests for variables with two values. Variables with more than two categories were examined with Kruskal-Wallis H tests. For continuous variables, a post hoc analysis of the differences was conducted with Jonckheere tests to evaluate whether there are trends in differences. All effects are reported at a one-tailed significance level of $p < .05$ because no assumptions on the direction of differences were made (Field, 2009).

4.2.4.1 Age

Differences in age groups were tested with the Kruskal-Wallis H test and followed post hoc with a Jonckheere-Terpstra test as age was assumed to be a continuous variable. The category 'rather not respond / not applicable' was excluded due to having only one observation.

Preferred employment benefits. Regarding employment benefits, the importance of the items 'an attractive overall compensation package' ($H(3) = 8.57$), 'a fun working environment' ($H(3) = 9.65$) and a 'happy work environment' ($H(3) = 9.95$) were all significantly affected by the age of respondents. Jonckheere's test revealed significant trends in the data for the items 'an attractive overall compensation package' and 'a fun working environment' indicating that with higher age, respondents found an attractive compensation package more important ($J = 11941.5$, $z = 2.5$, $r = 0.15$) while the importance of a fun working environment decreased with a higher age ($J = 9067$, $z = -2.16$, $r = -0.13$). These findings may imply that older respondents are rather attracted by employers who can offer attractive compensation corresponding to their current life situation in form of additional health insurance benefits or pension schemes while attributing less importance to their work environment being fun. However, it must be noted that only three out of 31 items were assessed differently, and analysis of trends yielded only

small effects for two items. The differences in age groups regarding employment benefits are reported in Appendix VII, Table 15.

Preferred online communication channels. Regarding the usefulness of online information sources to find interesting employers, the evaluations of ‘employer websites’ differed significantly among age groups ($H(3) = 10.98$). Jonckheere’s test revealed significant trends indicating that with higher age, respondents attributed higher usefulness to this channel for identifying employers ($J = 11949.5$, $z = 2.43$, $r = 0.15$). Regarding assessments of online communication channels for finding information about employers, the evaluations of Facebook ($H(3) = 11.23$), Twitter ($H(3) = 9.16$) and Instagram ($H(3) = 7.95$) differed significantly among the age ranges. Jonckheere’s test revealed significant trends in the data for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. With higher age, respondents found Facebook ($J = 8851$, $z = -2.45$, $r = -0.15$), Twitter ($J = 8768$, $z = -2.71$, $r = -0.16$) and Instagram ($J = 9158.5$, $z = -2.07$, $r = -0.12$) less useful to find further information about employers. These findings may imply that younger individuals who were exposed to social media for a longer time span of their life may be more comfortable to use these online channels in researching employers. However, ratings of these channels were rather low on usefulness, nevertheless, as the means indicate. For the future, this pattern could be cautiously interpreted indicating that respondents evaluate social media higher in usefulness once these channels are more established. However, it must be noted that only one out of nine sources regarding the development of employer familiarity as well as three out of nine channels regarding employer image were assessed differently, and analysis of trends yielded only small effects. The differences in age groups regarding information sources are reported in Appendix VII, Table 16.

4.2.4.2 Gender

Preferences of male and female respondents were tested with the Mann-Whitney U test. Only these two categories were included as the ‘rather not respond / not applicable’ value had only three observations.

Preferred employment benefits. Preferences for certain employment benefits differed significantly regarding 9 out of the 31 items. Women significantly evaluated ‘feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization’ ($U = 7292.5$, $z = -2.72$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.16$), ‘humanitarian organization – gives back to society’ ($U = 7434$, $z = -2.36$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.14$), and ‘supportive and encouraging colleagues’ ($U = 7437$, $z = -2.5$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.15$) as more important than men. In contrast to female respondents, male participants significantly evaluated the following items as more important:

- ‘The organization produces innovative products and services organization’ ($U = 7292.5$, $z = -2.62$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.16$),
- ‘Good promotion opportunities within the organization’ ($U = 6695$, $z = -3.64$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.22$),
- ‘Hands-on interdepartmental experience organization’ ($U = 7680$, $z = -2$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$),
- ‘An above-average basic salary organization’ ($U = 7284.5$, $z = -2.64$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.16$),
- ‘Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations organization’ ($U = 7655.5$, $z = -2.02$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$),
- ‘The organization provides an on-site sports facility organization’ ($U = 7615.5$, $z = -2.03$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$).

In conclusion, significant differences on these nine items imply that female respondents are more attracted to organizations that contribute to their self-worth, have a supportive collegial environment and act socially responsible. Male participants rather value working in an organization with innovative products and services as well as explicit rules and regulations.

Further they attribute more importance to career advancements and connections to other departments, an above-average basic salary and on-site sports facilities. In this regard, it must be highlighted that the difference on the evaluation of good promotion opportunities is highly significant. However, only nine out of 31 items were assessed differently with small effects. Results for gender differences regarding employment benefits are reported in Appendix VII, Table 17.

Preferred online communication channels. Regarding the usefulness of online information sources for finding interesting employers, no significant differences between the male and female respondents were found. The usefulness of online communication channels for retrieving further information about employers differed significantly between women and man on LinkedIn ($U = 7384.5$, $z = -2.4$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.15$), Facebook ($U = 7241.5$, $z = -2.69$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.16$) and Twitter ($U = 7735.5$, $z = -1.98$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$). The results indicated that women found these channels to be more useful. However, the means indicate low assessments of usefulness for Facebook and Twitter nevertheless. In conclusion, the differences regarding the evaluations of usefulness of social networks to retrieve information about employers could indicate that female respondents are more involved in the use of social media networks. However, it must be noted that no difference regarding the development of employer familiarity was found and four out of nine sources were assessed differently. Further, all differences indicated only small effects. Results for gender differences regarding information sources are reported in Appendix VII, Table 18.

4.2.4.3 Education

Differences in levels of education were tested with Kruskal-Wallis H tests and followed post hoc with Jonckheere tests as education was assumed to be a continuous variable. The value 'less than high school degree' was excluded due to only one observation.

Preferred employment benefits. Regarding the employment benefits, there were significant differences in the evaluation of importance for the following items:

- 'a springboard for future employment' ($H(4) = 12.79$),
- 'feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization' ($H(4) = 11.46$),
- 'hands-on interdepartmental experience' ($H(4) = 9.78$),
- 'employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations' ($H(4) = 10.18$),
- 'there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work' ($H(4) = 10.79$),
- 'the organization provides flexible working hours' ($H(4) = 14.68$) and,
- 'the organization offers opportunity to work from home' ($H(4) = 12.08$).

Jonckheere's test revealed significant trends in the data for the following items:

- 'a springboard for future employment' ($J = 10609.5$, $z = -2.79$, $r = -0.17$),
- 'feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization' ($J = 10446.5$, $z = -3.12$, $r = -0.19$),
- 'hands-on interdepartmental experience' ($J = 14256$, $z = 2.67$, $r = 0.16$),
- 'there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work' ($J = 10642$, $z = 2.7$, $r = -0.16$),
- 'the organization provides flexible working hours' ($J = 13975$, $z = 2.27$, $r = 0.14$) and,
- 'the organization offers opportunity to work from home' ($J = 14799.5$, $z = 3.37$, $r = 0.2$).

In conclusion, these results indicate that with higher education levels, the importance of 'a springboard for future employment', 'feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization' and 'there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work'

decreased while the importance of ‘hands-on interdepartmental experience’, ‘the organization provides flexible working hours’ and ‘the organization offers opportunity to work from home’ increased. However, it must be noted that only seven out of 31 items were assessed differently, and analysis of trends yielded only small effects. The differences among the different levels of education regarding employment benefits are reported in Appendix VII, Table 19.

Preferred online communication channels. Regarding the usefulness of online communication channels to find interesting employers, the evaluations of ‘employer rating websites’ ($H(4) = 9.54$), Facebook ($H(4) = 15.45$), Twitter ($H(4) = 10.76$), and Instagram ($H(4) = 15.228$) differed significantly among education levels. Jonckheere’s test revealed significant trends in data for employer rating websites ($J = 11084.5$, $z = -2.03$, $r = -0.12$), Facebook ($J = 10241$, $z = -3.33$, $r = -0.2$), Twitter ($J = 11056.5$, $z = -2.24$, $r = -0.14$) and Instagram ($J = 10425.5$, $z = -3.26$, $r = -0.2$). These findings indicate that with higher education level, respondents found these online channels to be less useful for finding interesting employers. Regarding the usefulness of online communication channels for acquiring further information about employers, the evaluations of Facebook ($H(4) = 16.28$), Twitter ($H(4) = 17.84$) and Instagram ($H(4) = 13.58$) differed significantly among the education levels. Jonckheere’s test revealed significant trends in the data for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. With higher education, respondents found Facebook ($J = 10058$, $z = -3.56$, $r = -0.21$), Twitter ($J = 10250$, $z = -3.44$, $r = -0.21$) and Instagram ($J = 10313.5$, $z = -3.36$, $r = -0.2$) less useful to find further information about employers. Findings are complicated to interpret in this regard. It also must be noted that only three out of nine sources regarding the development of employer image were assessed differently, and analysis of trends yielded only small effects. The differences among different levels of education regarding information sources are reported in Appendix VII, Table 20.

4.2.4.4 Employment Status

Differences among employed respondents and students were tested with Mann-Whitney U tests. Employment status was assumed to be a variable with two categories as full-time and part-time employment were summarized into one value and ‘unemployed looking for work’ as well as ‘rather not respond / not applicable’ were excluded due to only having two observations each.

Preferred employment benefits. Preferences for certain employment benefits differed significantly between employees and students regarding 12 out of the 31 items. Employees evaluated ‘hands-on interdepartmental experience’ ($U = 7831$, $z = -2.03$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$), ‘the organization provides flexible working hours’ ($U = 7631.5$, $z = -2.38$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.14$), and ‘the organizations offers opportunity to work from home’ ($U = 7751.5$, $z = -2.09$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.13$) as more important than students. Students significantly evaluated the following items as more important:

- ‘a springboard for future employment’ ($U = 7831.5$, $z = -3.17$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.19$),
- ‘feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization’ ($U = 6852$, $z = -3.75$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.23$),
- ‘feeling more self-confident about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization’ ($U = 7471$, $z = -2.68$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.16$),
- ‘working in an exciting environment’ ($U = 7656$, $z = -2.32$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.14$),
- ‘the organization has a fair attitude towards employees’ ($U = 7922$, $z = -1.98$, $p < .05$, $r = -0.12$),
- ‘humanitarian organization – gives back to society’ ($U = 7531$, $z = -2.46$, $p < .01$, $r = -0.15$),

- ‘there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work’ (U = 7525.5, z = -2.49, p<.01, r = -0.15),
- ‘a fun working environment’ (U = 7775, z = -2.13, p<.05, r = -0.13),
- ‘a happy work environment’ (U = 7641.5, z = -2.47, p<.01, r = -0.15).

In summary, employed participants evaluated connections with other departments and measures for work-life balance as more important which could respond to their life situation: on the one hand they may plan to work at a certain company for a longer period of time and, therefore, seek to establish their organizational network, on the other hand, they may have more family obligations than students and, therefore, strive for a balance of work and private life. In contrast, students in the sample are rather concerned that their employer provides a springboard for future employment, contribute to their self-worth and confidence as well as establishes a fun and happy environment to work in. Further, they also evaluate CSR-orientation and fair treatment higher in importance. However, it must be noted that only nine out of 31 items were assessed differently with only small effects. Results for differences in responses based on the employment status regarding employment benefits are reported in Appendix VII, Table 21.

Preferred online communication channels. Assessments regarding the usefulness of information sources for finding interesting employers differed significantly among employees and students on employer rating websites (U = 7630, z = -2.3, p<.05, r = -0.14), LinkedIn (U = 7781.5, z = -2.04, p<.05, r = -0.12), Facebook (U = 7841.5, z = -2, p<.05, r = -0.12) and Instagram (U = 7666.5, z = -2.43, p<.01, r = -0.15). The results indicated that students considered these channels to be more useful. Regarding the usefulness of online communication channels for retrieving further information about employers, evaluations of employees and students also differed significantly on LinkedIn (U = 7790, z = -2.01, p<.05, r = -0.12), Xing (U = 7619.5, z = -2.23, p<.01, r = -0.14), Facebook (U = 7311.5, z = -2.84, p<.01, r = -0.17), Instagram (U = 7737, z = -2.26, p<.01, r = -0.14) and YouTube (U = 7790, z = -2.08, p<.05, r = -0.13). The results indicated that students found these channels to be more useful. However, means indicate low ratings of some channels in both groups nevertheless. In conclusion, students find social media as more useful to find interesting employers and retrieve information about them. It must be noted all differences indicated only small effects. Results for differences in responses based on the employment status regarding information sources are reported in Appendix VII, Table 22.

5 DISCUSSION

For the comprehensive understanding of this research problem, several issues were examined which following sections discuss in detail. The focus will lie on contributions to knowledge arising from findings relating to:

- disconfirmed expectations regarding the research problem deducted from literature review in Chapter 2 and
- areas which previous research speculated but provided no empirical testing.

Research issues are shortly summarized in the following. To assess the role of employee preference profiles in employer branding, strategic elements were deducted from an integration of employer branding literature that developed frameworks in this regard. Frameworks of employer branding strategies exist but comparisons to the reality were examined to a very small extent. Findings indicated that the development of EVPs as desired identities of employers and the management of information sources are at the core of companies’ employer branding efforts. Therefore, this thesis proposed that potential

employees influence both activities via their preference profiles. Employer attractiveness was examined in a lot of cultural contexts such as Australia, India, Sri Lanka, China and Norway (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Roy, 2008; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014) but, only by one publication in Germany (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013). Thus, this research proposed that drivers of employer attractiveness in Germany could be explored by applying the 'Employer Attractiveness' scale by Berthon et al. (2005) which was tested on multiple occasions. Regarding the management of communication channels, it is important to understand how strategic combinations of them influence employer knowledge. Employer branding research provided a lot of findings especially about employer websites, job-listing websites and recruitment advertisement (Breaugh, 2008; Cable & Yu, 2006; Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Hoye & Lievens, 2007; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005; Van Hoye, Saks, Lievens, & Weijters, 2015). However, literature review revealed limited up-to-date research, especially regarding the use of social media in early-recruitment activities (Theurer et al., 2018). Therefore, this thesis examined the usefulness of information sources, including more traditional channels and social media, for developing of employer knowledge as proposed by Cable & Turban (2001).

Literature review further indicated that employees might play a central role since employer's efforts are based on the intention to influence their perceptions. Employer branding research did not put as much attention on employee populations being heterogeneous conglomerations of individuals as studies mainly focused on homogeneous samples containing only students. However, several publications warned that an over-emphasis of one group could result in restricted success of employer brands (Avery & McKay, 2006; Backhaus, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Market segmentation was proposed as a counter-measure to achieve success (Avery & McKay, 2006; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). In this regard, there were recommendations from research which characteristics might be suitable to derive different treatments of potential employees. These can be classified in observable factors such as demographic characteristics as well as un-observable factors such as values and attitudes (Avery & McKay, 2006; Casper et al., 2013; Chambers et al., 1998; Eger et al., 2018; Highhouse et al., 2007; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Marini et al., 1996; Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Nikolaou, 2014; Rousseau, 2001; Sutherland et al., 2002). Observable characteristics as possible bases for segmentation were examined by a few researchers to some extent (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Eger et al., 2018; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Nikolaou, 2014; Sutherland et al., 2002). However, propositions on how to segment employees rarely went beyond theoretical conceptualizations (Moroko & Uncles, 2009) or yielded inconsistent results (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Eger et al., 2018; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Nikolaou, 2014; Sutherland et al., 2002). In the following section, conclusions deduced from Chapter 4 in relation to these research issues are presented and discussed.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RESEARCH ISSUES

Conclusions are structured around the themes presented in the introduction of the discussion. Findings from the conducted research are integrated and summarized to understand contributions to the identified research issues. First, general conclusions about the proposed framework for attraction-oriented employer branding strategies is discussed. Second, benefit drivers of employer attractiveness in Germany are explored. Third, conclusions on the management of communication channels are elaborated. Lastly, possibilities for market segmentation of potential employees derived from identification of differences in job seeker regarding observable characteristics are debated.

5.1.1 Expectations and reality of employer branding

A conceptual employer branding framework was created from reviewed literature by integrating reoccurring strategic elements. This schema was mostly validated by interviews with practitioners. However, three strategic issues were identified: an imbalance of employer branding activities, low recognition for employer brandings within the company and problems to attract the right employees.

Practitioners emphasized that the main goal of employer branding was to improve external knowledge of their employers in the dimensions of familiarity and image. The existence of an EVP was rather implicitly assumed but not developed by employers or practitioners. However, previous research suggested that the development of EVPs as desired identities of employers serve as foundations for employer knowledge as it provides information about the benefits related to employment (Theurer et al., 2018). Despite the implicit nature, practitioners mentioned EVP attributes referring to instrumental and symbolic dimensions of employer attractiveness. Therefore, the results of three interviews (Participants A, B, C) indicated that the creation of the EVP was not explicitly facilitated and rather emerged by the employer as described in section 4.1.1. This is in contrast to the suggestion of employer branding research to explicitly develop an EVP (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Backhaus, 2003, 2016; Deepa & Baral, 2017). Respondents' attention was rather centered on the marketing of the employer through the management of communication channels since this was considered the main goal of practitioners in employer branding. Companies of the participants wanted to either increase their employer familiarity in the labor market (A, B), develop a positive image in the minds of potential employees (C) or manage their negative image into a more positive perception (D). Suggestions from literature were not realized in the selection of information sources as all employer branding practitioners followed a generalist approach guided by trial-and-error and continuous adjustment of managed information sources as described in section 4.1.2. The fear of not reaching potential job seekers governs considerations regarding communication channels. Therefore, as many channels as possible were integrated into their employer branding activities. Especially, the effective use of social media seemed to be an issue because of lacking experience with these channels as described in section 4.1.2. This indicates that research on employer branding might need to take up speed to be useful for practitioners and their activities in employer branding. In summary, the core of employer branding strategies is mostly depicted by the conceptual framework of section 2.4.5 but differently managed in the reality of employer branding.

The organizational context in which employer branding strategies are embedded was also part of the conceptual framework. Research proposed to gain organizational support and involvement of company functions to ensure that sufficient expertise and resources (Cascio & Graham, 2016; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Mölk & Auer, 2017). In contrast, three of four interview participants (A, B, C) reported that they mostly worked on employer branding topics alone and with additional responsibilities which created time constraints on the implementation of employer branding strategies as described in section 4.1.1. The exception was descriptions of Participant D whose employer followed a more explicitly planned approach. This indicates that with more resources at hand, it could be easier to conduct successful employer branding which is in line with theoretical suggestions. Due to unclear monetary value, all interview partners also described that the standing and support of employer branding was expandable, and that their work was characterized through resource constraints. These constraints could be also the reason why employer branding efforts were rather of emergent nature. Interview partners did not have the necessary resources without corporation of other departments to develop an explicit employer branding strategy. In summary, interview findings affirm theoretical suggestions for the involvement of enough organizational capabilities. The lack thereof created constraints mitigating the perceived success of employer branding efforts. Of

course, employers also need to consider financial justification of employer branding investments. Unfortunately, few findings exist to put employer branding in relation to monetary value (Theurer et al., 2018). Thus, research agendas to examine financial and shareholder value of employer branding and should be facilitated and might add to the conceptual framework.

Interviews also indicated that employer branding is also influenced by the situation in the labor market. Interviewees recognized the importance of employer branding to compete against other employers in the war for talent but felt difficulties to stand out as section 4.1.3 described. Participants focused closely on differentiation by selecting innovative communication and media. This contrasts with employer branding literature that rather focusses unique EVPs in this regard (Backhaus, 2004, 2016; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Theurer et al., 2018). Especially employers with more resources were a threat to respondents. In summary, the interviews mostly mirrored the conceptual framework in the description of their employer branding efforts. Participants emphasized deviations as areas for improvement. Thus, the discussion of practitioner's experiences in employer branding compared to the conceptual framework indicated that the framework can provide a roadmap for employer branding to aspire to.

5.1.2 Employer attractiveness and EVP creation in Germany

Findings of conducted survey yielded more explicit insights on the creation of EVPs than the interviews. The assessment of importance for employment benefits advances research to understand employer attractiveness in the German job market with results described in section 4.2.2. Conceptualized drivers have similarities to the factors originally described by Berthon et al. (2005) as well as Tanwar & Prasad (2017) contributing to partly sustaining Hypothesis 1 of this thesis.

Social and Appreciation Value, Application & CSR Value and Economic and Career Advancement Value have parallels to the originally defined factors since items loaded fairly similar (Berthon et al. 2005). Interest Value in this thesis even got the same label as the originally identified factor, though, some items were eliminated in the process of exploratory factor analysis. However, two items of 'Development Value' of Berthon et al. (2005) were scattered across the identified components 'Social & Appreciation Value' and 'Economic and Career Advancement Value' in this thesis and left good feelings and self-confidence in relation to employment to load on the factor 'Self-Image Value'. The addition of items by Tanwar & Prasad (2017) describing work-life balance contributed 6.9% of explained total variance in the sample and resulted in the additional factor 'Work-Life-Balance Value'. Therefore, considerations of work-life-balance are suggested to be included in future assessments of employer attractiveness in Germany. The consideration of CSR activities and ethical behavior seemed to not have the same success as two items ('employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations' and 'there is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work') were among the items that scored low importance averages and got eliminated during exploratory factor analysis. The remaining two items of the 'CSR & Ethics' dimension by Tanwar & Prasad (2017) loaded onto other components of the solution. Other authors identified more components to be of importance for employer attractiveness but also included different or additional items deducted from qualitative research (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Roy, 2008; Zhu et al., 2014). This circumstance makes comparison difficult but suggests that cultural differences may influence employer attractiveness. Another source for arising differences could be the sample structure as aforementioned authors almost exclusively used student samples, whereas the present sample also included individuals that already gained working experience.

5.1.3 Usefulness of communication channels in employer branding

Quantitative research sought to find out which online information sources were suitable to develop job seekers' employer knowledge. Hypotheses assumed that online information sources were useful for this endeavor. Results indicated that this partially was the case. Employer websites, job-listing websites and career-oriented social networks were rather useful whereas non-career oriented social media was deemed rather useless for identifying employers and finding information about them. This confirmed finding of Nikolaou (2014) that traditional information sources like job-listing websites are still important in the job search of individuals as they are proven themselves for developing employer knowledge. On one hand, findings further support conclusions by Sivertzen et al. (2016) and Kissel & Büttgen (2015) of social media being important for building employer knowledge if the focus lies on career-oriented social networks like XING and LinkedIn. On the other hand, research is also in line with non-career-oriented social media being not useful for providing information about employers as Eger et al. (2018) suggested. The relative unimportance of most social media channels does not confirm Backhaus' (2016) prediction that social media will be the main platform for employer brand marketing yet. When considering practitioner's interviews, a possible explanation could also be that employer might fail to provide relevant information on these platforms due to insecurities about the effective management of them and that job seekers, thus, do not find these platforms useful. Regarding combinations of information sources, survey results indicated that job seekers mainly contribute a higher influence on job pursuit decisions for employer websites, job-listing websites and employer rating websites than on social media platforms. This confirms the assumption that social media is not used as primary source for acquiring employer knowledge to evaluate employer attractiveness but rather complements traditional sources in job search (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). In summary, findings on information sources indicate that channels strongly connected with recruitment and employment have most influence in decisions for employers. For the strategic combination of information sources, this would indicate to focus on a combination of career-oriented information sources to develop the employer knowledge of respondents.

5.1.4 Segmentation via employee preference profiles

Next to examinations of EVP attributes and information sources, employee preference profiles based on observable characteristics in these two areas were explored. Hypothesis 3 assumed that differences exist. These were assessed regarding age, gender, education and employment status and resulted in different evaluations sustaining the existence of employee preference profiles. However, significant differences only had small effects ($r < 0.3$) and were not identified in relation to all items. Therefore, an analysis of unobservable characteristics such as values and attitudes as suggested by literature (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016) may be useful to get a holistic understanding of segmentation bases for employer branding. In addition, it must be noted that research suggests to not use these differences to single out one target group as there are threats of discrimination and mitigation of strategic flexibility (Avery & McKay, 2006; Casper et al., 2013; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Differences should rather be used to attract a diverse workforce in talent shortages and provide information on different benefits to each group to acknowledge their expectations. In the following, the use of employee preference profiles in EVP creation and management of communication channels is discussed.

5.1.4.1 Segmentation in EVP creation

Examinations regarding EVP attributes yielded several implications regarding segmentation possibilities of employees. Findings indicated that with higher age, the importance of an attractive compensation package increased while expectations regarding a fun work environment decreased. Thus, older individuals would be attracted to employers who emphasize attractive compensation packages while younger individuals would be rather convinced by providing information about fun working atmospheres. However, effects found

were small. Due to homogeneity of samples and a focus on students, past employer branding research is not in line with these findings. Authors found no or few differences in between age categories but argued that this might have been a result of their sample being mostly around the same age (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2002).

Regarding gender, there were differences in assessments of nine items. Women placed more importance on having a socially responsible employer that invokes good feelings and provides a supporting social environment. Men placed more importance on innovative culture, promotion opportunities, connections between departments as well as above-average basic salaries amongst having rules and regulations and on-site sports facilities. If employers wanted to attract a more balanced composition of men and women, they would be suggested to emphasize CSR activities and team support to attract women. To attract men, they would rather have to provide information about career advancement, innovation and salaries. Findings of previous research confirm the higher importance of salary for men and open and honest communication for women (Deepa & Baral, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2002).

Regarding education, results indicated that with higher education levels, the importance of jobs being a springboard for future careers, good feeling from association with an employer and the possibility to report misconduct at work significantly decreased. Connections between departments and provision of benefits relating to work-life-balance were more important with a higher level of education. This might indicate that respondents with higher levels of education do not need to have a springboard for career advancement as they are already competed over in the labor market and therefore, also have higher expectations towards their employer to provide work-life-balance. As the sample contained a lot of students, another explanation might be that the respondents with lower levels of education still are at the beginning of their professional life and expect a career kickstart from their first employments. Thus, if employers want to provide additional value to potential employees with high educational degrees, they may emphasize activities towards achieving a good work-life-balance in employer branding. Employers may rather emphasize possibilities for starting job seekers' careers within the company if they want to convince those with lower educational degrees.

Regarding employment status, full- or part-time employed participants evaluated connections with other departments and work-life balance as more important. This finding could be explained by their life situations. On the one hand they may plan to work at a certain company for a longer period and, therefore, seek to establish their organizational network. On the other hand, they may have more family obligations than students and, therefore, strive for a balance of work and private life. In contrast, students in the sample were rather concerned that their employer provides a springboard for future employment, contribute to their self-worth and confidence as well as establishes a fun and happy environment to work in. Further, they also evaluated CSR-orientation and fair treatment higher in importance for their future employment. The higher assessments of CSR-orientation, a good working atmosphere, good feelings and self-confidence might relate to the fact that they have more idealistic expectations of employers and are not influenced by work experience yet. Further due to students being at the start of their career, a springboard and getting acknowledgement might be more important due to their lack of experience in professional environments. Thus, to attract students or graduates, employers should emphasize information about happy and fun work environments with appreciative and fair cultures, opportunities for career advancement as well as the organization's involvement in CSR activities. For the attraction of already employed individuals, opportunities to achieve work-life-balance and connection within the organization should be advertised by employers. In the following, differences in ratings of usefulness for information sources are discussed.

5.1.4.2 Segmentation in management of communication channels

Examinations of employee preference profiles regarding the usefulness of information sources yielded several implications on how to reach respondents. Regarding age, the results of the survey indicated that younger individuals who were potentially exposed to social media for a longer time span of their life might be more comfortable to use it when researching further information about employers. Previous research found similar results indicating that younger individuals seemed to use social networking sites more extensively (Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska, 2017; Nikolaou, 2014). The interviews with practitioners seemed to confirm this result as well as participants assumed that younger individuals use social networks a lot more than older potential employees. For the future, this pattern could be cautiously interpreted indicating that respondents may evaluate social media higher in usefulness once these channels are more established in employer branding. However, it must be noted that the usefulness of traditional online channels for younger age groups is still higher compared to social media as previously discussed in section 4.2.4.1. In summary, social media in employer brandings might be of more interest for younger individuals compared to older potential employees.

Regarding gender, findings of the survey imply that social networks may be more useful to women to seek further information about employers than it is for men in Germany. Previous studies indicated no difference or contradicting results in other countries (Eger et al., 2018; Nikolaou, 2014). However, differing cultural contexts might be an explanation regarding these contradicting findings due to the research of Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska (2017) finding differences between genders in the use of social networks for Chinese and partly for Polish participants but not for U.S. Americans or Turkish respondents.

Regarding education, the survey indicated that social media is used less to develop employer knowledge by respondents with higher levels of education. This is also in line with findings on age as individuals with a higher level of education tend to be older. This seems to contradict findings of Bartosik-Purgat & Jankowska (2017) who found that Chinese Master's students tend to use social networks more for job-related activities and no differences for Turkish, Polish or U.S. American respondents. The same is valid for results of Nikolaou (2014) that indicated a higher usage of LinkedIn with increasing level of education. Therefore, findings are inconclusive in context of previous results and might need further investigation.

Lastly regarding employment status, the assessment of information sources seemed to also differ. Students found employer rating websites alongside social media more useful than currently employed respondents. The same pattern is identified with seeking further information about employers: social networks were mostly more useful to students than to employees. For employers these findings may indicate that graduate and student opportunities should be advertised via social networks. However, the relatively low average scores on the assessment of usefulness should to be considered. Following, conclusions about the research problem and theoretical implications will be described.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RESEARCH PROBLEM & THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research goal of this thesis was to examine the role of employee preference profiles in employer branding strategies. Research was focused on the identification of differences that might change perceptions regarding employer brands. Although there were assessments of differences in study samples in employer branding research, findings yielded inconsistent findings due to homogeneous sample structures and varying operationalization of concepts. This mitigated the establishment of fitting suggestions on how to cater to different preferences of employees as proposed by the concept of market segmentation. Further, other elements of employer branding strategies were not considered in integrated approaches but rather singled

out. The integration of strategic elements and related concepts into employer branding frameworks mostly was deduced from literature reviews but not in consideration of practitioner's realities (Backhaus, 2016; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018).

Important EVP attributes, useful information sources for job seekers and employee preference profiles based on demographic characteristics were further explored. Benefit drivers were identified as Social & Appreciation Value, Economic & Career Advancement Value, Interest Value, Application & CSR Value, Self-Image Value and Work-Life Balance Value similar to factors identified in other cultural contexts (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005; Dabirian et al., 2017; Roy, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Zhu et al., 2014). Therefore, this research also advances understanding how employer attractiveness is assessed differently in cultural contexts by adding findings in relation to Germany. Moreover, the inclusion of work-life balance as a factor updates the Employer Attractiveness scale and might be useful for future scale development. Further, the structure of this thesis' sample contributes to a more balanced understanding of working individuals as it did not only contain students or employees but tried to include both groups. Therefore, this research advances a broad understanding of potential employee populations using a heterogeneous sample.

For the selection of useful communication channels, employer branding research provided suggestions on how employers should use employer websites, recruitment advertising and employer rating websites for the development of employer knowledge (Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005). However, the review revealed research gaps especially regarding the use of social media despite this source being predicted to be central to employer branding in the future (Backhaus, 2016). The thesis' survey helped to identify useful channels to develop employer knowledge and revealed that traditional job search channels and career-oriented social media are more important to individuals in the sample than non-career oriented social media. The assessment of specific platforms emphasizes that social media platforms should not equated to each other but handled differently.

As its central focus, this research examined employee preference profiles as these were hypothesized to have an influence on evaluations of employer attractiveness. This research examined demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education and employment status in relation to differences in assessment of EVP attributes and communication channels. Quantitative research of this thesis found varying response patterns regarding employment benefits and channels. These findings can help to understand how market segmentation based on demographics can be applied to create successful strategies for attracting new employees. Further, it considers the current definition of employer branding by Aggerholm et al. (2011) that characterizes employer branding as a strategic process of negotiation and relationship building with employees. Acknowledging age, gender, education and current employment status of potential employees in relation to developing EVPs and managing communication channels may increase their evaluations of attractiveness towards employers because they are exposed to relevant information that helps them assess their person-organization fit.

The previously discussed findings further contribute to the establishment of a conceptual employer branding framework. Review of employer branding literature yielded several frameworks to conduct employer branding strategies and came to different solutions. This thesis explored the proposed elements theoretically and, additionally, asked practitioners about their realities of employer branding. These efforts resulted in a conceptual framework that depicts attraction-oriented employer branding strategies in talent shortages. Findings regarding employer branding strategies can possibly provide a roadmap for practitioners to design and implement employer branding approaches in a candidate-driven labor market like Germany as discussed in the following section.

5.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

For practitioners, results can contribute to a sound development of employer branding strategies to attract highly-qualified employees. Insights on variations of perceptions across segments of employees help to create a more inclusive strategy to attract a diverse workforce as well as appeal to segments specifically. In the following the elements of the updated conceptual model are discussed in relation to setting up and managing employer branding strategies.

5.3.1 Before setting up an employer branding strategy

Before engaging in any specific activities, practitioners as well as the management of the firm should be aware of the importance of employer branding and should secure enough financial resources and expertise. When HR managers want to start off the management of employer brands, they might need to convince the top management of the organization to offer support in branding efforts and emphasize problems in recruitment by facts and figures to secure sufficient resources. Responsibilities for employer branding should not be combined with recruitment efforts in one person as time constraints may occur that mitigate success. Further, necessary expertise regarding marketing techniques and budget control should be secured. In this regard, HR managers might need to coordinate efforts, especially in large and/or multi-national companies. Further, the involvement of current employees should also be considered. Lastly, the understanding of employer branding as a long-term strategy should be established and efforts should be vigorously developed in this regard.

5.3.2 Developing an attractive EVP

When having secured organizational support, resources and expertise, the desired contents in the employer identity should be developed by creating an EVP (Theurer et al., 2018). In this regard, it is important to include relevant employment information that differentiate from competitors. An analysis of strong competitors and their EVPs as well as monitoring perceptions might help to position the own EVP in a niche that results in an attractive image and value for potential employees. Further, potential employees and their differences should also be considered. To achieve a balanced and diverse composition of employees, companies may include different benefits of employment for various employee preference profiles. Based on the results of this thesis, for example, this can include an attractive compensation package for older employees, insights to a fun work environment for younger individuals, information on career advancement for men and insights on CSR activities for women. Regarding the education levels and current employment status, organizations might provide opportunities for advancement and feeling good for lower academic education and students and work-life balance as well as interdepartmental connection to individuals that are employed or with a higher educational level. It might also be useful to conduct interviews with current employees or interested applicants to learn more about them. Further it must be noted that claims about employment should be accurate as, otherwise, retention of newly recruits may not be ensured. In this regard, a balanced representation with acknowledgement of negative aspects of employment might help to gain trust and loyalty of potential employees.

5.3.3 Selecting suitable channels to develop employer knowledge

After creating an EVP, it must be communicated to individuals in the labor market. Online information sources are suggested to be very important in the early stages of the recruitment process to develop employer familiarity and image. Therefore, companies may use them to trigger interest among potential new employees. Companies may focus their efforts on their websites, job-listing platforms, employer rating websites and career-oriented social media first to expose individuals to relevant information about employment. For raising employer familiarity, low involvement channels like job-listing websites, recruitment advertising and word-of-mouth via social media may be a good idea. For developing an employer image, high

involvement information sources such as the employer website containing relevant information about employment with, ideally, separate sections for multiple segments are suitable. Further, embracing company-independent channels like employer rating websites and actively engaging with potential employees on social media may contribute to build a trust-based relationship. Even though social networks might not be information sources rated with the highest usefulness in this study, the future of social media in employer branding is praised for the interactivity of communication. As interviews with practitioners showed, there is a lot of insecurity regarding social media. Thus, implementing a successful management might also be a source of differentiation from other employers who fail to provide relevant information on these channels.

5.3.4 Managing and maintaining the employer brand

After setting up employer branding strategies, it is proposed to monitor their success. This can be done by measuring relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) related to recruitment and retention of employees. For example, hiring numbers, time to hire, cost to fill and turnover seem to be suitable KPIs to keep track on the performance of employer branding. It is also suggested to monitor perceptions of the employer brand by analyzing employer rating websites. Adjustment of EVP contents and information sources is suggested to be conducted in regular intervals. Monthly or yearly reviews of the employer branding strategies are suggested by interviewed practitioners. Having discussed this roadmap, limitations of the research are discussed.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

To identify distinctive characteristics of employer branding strategies, a mixed-methods research approach was applied. Mixed methods proved to be suitable to produce data needed to contribute to the research issues. The interviews with practitioners resulted in a variety of descriptions about conducting employer branding. Further, a diverse survey sample made it possible to explore employee preference profiles. The application of previously tested and validates measures contributed to reliability and validity of the research design. However, there are several aspects that could have added to the validity and reliability of the research for this thesis. First, this section will discuss limitations based on the research problem before reviewing limitations rooted in the characteristics of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The research focused on individuals considered as talents. Consequently, employees that are not considered as highly valuable are neglected, although their work can also contribute to the success of companies. Therefore, no conclusions were possible on how to attract them within the scope of research. Further, the theoretical framework neglected the retention of employees. Once attracted, employers must actively work on the retention of employees to not lose them again. Therefore, the integration of internal employer branding activities to increase employee engagement could have enhanced external validity as well and contributed to a sound depiction of reality.

In the qualitative research, the main limitation is rooted in subjectivity. Although, respondents were selected to portray different experiences by involving a variety of companies, the research design is still prone to be subjective. The small convenience sample of practitioners can lead to the inability of replicating results in similar contexts. Further, small and medium-sized companies were underrepresented. In the quantitative research for this thesis, the sample structure overrepresented some groups of individuals in the job market due to a non-probability sampling approach. Due to the sources of the sample, engineers of the Automotive supplier, students as well as individuals with academic education are mitigating the representativeness of the actual German labor market. Further, it was not controlled that participants were considered as talents by their current or potential employers. Validity and

reliability could have been increased by a more diverse sample structure in regards of regionality, industries and experiences.

Regarding the measurement of employer branding strategy elements there are also aspects that could have contributed an increased validity. The application of scales validated in other cultural contexts could have led to the possibility that important items for the sample were missing. Additionally, questions were formulated regarding an ideal employer which includes a degree of abstractness to answer the questions. The use of real employers could have made respondents assess elements of the employer brand in a more integrated way. Besides, personalities of employers were not examined in the current approach. Further, the sample was not only focused on individuals who are currently looking for a new job. The researcher asked to answer the questions by imagining to be on job search but had to assume that employed individuals consider the questionnaire from the viewpoint of a job seeker. Therefore, there is the possibility that respondents were not able or willing to answer questions with the intended viewpoint in mind. Further, only selected information sources were included. The inclusion of offline information sources could have contributed to the understanding of effective management of all possible information sources. The discussed limitations provide platforms for further research as discussed in the next section.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Implications for further research are phrased regarding methodology and areas contributing to advance employer branding research. A variety of quantitative and qualitative methods can help to further explore employer branding in-depth. Qualitative interviews and case studies with more practitioners can help to provide detailed descriptions of realities in employer branding and connected challenges. The application of such methods would also contribute to understand how strategic frameworks from research behave regarding actual strategies. Further case studies and experiments regarding the combination of EVP elements and information sources can contribute to the validity of research. The use of mixed-method research designs may contribute to a holistic understanding. Further, longitudinal designs may provide insights on how employer brands need to readjust to changing perceptions of individuals in labor markets as well as shine light on the use of employer branding in different economic situations. When conducting quantitative surveys, methodology should, preferably, involve probability sampling techniques and aim to create diverse sample structure to achieve validity and reliability as studies mainly focused on convenience samples containing a specific group of labor markets.

Regarding areas requiring further research, six implications can be formed. First, some strategic elements that were not immediate focus of this research are suggested to be further explored. Differentiation from competitors as well as the accuracy of employer brands need further attention. Second, investigation of employer attractiveness in different cultural contexts could contribute to understand which aspects differ across labor markets. Moreover, cross-cultural comparison could provide suggestions on how to conduct employer branding in a globalized world with local adaptation for multi-national organizations. Third, the integration and streamlining of research regarding employer attractiveness should be advanced by focusing on both, symbolic and instrumental attributes of EVPs, instead of creating scattered results relating to either personality traits or job and organizational attributes. Fourth, integrated results on how to manage and strategically combine online and offline communication channels is suggested to contribute understand how to successfully provide information to suitable employees. Fifth, the exploration of market segmentation should be further facilitated to attract a diverse, balanced and strategically flexible workforce. Previous research suggested that unobservable factors like values might be even more important for creating customized employment promises (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles,

2009) and, thus, need to be examined. Lastly, more research is needed on the financial value of employer branding. The actual financial value in engaging employer branding as a strategic tool is rarely explored and further research is suggested by current reviews of the field (Backhaus, 2016; Theurer et al., 2018). This could also help practitioners to justify budgets and promote the importance of employer branding for recruitment and retention. The examination of relevant KPIs in relation to employer branding might yield some useful results.

To conclude this thesis, the employer branding field assumes that there must be employer attractiveness resulting from evaluations of relevant employer information to attract highly-valuable employees in candidate-driven markets. This research showed that employers cannot treat potential employees as one group but suggests that acknowledging differences via employee preference profiles may benefit employer branding strategies by attracting a balanced, diverse and strategically flexible workforce more successfully.

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App. I. LIST OF KEY WORDS FOR LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 8 List of keywords for literature review

Employer Branding & Employer Brand Development	
Employer branding	Employer personality
Employer brand	Employer value proposition
Employment brand	EVP
Employment branding	Employer branding AND differentiation
Employer-of-choice	Employer branding AND consistency
Employer of choice	Employer branding AND accuracy
Employer attractiveness	Employer branding AND target
Employer branding AND attraction	Employer branding AND segments
Employer branding AND attractiveness	Employer branding AND market segmentation
Employer branding strategy	Employer branding AND segmentation
Employer image	
Employer Branding & Communication Channels	
Employer branding AND communication channels	Employer branding AND external marketing
Employer branding AND communication	Communication channels
Employer branding AND advertisement	Recruitment advertising
Employer branding AND marketing	Communication channel & market segmentation

App. II. OVERVIEW OF EVP DIMENSIONS

Table 9 Overview of dimensionality of employer attractiveness

Author	Date	Identified dimensionality	Research design	Limitations regarding sample structure
Towards ideal employer				
Ambler & Barrow	1996	3 dimensional solution: functional benefit, economic benefit, psychological benefit	Exploratory, qualitative interviews, British managers (n=27)	This paper is exploratory but we believe there is sufficient underlying strength in the Employer Brand concept to warrant further investigation.' (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 202)
Sutherland et al.	2002	11 dimensional solution: corporate culture of growth & challeng. training & development, pay, innovative & global perspective, large organisation, successful company, non-hierarchical company, like the work and the industry, value-based organisation, benefits, small organisation / casual dress / comfortable working environment	Quantitative survey, South African business students (n=274), 33-item scale	This is a useful method to determine ideas and insights during exploratory research but does not claim to statistically represent the entire population.' (Sutherland et al., 2002, p. 16)
Berthon et al.	2005	5 dimensional solution: development value, application value, economic value, social value, interest value	Quantitative survey, Australian students (n=683), 25-item scale	Undergraduate students are likely to have limited relevant employment experience compared to typical job seekers with a lack of expertise in job search activities.' (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 168)
Roy	2008	8 dimensional solution: application value, interest value, ethical value, economic value, social value, psychological value, career opportunities value, development value	Quantitative survey, Management school students in Hyderabad, India (n=150), 27-item scale	'Additional research with a more representative sample of potential and existing employees of a large number of organizations in India must be undertaken (...). Another limitation of the study is the use of MBA students who are likely to have had limited work experience (...)' with a lack of expertise in job search activities.' (Roy, 2008, p. 126)
Arachchige & Robertson	2011	8 dimensional solution: corporate environment, job structure, social commitment, social environment, relationships, personal growth, organizational dynamism, enjoyment	Quantitative survey, Business course students from a Sri Lankan university (n=221), 32-item scale	Generalizing from these findings in relation to students from other disciplines could be misleading as other factors (...) may vary from those relevant to business studies. (...) Care would therefore be required in relating the results to other national entities. A majority of job seekers are current or former employees who, as pointed out previously, are likely to have quite different perceptions of employer attributes.' (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 42)
Zhu et al.	2014	5 dimensional solution: compensation & benefits, recognition, opportunity for development, work-life effectiveness, organization mark	Quantitative survey, Chinese students from universities in Beijing & Wuhan (n=912), 29-item scale	We used a student sample so findings based on this sample may not be generalized to other samples, such as people who are currently in the workforce who have intentions of applying for a new job or with a different organization from their current employer.' (Zhu et al., 2014, p. 946)
Sivertzen et al.	2016	5 dimensional solution: innovation, psychological, social, economic, application	Quantitative survey, Norwegian engineering students (n=184), 25-item scale	In the present study engineering student were singled out as respondents. This limits the opportunity to generalise the result of the study.' (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 480)
Dabirian et al.	2017	7 dimensional solution: social, interest, application, development, economic, management, work-life balance	Qualitative content analysis of employer reviews on glassdoor.com with IBM Watson (n=38.000)	We considered only large companies for this study, and it would be interesting to investigate how smaller companies compare. Further research should perform a more granular data analysis and determine which value propositions individual respondents praise and complain about.' (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 204)

Source: Review of current employer branding literature, own depiction

Table 9 Overview of dimensionality of employer attractiveness (continued)

Author	Date	Identified dimensionality	Research design	Limitations regarding sample structure
Towards ideal employer (continued)				
		7 dimensional solution: development opportunities & organizational reputation, organization culture, work environment, large successful organization, attractive compensation & promotion opportunities provided locally, attractive compensation and promotion opportunities across domains & geographies, growing organization with less formal work culture	Quantitative survey, Indian business school students (n=193), 42-item scale	No limitations given
	Deep a & Baral 2017			
Towards specific employer				
Van Hoye et al.	2013	9 dimensional solution: pay/security, advancement, task demands, working conditions, sincerity, innovativeness, competence, prestige, robustness	Quantitative survey, Turkish students from 87 Turkish universities (n=19,894), 31-item scale	our sample consisted of university students asked to identify their most admired employer. More research is needed to examine whether our findings generalise to other types of job seekers and employers. (Van Hoye et al., 2013, p. 555)
Lievens & Highhouse	2003	11 dimensional solution: pay, advancement, job security, task demands, benefits, flexible working hours, sincerity, innovativeness, competence, prestige, robustness	Quantitative survey, Flemish students interested in bank industry (n=275); employees in bank industry (n=124)	our study was conducted in Belgium in a specific industry. Hence, our results need to be replicated in other cultures and in industries other than banking. (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003, p. 98)
Lievens et al.	2005	15 dimensional solution: social/team activities, physical activities, structure, advancement, travel opportunities, pay & benefits, job security, educational opportunities, task diversity, sincerity, excitement, cheerfulness, competence, prestige, ruggedness	Quantitative survey, Belgian high-school students in their final year (n=576), 52-item scale	Our study was conducted in the Belgian armed forces. It is possible that other attributes are related to the attractiveness of armed forces in other cultures and populations. (Lievens et al., 2005, p. 567)
Tanwar & Prasad	2017	5 dimensional solution: training & development, ethics & CSR, work-life balance, healthy work atmosphere, compensation & benefits	Quantitative survey, employees of Indian IT companies (EFA n=341; CFA n=313), 23-item scale	First, the study sample was restricted to the employees working in the IT companies of a developing country, which limits the researcher's ability to generalise the results. The IT industry is quite specific in terms of its culture and management policies. The results may thus vary across developed countries due to their cultural differences with their less developed counterparts. (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 405)

Source: Review of current employer branding literature, own depiction

App. III. TABLE OF EVPs' INSTRUMENTAL BENEFIT DIMENSIONS

Table 10 Table of EVP's instrumental benefit dimensions

EVP dimensions	Description
Functional benefit	<i>'developmental and/or useful activities'</i> (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187)
Development Value	<p><i>'employer that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 162)</p> <p><i>'provides a happy work environment along with the developmental aspects like career enhancing experience, job security and hands on interdepartmental experience'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121)</p> <p><i>'degree to which an employer recognizes employees' contributions and provides opportunities for professional development and career advancement'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)</p> <p><i>'Employees are interested in improving and developing their skills for future job positions.'</i> (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 402)</p> <p><i>'The opportunity for learning and development, skill improvement, and career advancement that applicants expect to get in the employment relationship.'</i> (Zhu et al., 2014, p. 939)</p>
Application Value	<p><i>'employer that provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer orientated and humanitarian'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 162)</p> <p><i>'opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an organization which is both innovative and humanitarian'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 120)</p> <p><i>"put their know-how and skills to meaningful and considerate use."</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)</p>
Work-Life-Balance	<p><i>'proper work/life balance allows people to manage their work in harmony with all their other identities (e.g., parent, friend, traveler, club member) without conflict or stress'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)</p> <p>good work-life balance; possibility to comply with personal and family matters (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013)</p> <p><i>'managing work and life effectively that applicants expect to get in the employment relationship, rather than work-life balance.'</i> (Zhu et al., 2014, p. 939)</p> <p><i>'organisations that provide flexible work hours and a work from home facility'</i> (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 402)</p>
Psychological benefit	<i>'feelings such as belonging, direction and purpose'</i> (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187)
Social Value	<p><i>'positive work atmosphere; coworkers who are fun and collegial, and who share similar values; a team approach to problem solving; and a people-focused organizational culture'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)</p> <p><i>'provides a working environment that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 159)</p> <p><i>'provides a fun working environment, provides good collegial relationships and a team work environment'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121)</p> <p><i>'organisations which are concerned about the well-being of the employees, offer autonomy and provide a friendly team atmosphere'</i> (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 402)</p>
Interest Value	<p><i>'employer that provides an exciting work environment, novel work practices and that makes use of its employee's creativity to produce high-quality, innovative products and services'</i> (Berthon et al., 2005, p. 159)</p> <p><i>'exciting work environment, novel work practices and that makes use of its employee's creativity'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121)</p>

	<i>'requires novel work practices and an innovative mind in order to complete challenging but achievable tasks'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201)
Ethics & CSR	<i>'employer which is ethical, and the work culture is strong and clear'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121) <i>'organisations that exhibit a corporate social behaviour towards the society and their employees'</i> (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 402)
Corporate Environment	Large, well-known and profitable company with high-quality products or services (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011) good public reputation of the company; it is good to have the company on your resume (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013) <i>'The explicit or implicit image or symbolic factor of the employer identified by prospective employees in the labor market.'</i> (Zhu et al., 2014, p. 939)
Economic benefit	<i>'employer that provides above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities'</i> (Berthon et al. 2005, p. 159) <i>'provides an above-average basic salary, an attractive overall compensation package and a happy work environment'</i> (Roy, 2008, p. 121) <i>'The economic reward and job security that applicants expect to get in the employment relationship.'</i> (Zhu et al., 2014, p. 938) <i>'pay, but also to benefits such as healthcare, pension contributions, job security, and other quantifiable perks.'</i> (Dabirian et al., 2017, p. 201) <i>'a competitive salary and attractive remuneration package'</i> (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 402)

App. IV. INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

Interview Guideline

‘Employer Branding Strategies in the War for Talent’

Questions related to (English Version):

- Short company description
- Objectives of Employer Branding
- Responsibility & Involvement in employer branding
- Development of employer branding strategy
- Success factors of employer branding
- Challenges of employer branding
- Target audiences for employer branding
- Most convincing arguments for recruits to join
- Differentiation from other employers
- Communication channels of employer branding

Question related to (German Version):

- Kurze Unternehmensbeschreibung
- Ziele von Employer Branding
- Verantwortung von und Teilnahme an Employer Branding-Aktivitäten
- Entwicklung der Employer Branding Strategie
- Erfolgsfaktoren für Employer Branding
- Herausforderungen bei Employer Branding Aktivitäten
- Zielgruppe/n von Employer Branding
- Argumente für eure Mitarbeiter bei deinem Unternehmen anzufangen
- Abhebung von anderen Employer Brands
- Kommunikationskanäle um eure Zielgruppe/n zu erreichen

Information about Master Thesis Research ‘Employer Branding Strategies in the War for Talent’

Dear Participant,

This sheet serves to provide you with information about the research you are participating in. The purpose of this study is to identify distinctive characteristics of employer branding strategies and develop suggestions on the development and implementation of such strategies. Therefore, your expertise in the field of employer branding and your experiences in managing employer branding in your company are very valuable!

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Management Sciences of University of Twente. I believe there are no known risks associated with this research study. To the best of my ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. Your personal information such as name, contact data or employer will not be shared by the researcher and will remain confidential.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Answers to questions can be given in German or English. You are free to not answer any question. Further, you can request the deletion of your data at any time via e-mail.

Please note that your answers will be audio recorded, translated into English and transcribed into written text that will be used in quotes to discuss results and findings. Audio data will be deleted after submission of the thesis in January 2019. Part of the transcriptions will be quoted in the thesis and freely accessible via the thesis repository of University of Twente.

Thank you!

Henriette Brune (h.brune@student.utwente.nl // Phone: 08165 – 944 977)

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl

App. V. TRANSLATED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Name: Participant A

Gender: Female

Employer Branding Experience:

Company: Headhunter Company*

Source of Contact: LinkedIn

Date: 26.11.2018

Length: 19:27 minutes

Language: German (translated)

Type of Interview: Telephone

A: (identifying information) (0:00 – 0:02)

H: Hi, here's Henriette. (0:02 – 0:04)

A: Hi Henriette. Nice to have you call. (0:04 – 0:07)

H: Yes, I'm also glad you had time for me. (0:07 – 0:09)

A: Yes, of course. No problem. I also have your guide printed out and also signed. I'll send you an e-mail right away. (0:09-0:20)

H: Okay, great! (0:20-0:21)

A & H: (... identifying information) (0:21 – 2:26)

A: Could you brief me quickly? What exactly is your thesis about? (2: 27 – 2:29)

H: Well, I'm writing my master's thesis at the moment. I am studying in the Netherlands and Berlin in the program Innovation Management & Entrepreneurship and have specialized on HR as well and Employer Branding is actually a very hot topic in this field, both academically and at the companies themselves. And I want to go illuminate the strategic side a little bit more. So in theory, there is a lot of emphasis on the individual elements such as what the applicants find attractive, how can I conduct employer brand marketing and it is not necessarily explored on how to really come up with a strategy that unites everything. And I would like to have a few more insights from the companies. Simply because this is then a bit closer to reality and, of course, you are also confronted, uh, with things that do not appear in reality and that you don't really think about in theory. (2:30 – 3:39)

A: Yes. Ok. That's right. There are always catches when planning something beautiful and then it doesn't work out that way. (3:40 – 3:46)

H: Exactly. (3:46 – 3:47)

A: Okay, great! Finally, something about myself. I have been at (Headhunter Company)* in internal recruiting or also in human resources marketing for three and a half years and conduct employer branding for the whole D-A-CH region. We are a UK recruitment consultancy and are looking for new, young talent everywhere who would like to start with us internally as junior consultants. So, I have nothing to do with external recruiting for our clients, I don't do this classic business at all. I'm looking for new people for us internally and then do the first step, before my colleagues take over. My colleagues are responsible for the whole interview process here with new talents who want to start for us. I do everything that these talents can get to know us. This means that I am responsible for the whole D-A-CH region, that our employer brand becomes visible, by fairs, by lectures, by workshops, by social media advertising, by analog advertisements such as in subway commercials, by giveaways. Everything you can see externally as an applicant from us, goes over my table and I do these really very, very much during the semester. So always when the uni starts. And when the university stops, I have a little more time here in Munich to plan the things again for the next semester. You can think of it as a seasonal business. (3:48 – 4:58)

H: Ah, okay. All right. Well. (4:58 – 5:02)

A: Do you have a prepared questionnaire? (5:02 – 5:07)

H: Yeah, a little bit. So I would just keep it relatively open so that you can also have your say and you can maybe also explain the individual challenges, so to speak. But I have prepared a few questions. (5:07 – 5:22)

A: Yes, gladly. We can do that. (5:22 – 5:24)

H: Okay, great. Could you briefly describe a little bit of what (Headhunter Company)* is doing now? Where and in which fields do you operate? (5:24 – 5:35)

A: Okay, so we're a classic recruitment consultancy from (the UK)*. So, we are of British origin with British corporate culture. We find specialists and executives, primarily for permanent positions or freelance. So, project contracts and fixed employment contracts in different industries. Especially in the IT sector, in engineering,

banking, finance, pharma and life sciences and (identifying information company attributes), we have about (over 1000 employees)* employees worldwide, have really gone from (the UK)* everywhere and have also opened branches everywhere. Now not only Europe, but also really in the USA, Asia, Dubai, in APAC. So, we're really very, very dispersed regarding locations. And since (1980'ies)* on the market. That's when we were founded. So from the years and also from the number of people not so small anymore. However, we are often not known because we have a multi-brand strategy. This means, (Headhunter Company)* is the holding and various branches of business, all of which belong to the holding. And if you work with us, for example, as a consultant and recruit classically in the IT market, then you work for the business branch that recruits in the field. So, all business branches have their own names. And for the holding itself, you really only work in the background, like HR, Learning & Development, legal, Internal Recruiting, like me, for example. And, um, that's how we're structured, you can say. (05:35 – 07:08)

H: Okay. All right. If I now shift a bit to Employer Branding, how is this concept defined in your company? What do you mean by this? (07:08 – 7:17)

A: Really carrying the employer brand to the outside world and positioning it as an employer, about anchoring the name in the minds and really being perceived as an attractive employer. We are noticing more and more, even with Generation Y it is the case that many, many graduates still like to work with top employers who have a name they know. These are big German corporations that can afford to advertise everywhere. Since almost every company is looking for new workers in Germany today, this has really already become a struggle. So when thinking about Employer Branding, we also think about the War of Talents. Because it is always such a competitive situation and we always compete against other companies through Employer Branding. Employer Branding is no longer: "beautiful, nice to have. We do Employer Branding." It is always to be competitive. So a little challenge is also associated with the word. (07:18 – 08:11)

H: Alright, okay. And are there different departments that are responsible for Employer or have you bundled it up? (08:11 – 08:19)

A: Everything is bundled in one person, with me, and that's primarily university marketing. So, university marketing is our strongest branch. Because we focus Employer Branding on that. We grow organically, from the inside out and primarily hire juniors who come fresh from university. This can be bachelor but also master graduates and we always try to internally promote them quickly and not hire executives externally. Thus, the target group is always fixed and this is usually almost always graduates or, um, juniors with 1, no more than 2 years of professional experience and, thus, university marketing is clearly the number one area, so to speak. Therefore, we do a great deal in this regard. (08:19 – 09:03)

H: Hmm, ok. So your goal is actually primarily to recruit the next generation with Employer Branding? (09:03 – 09:09)

A: Yes. (09:09)

H: Okay, all clear. What do you perceive as a success factor in Employer Branding? So, what do you absolutely have to have as a company to be truly successful? (09:10 – 09:19)

A: Hmm. You have to be authentic. It doesn't work to sell something on the outside which we don't show internally at all. And by having many, many applicants here internally with us, we have an incredible number of job interviews per day and per location. Open application processes that have trial days here, applicants that talk to us and, also because we are very open and transparent, perceive how we work, who we are. This is always what is then mirrored outwards, by advertising, by photos, by campaigns, so to show authentically who we are, that is the most important thing, so that the applicant says: "okay, you are honest and with someone like that who is honest I want to work". (09:20 – 09:56)

H: Ok. And what do you perceive as a challenge or a special challenge in Employer Branding, one which might make it a bit harder to reach the people you want to recruit? (09:57 – 10:09)

A: Just to stand out from the crowd. There are so many employers who have cool Employer Branding, just staying exciting, being exciting and kind of making a difference. That's super difficult. Relatively many companies today have the title of top employer, an incredible number of companies invest in the field, have great giveaways, are at every fair, also make Facebook advertising, on Instagram, and think of cool, exciting, new stuff... Everyone walks the walk with university. Standing out, that's almost impossible. (10:09 – 10:35)

H: Okay, and in what way did you decide to be different, so what are your points of differentiation? (10:35 – 10:43)

A: Very strong Employer Branding in the field of university marketing. So, continuously emphasizing the focus on students. With cool things, like a photobooth, which we set up at a faculty, in the canteen. We did a cool subway advertisement with young people but that also signaled very strongly that we are also looking for cross-starters. With Facebook, with Social Media. Very, very, very much Xing and LinkedIn, with a colorful and open booth on

fairs, with balloons, with young people at the booth, with a lot of young people on posters. And that we have shown very authentically who we are. We are young and, have an open culture and we have carried that to the outside world and there are always students or graduates who come to us and say: "hey, we saw you today at the fair and I have also seen in the uni booklet that you are giving a lecture next week". So, they really address this that we can be perceived everywhere. This doesn't always work out, though often and that's our strategy in these semester months, doing a lot of all ways to reach a student. (10:43 – 11:48)

H: Yeah, okay. All right. And what did you perceive as the most effective or efficient channel to win over the students? (11:48 – 11:57)

A: To combine personal contact with the digital. So, in advance to get to know the students through a lecture, of course, it is nice, when many students are present, or you can speak in the lecture and afterwards add the attendants on Xing or LinkedIn, so that you can combine the personal and digital. That you first get to know each other personally and yet this getting to know each other does not run in the sand, but instead you get connect and stay connected precisely through a Social Business Network. (11:58 – 12:27)

H: Okay. (12:27)

A: It actually works out quite nicely. (12:28 – 12:29)

H: Yes, I can imagine that. And perhaps so as the last questions. We're actually going through relatively well. So, I would have had the question of how you came up with this strategy and how you developed it further? (12:30 – 12:55)

A: The strategy actually emerged a bit out of our corporate structure. So, we grow organically, it's this rather British culture that you grow from the inside and, don't promote based on affiliation, like a German corporation, for example, that says: "Yes, Mrs. Müller, you are now with us for 3 years, now you are slowly moving forward" instead we will only promote on merit. Means that someone who is only here for 2, 3 months and achieves his goals can be theoretically promoted after only half a year and theoretically can manage his own team after only 10 months. Theoretically... This is precisely this flexible..., this young..., this agile..., that we do not look at the human being, where he comes from and what his name is, but only at his performance, what he contributes here internally, so to speak. Um, now I've come off the thread. What was the question? (12:56 – 13:40)

H: How did you develop the strategy in this way? (13:41 – 13:43)

A: Alright, and by the way that the company has dictated who we are looking for and how we grow, that's always the young target group, that's always the graduate who comes from university, because we always want to grow with our employees. And the best managers are also the ones who have done everything from A to Z. Someone who leads a team here and knows what it's like to get started here and build a market for himself from the very beginning can much better understand the beginners in any case much better. And this is much more honest and much nicer for the beginner, that his supervisor now gives him tasks that the supervisor himself did when he started and that he knows. And that's how we go well and that's why the target group is actually always clearly determined and actually doesn't change in the next future. (13:44 – 14:29)

H: Okay, and you have iterations in such a way that you take a look at what communication channels that might work better or work worse? Do you have such a particular process? (14:29 – 14:43)

A: A certain process is not in place, but we always take a look after every year, of course. What worked, what didn't work like that, we've tried things like Edgarcards, you probably know that. Or we shot videos, with virtual reality, that works better, as I said, worked with a photo box once, we got away from it a bit, because that's very, um, hip and young, but we've become a bit more grown-up as well. That people see that we are also growing and are getting older and are no longer quite in our early 20s, but perhaps in our late 20s, early 30s. But to adapt such tools a little more to ourselves and also to the target group, we go through once a year and consider what works from what we did. What rather less, the target group remains first, and the channels don't change fundamentally either, but we still adjust it again every year. (14:44 – 15:29)

H: Okay, and do you work with certain KPIs or do you take a look at, for example, kununu or something so see how your efforts are perceived? (15:30 – 15:40)

A: Definitely. So, we work a lot with kununu. Also falls into my remit that I have statements and feedback on the comments that applicants leave on our site. You can't delete them as an employer, we can only take a stand. I do this every day and applicants evaluate the application process and not really what they see from us in the area Employer Branding, that less. They evaluate more as the conversations are here internally and how we shape the application process. (15:41 – 16:04)

H: Okay. (16:05)

A: So, we don't have any influence on that. Kununu is now not coupled with what we do outside, but rather how we treat the applicant here, from second 1. (16:06 – 16:15)

H: Okay, all clear. And perhaps as a final question: At the moment or in theory, it is not quite in agreed on how to integrate Social Media into Employer Branding. Which role does Social Media take in Employer Branding and can you use it well or how do you see the possible applications? (16:16 – 16:40)

A: So, you can use this well, but you don't necessarily reach the target group you want to reach. So, for example, Facebook is receding more and more. We consume it still but hardly anyone posts something. On Instagram, you theoretically have to do something every day to be seen, that you are shown in the stories or in the bar at the top. So, there's a lot of work required in the beginning that this works. I see there, of course a future, because the target group is only moving online, so digitally. It's all just going digital. So that's really the only way. Still, you have to think carefully about how to do that so that it's also profitable and you don't shoot posts and articles into the void. That's where it's our turn. We also do a lot through a blog that we link to Facebook and Xing, also post a lot via LinkedIn, have a career blog, Youtube videos. But that is not so easy. So, yes, I think it makes sense and is right and it's the way, but that doesn't always work the way you want it to. It's a lot of work. You need a strategy around Social Media to be successful with that and we don't have perfected it. (16:41 – 17:39)

H: Okay, all clear. Yes, I think it's also very hard to sort yourself through that and really put the time in there. Definitely, very, very interesting. That was actually my last question. (17:39 – 17:56)

A: Okay, great. Yeah cool. (17:57)

(identifying information) (17:58 – 19:10)

A: You can contact me again. Also, if you put the thesis on hast, could you write to me again. (19:10 – 19:14)

(identifying information) (19:14 – 19:20)

H: Thank you again and a nice day for you. (19:20 – 19:25)

Name: Participant B

Date: 30.11.2018

Gender: Male

Length: 26:15 minutes

Employer Branding Experience:

Language: German

Company: Engineering Company*

Type of Interview: Telephone

Source of Contact: LinkedIn

B: (Engineering Company)*, (Participant B)*. Good morning. (0:00 – 0:04)

H: Hi Henriette, from LinkedIn. So not directly from LinkedIn but I found you on LinkedIn. (0:05 – 0:13)

B: Exactly, right. I remember. (0:13 – 0:15)

H: Yes, exactly. It's very nice that you have time for me and that you came forward to do the interview with me. I would briefly present myself so that you just have a bit of an impression of me and know who you are talking to, because we had no contact before. I'm a master's student. I do my Master's degree in Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship at two unis. I thought one university wouldn't be enough. I, then focused myself relatively, that I just want to work in HR and I also designed my courses around that. Now, I completed an internship with an automotive supplier and there was the problem that the applicants did not really know the company and that it was, of course, a bit harder to convince the applicants of the company, if you then also have a few companies in the Munich area who are more well-known and perhaps also perceived more attractively. And so, I actually came up with the idea of writing my master's thesis in Employer Branding. And now I'm here. (0:15 – 01:39)

B & H: (identifying information) (01:40 – 02:09)

H: Yes, before I start the interview, I would like to also get an impression of you and ask you that you also tell me something about yourself. (02:10 – 02:20)

B: Great, great. Yes, I'm here at (Engineering Compnay)* as a permanent employee since February and I am responsible for recruiting, i.e. the talent acquisition and Employer Branding. And we're 2 people in the recruiting department right now. I have previously, for 6.5 years worked for a large headhunter company and managed the same market as that of our company. The main shortage of candidates there is electrical engineers in permanent employment and I have looked after the Bavarian area and have therefore met a very, large number of companies and worked with a great amount of our competitors and recruited the same candidates as for (Engineering Company)*. (02:21 – 03:14)

(identifying information) (03:15 – 05:00)

H: Okay, maybe you can tell a little bit about (Engineering Company)*? (05:00 – 05:05)

B: Yes, clearly. Our company is a grown start-up. We were founded 10 years ago by (founder)*. At that time, he set up his own business and offered his services alone as a freelancer. And we won big projects quickly at a large, well-known car manufacturer from Munich and so our company grew continuously, and we have had a very close cooperation with this car manufacturer and other car manufacturers for 10 years now and we have had our own products on the market for 5 years in addition to our testing services, which are also used for testing. We have a niche specialization for the whole company. That's that of electronics testing in the car. (identifying information about the products of the company) We have made a name for ourselves within the electronics industry that will continue for a long time and will ensure that we win very, very exciting projects. (identifying information about the clients of the company) ...and even other automotive OEMs on the international market. We had an annual turnover of (identifying information about turnover). From this, we have made only 45% with consulting and 55% with the distribution of our own products. This means that the company has changed within 10 years, from a service provider to a manufacturer with additional services. And it will also be the case that, as a corporate strategy, we will continue to maintain both divisions, on the one hand the service But just want to have a certain basic noise and want to rely a lot more on products in the future, because it simply makes it easier and faster to successfully conquer a market and because a manufacturing company can also have much more success on the International market, if you want to diversify and also attract more customers than a service company, which is virtually committed to one customer. (05:06 – 8:26)

H: Yeah, okay. Very exciting definitely. (08:26 – 08:29)

B: Yes, it's a super exciting topic and we have the classic situation in recruiting that we have a candidate-driven market, that we are specifically looking for professionals who are have niche electronics qualifications and these people can also choose from who they want to work with and most of them want to work at the OEM or at Tier-1 companies and so of course we have a certain fight. (08:29 – 09:00)

H: Yes, of course. That's where I would actually like to start. Because you usually don't do Employer Branding for nothing. How is Employer Branding defined for you? So, what do you both mean by that, in recruiting? (09:01 – 09:18)

B: Yes, so this company didn't have Employer Branding in that form before I started here and we've had that now since February. At the end of the day, we have not rolled out a major strategy, except that we know that we ultimately need to do Employer Branding and that we have to intensify that a bit. In the end, we want to strengthen the employer brand and, thus, make a better appearance in the potential candidate market. And this starts with the customer, because customers can also become our candidate staff and goes all the way to the student. And that's is supposed to be reaching all target groups. (09:19 – 10:09)

H: Ok. I would also like to speak later about the target groups but first I wanted to ask which corporate goals are served by Employer Branding? You see greater benefits in it or is it just focused on getting really suitable candidates? (10:0: 10 – 10:30)

B: We have two employer branding strategies, so we have defined an internal and an external Employer Branding and we have multiple goals. One goal is that we want to increase the length of our employees' stay in the company. So, we want fewer terminations and on the other hand, it is also the employee satisfaction, the internal marketing, so that satisfied employees tell other potential candidates about it and, thus, advertise better for our company as a company through word of mouth. Und then, of course, we have the external Employer Branding that we can just provide people who find out about us or don't know us with good information and present it realistically and so just make us attractive as an employer. (10:31 – 11:25)

H: Ok. And, do you have set up a working group? So, there are several colleagues also involved in the company or is that actually very focused on the HR department? (11:26 – 11:39)

B: It's very focused on the HR department. (11:40 – 11:43)

H: Okay, all clear. And what have you been using regarding resources to start with Employer Branding? So, you had said that it is not a real strategy yet. But what did you assume? (11:43 – 12:00)

B: So, I have actually assumed a fairly holistic approach, because I am trying to cater to the internal and external areas of Employer Branding. I have first of all introduced giveaways like drinking bottles, coffee cups, ballpoint pens, electric screwdriver and notepads and alike that is all branded. What we ultimately distribute internally to the employees that they can use it, but also, for example, that we now have working attire such as polo shirts or business shirts or softshell outdoor jackets and something like that, in order to ultimately give the employees, work attire and in this way a better identification with the company. Then I'm going to recruiting events, i.e. career fairs of schools and engineering fairs and engineering career fairs and at technical schools and something like that. Open company day and things like that and then in the end have a company recruiting booth there and be present there

and trying to advertise for us. Always bring good high-tech demo devices where a lot of flashes and lights and cameras are there and so on. That in the end, you can fascinate people with it and also tell a bit of a story that interests people so that they remember it. (12:01 – 13:34)

H: Yeah, okay. You had just addressed a bit, what you did in Employer Branding. What do you perceive as such an efficient or effective channel to conduct Employer Branding? (13:35 – 13:49)

B: Do you now mean online platforms like Instagram or Facebook? (13:49 – 13:53)

H: Exactly, exactly. So actually, all sources of information, where the applicants can inform themselves about your company. (13:53 – 14:02)

B: So, at the moment, unfortunately, LinkedIn is the place to be. Yes, definitely where everyone actually looks at the company after they looked at the homepage and then a lot of people look at Instagram and Facebook. I also use Xing directly as a platform. We also have a LinkedIn account that I care for and a Twitter account, with Twitter in my opinion being more popular abroad than in Germany. That is no longer the subject here. I also have already thought about using more up-to-date things, such as Jodel, don't know if you know that, or Snapchat. Both are, I say, rather things that appeal to younger target audiences and that's not so much in our core focus as we rather want the young professionals and professionals and with Jodel and Snapchat, we're more likely to get people under 18 and that's not in focus yet. (14:03 – 15:15)

H: Yeah, okay. How do you see the potential of Social Media? So, do you think that you should put the focus on it or to stay with traditional job platforms or employer platforms? (15:16 – 15:30)

B: No, definitely a lot of potential in it. So, I'm putting emphasis very much on the new electronic media and on these company accounts and company presentation opportunities. We now also want to work on an image video and produce various short clips, because it is state of the art, when people want to get informed. People find out a lot more on their smartphone, which means that everything needs to be shorter, simpler, more concise information, which can be retrieved relatively quickly and that is, yes, I think it is important that you are present on different platforms with a roughly equal account or equally good representation, because you still can't look into people and people have too much choice. One goes on Indeed, the next one goes on Monster, the next one goes on Stepstone to look for a job and you cannot tell people that everyone should look on Monster or something like that and the one googles just with Google, the others, no idea, with Yahoo and that's generally a bit difficult and in my opinion the generalist approach is the only correct way to make for a certain background noise on all media. (15:31 – 17:03)

H: Ok. All right. Exactly, so you had already talked about target groups. Which target groups do you have in mind? (17:04 – 17:10)

B: From graduates up to the super senior. (17:12 – 17:21)

H: Ok. (17:21)

B: Our target groups are about people, who know in and have abilities around electrical engineering and (identifying information about products), which we then have as a prerequisite for being able to work with us in the professional positions. (17:22 – 17:35)

H: Do you think there are big differences between the grades of seniority? What people find attractive or what makes people work with you? (17:36 – 17:48)

B: You can't say that way. We have a high proportion of Young Academics or Young Professionals, about 75%, and it's actually always been in the jobs, what fascinates people and what they find exciting. Very few come here because we offer them more salary or because we just offer them any job, but they want to do the job in a targeted way. (17:51 – 18:30)

H: Okay, okay. And if you now focus on your last experiences with Employer Branding, also at (Engineering Company)*. What do you think are success factors for a successful strategy? (18:30 – 18:45)

B: If you can reach people emotionally. So when you give people a memory through an experience or a thought, I say. That people think of it afterwards because that's something special. Yes, because you are not one of many service providers, but because we somehow have something smart or extra that has to be something funny or a flash of inspiration or anything that people didn't know before from the technical field, which is just communicated by us a little bit better. Or somehow, where otherwise some added value is simply there. (18:47 – 19:35)

H: Ok. All clear, with there is perhaps also the question of how your Employer Branding stands out from other companies. So, where do you put the focus to really say we are different and that's why people should come to work with us? (19:36 – 19:55)

B: So, I've already worked out a whole bunch of USPs from my conversations with the heads of department and management and that's, on the one hand, about us being a manufacturing company for 5 years and having own devices on the market. And have now made a larger share of our sales with that and that, on the other hand, we have quite a lot of engineering and development with us. That said, people who want to work creatively or really want to research and develop, we can sell the jobs here with us well, because in the end we are, on the one hand, an engineering and development service provider. So really don't get contracts for components from BMW or from the car manufacturers, which we then have to develop. On the other hand, develop our own products and that's where we develop our products in such a way that we get them in series production. That means we have the entire development chain, the entire tool chain in the house and that's pretty sexy for people who work at other service providers or people who work at OEMs and can't do anything but just award contracts for components. (19:55 – 21:18)

H: Sure. Yeah, okay, all clear. All right, then I'm almost through. The last question for me would be where you really had challenges or problems in starting with Employer Branding where you realize that it's a bit difficult. Do you somehow have such factors that make it hard or have you experienced situations where you didn't get on? (21:19 – 21:52)

B: So, finding German-speaking candidates is, on the one hand, much, much more difficult than just finding skilled workers, because we don't actually have a shortage of applicants in the international skilled market because there are always enough Indian or African or Asian people who can do the job and are professionally well suited enough. Then, the problem lies in the flexibility of the head of the department that needs to be fixed. And then, of course, we also have a bit of applicant shortage here in Munich in general, so that our employees are also very actively head-hunted and we also need to protect ourselves a bit from headhunters on the outside, which almost weekly write our employees on all available platforms and offer them better-paying jobs and try to pull people out. Because we sit here in a neighborhood with 3 other companies that offer similar services to ours and all of which would like to recruit our employees and the employees actually only have to walk 100 meters around the corner into the next front door and then that works as well for them. And then we have BMW, which is almost in the same specialist sector and recruits directly from us and pulls the people out of the projects. And it's precisely the enticement from its own service provider that BMW likes to do very much, but we also have that at Audi or Continental and that's a rather dirty story, I find, because you as a supplier can't even rule that out in your supplier service agreements, because otherwise you won't get the order and at the same time, yes, they want your expertise and your performance and beat yourself up when you deliver a day late and that's a bit uncomfortable. But BMW will probably drive itself very strongly into the sand because of this. (21:53 – 23:52)

H: Yeah, I mean, that's the problem anyway with the automotive suppliers that you have a bit less leverage, because there are just a larger number of supplier companies that maybe also have similar offers. (23:53 – 24:02)

B: Yes, that's where we are really lucky, because we are so specialized (identifying attributes about company) but you don't know what the future looks like. (24:03 – 24:31)

H: Yes, that's true. It is also getting more and more unpredictable. All right, so you've definitely answered all my questions to me so far. I feel a bit smarter again. (24:32 – 24:48)

B: Very happy. (24:49)

H: Yes, I mean Employer Branding, especially at the theoretical level, is just a very complex topic, because it has so many contacts. So, you have the applicants externally, you have the employees internally and you have to look again that it all somehow fits together. That's why it's actually always quite good to get a bit of experience from practice again, how it really works, because in theory you just have a lot of tasks and practices are conveyed but whether you can then implement them in this way is always the question. (24:50 – 25:26)

B: Yes, I am completely with you. So, with us, as I said, it's in its infancy. I do it alone and I would have liked to have implemented much more already, but I have not the time either, because I am also actively recruiting and in my opinion, I should be much further but I hope that there is still headcount and that next year I can hire a few more people to join in. That we can grow there... (25:27 – 25:57)

H: Yes, I wish you that too. (25:58 – 26:01)

B: Thank you, thank you! Of course, I am also interested in your thesis. So, if you were so nice to let me know when you've finished and tell me where I can read them or download them or something like that, I'd be very, very grateful to you, Henriette. (26:02 – 26:15)

Name: Participant C
Gender: Female
Employer Branding Experience:
Company: Marketing Company*
Source of Contact: Personal Network

Date: 30.11.2018
Length: 36:48 minutes
Language: German
Type of Interview: Telephone

C: Hi! (00:00 – 00:02)

H: Hello, here's Henriette (00:02 – 00:04)

C: Hi Henriette. I will look for a room that we can speak in peace. (00:04 – 00:11)

H: Yeah, very nice that you take your time. Thank you very much! (00:11 – 00:17)

C: Yes, you are very welcome! (00:17 – 00:18)

H: Yes, it is always a bit difficult to inspire people for these activities, because there is always not so much ... (00:19 – 00:28)

C: You often hear that from such investigations or even with large polling institutes, I don't know, they somehow appealed to 500 companies, then maybe 200 say that they want to participate and actually 70 or so respond, if at all. (00:29 – 00:44)

H: Exactly, that's why I'm very happy that you're helping me. (00:44 – 00:48)

C: Yeah, let's see what I can tell you. (00:48 – 00:52)

H: Exactly. So, I think you can enlighten me. First, I can give a little more insight again into what I'm up to and who I am, because I think we didn't really overlap at (former employer)*. (00:53 – 01:08)

C: No, no. (01:09 – 01:11)

H & C: (identifying information) (01:12 – 01:59)

H: I'm writing my master's thesis at the moment, I've studied innovation management and entrepreneurship. Not such a special HR topic, but people are also very important for innovations. Otherwise, all it won't work. And that's why I put the focus on HR and had been working at an automotive supplier for the last few months now and there, the topic. Employer Branding came up a bit because, of course, as a supplier, you don't have the direct contact to customers because most of the time you only work with car manufacturers and then of course you are not so well-known among potential employees and then you have to see how you still kind of get people excited about your company and get them to apply. And from that it just developed that I wanted to look at what Employer Branding strategies there are, what elements there are for you might have to use and what you have to pay attention to. And, the practical part fell short, because of course I got more of my insights from the literature and I couldn't get so much practical insights because, unfortunately, I haven't been to so many companies yet, where Employer Branding was so actively operated. (02:00 – 03:48)

C: Yes. It is actually an emerging topic and for everyone, I don't think, so consciously present. Actually, also with us in the company, when I say to someone that I do Employer Branding, they are like: "Huh? Big question mark on the face. What is that?" (03:49 – 04:05)

H: Exactly, I have noticed that and then you always have make sure that everyone has it on the radar. Above all, the management and so on and that this does not fall down at the back, right? (04:06- 04:21)

C: Exactly. (04:22 – 04:23)

H: So, so before we maybe get right into the interview, I would ask you to introduce yourself a little bit and also to introduce (Marketing Company)* (identifying information) again a little bit, so that I also know what kind of context this is embedded in, so to speak. (04:24 – 04:46)

C: Yeah, so, in 2015, as I said I switched to (Marketing Company)*. Before that, I only have gained professional experience at (former employer – a headhunting agency)*, as a quasi-external service provider and then switched to the internal company side, quite simply also for reasons of interest, especially since you just get a much better insight into the culture and stuff. You otherwise not have that as an external recruiter. And (Marketing Company)* is a tech company, that is, really a digital company in Berlin, that is, founded in Berlin. At that time, I actually was the first to deal intensively and explicitly with the topic of recruiting, and at that time also HR and also a bit of office management tasks. I was actually hired as a recruiter. Also, for all departments actually and in this activity, I have actually managed Employer Branding topics – at that time, it was not termed that way. Which meant, how

can we get more known out there, how can we maybe write our job advertisements more attractively, so some little stuff that's playing in there somewhere and then I was on parental leave and came back (identifying information about return) and didn't really want to do this pure recruiting anymore and then we thought of what else is there and where one might also act independently, so regardless of others, because I'm only working part-time at the moment. And then we came up with the topic of Employer Branding, which in the end has to do with recruiting and, thus, also to draw attention from potential employees. Also, it was a bit more creative. I found this interesting, a good development and that's why the position was created here. It was never advertised or somehow planned for the longer term, it just turned out this way. And at (Marketing Company)*, now, we have really grown from a start-up to a medium-sized company in these 3 years. So (Marketing Company)* itself is already a bit older than 5 years and now we are over 200 people, also have many international offices. So not only the Berlin headquarters, but also are represented in the USA and (in European locations)*. Now we are also likely to enter the Asian market in the near future, so we are actually acting globally. And what do we do? Is that perhaps still interesting for you? (04:47 – 07:48)

H: Yes. (07:49)

C: So, like I said, we're mainly a tech company, that is, we have developed a cloud platform (for marketing purposes)* (identifying information about business model). (07:51 – 10:28)

H: Hmm. Very interesting. (10:28 – 10:29)

C: Very, very complex and very cool topic definitely. It is, as I said, a business-to-business solution, so end users like you and I don't really have anything from it. (identifying information about business model)* (10:30 – 10:53)

H: Yes, that would be nice. Okay, fine. Very nice. So, I can definitely imagine it now. That's very good. Maybe then we start with the topic Employer Branding. How is the topic of Employer Branding defined by you and your company? So, what do you mean by that? (10:54 – 11:21)

C: So, I personally understand by the term Employer Branding to actually create an employer brand. So really just branding. But I believe, in the end of the day, in the execution and also in the way in which the company actually understands or wants to have it, it is rather the area of human resources marketing because, let's say, as an employer, we already have a certain standing or a certain brand. It's not even defined anywhere, it's more or less just there, but it doesn't really have to be created. In other words, my job is to actually communicate this brand to the outside world. But, as I said, at its core, the brand is not defined at all. You would actually have to start here again. Yes. (11:22 – 12:30)

H: Okay, yeah. And what are the goals that you connect with Employer Branding and that you want to achieve? (12:30 – 12:37)

C: So, that's a question. Funnily enough, as I said, this is a newly created position. We are actually just working out a personal target agreement but what's in there or what is the aim of this? So, on the one hand, of course, to actually communicate our employer brand, as far as it exists, to the outside world. That also means going into new channels in which we may not be present as an employer yet, or to strengthen existing communication channels. For example, I have now put up an Instagram account. This was not created for us yet. Simply to give potential employees a feeling and an insight into who are we at all, what we do, what kind of people work here, so, visually, that attracts more than pure job ads. I would also like to go more to recruiting fairs in the future. Go and introduce ourselves as an employer. These are channels, for example, that we have not yet entered. Otherwise, we've always had a Facebook page. But it was more or less neglected, or it was mainly used for our business-to-of business marketing, although this is not a usual channel for business-to-business. That means to convert this channel and set it up more as a career page, for example. Otherwise, yes, as I said, make us better known as an employer. In fact, as we see ourselves, to also present that to the outside world. Otherwise, for example, our own homepage, our career page is one of my tasks or, in general, all international online profiles, to provide information and keep them up-to-date. Then to also build and expand our talent pool. For example, through job fairs, or what I am planning to do now is to set up a kind of alumni newsletter. In other words, students who have worked with us or staff who were of interest to us, but for whom it is currently the wrong time to start with us, to stay in contact and perhaps to show them through a quarterly newsletter how we develop, what happens and, remind them of us. That is all included. Otherwise, media to present us much more as an employer. That said, creating content in the form of pictures, now a big photo project is coming up, in the form of videos, that's planned next year, these can be interviews, these can be speeches, these can be glimpses of everyday work, whatever. But, as I said, also deploy new media channels. What else does this count? (12:37 – 15:56)

H: Yes, that's actually a very good overview. So, you definitely already have ... (15:58 – 16:03)

C: So it's definitely about making the company more known, because, in fact, we still have a lot of employees say: "yes, I have seen your job advertisement, but must admit, I have never heard anything of you before" and something like that, for example, to maybe avoid such sentences and change them to: "yes, I have seen you there and there

before” or something, right? So, as I said, just making us more known, increase the bandwidth of us and create attention, these are the goals and actually to convey who we are as employers. (16:03 – 16:32)

H: Yes. Do you have certain connections, such as departments or people with whom you work more closely regarding employer branding? (16:33 – 16:42)

C: Yes. So, I'm very tight, because I also come from this field, connected with our recruiting team. I also sit with them in the office. I always have to know in which markets we are looking particularly hard, which target group we are looking for particularly strongly, which positions are currently pushing. Also, how does recruiting generally work, where is it successful, where is it not, where do we have to start accordingly with campaigns or something? Yes, regarding the keyword campaign: this is also such a thing, so sometimes sponsored posts or something through Social Media. To expand all of this more strongly there. This and of course strongly also in cooperation with marketing, because this is also the mouthpiece of the company to the outside world and with whom, of course, I am talking precisely in relation to this creative stuff and also in terms of what is allowed to communicate to the outside world, how you can phrase it that it fits our tone and our company. Also, communication has changed in recent years. As a start-up, you communicate differently than you do now as a medium-sized company. And that has to be taken into account, of course. So, these are the two departments, otherwise also partly with the management, because they then approve the budget or something, but these are rather such small connections. (16:42 – 18:07)

H: Ok. And you already addressed target groups. Which target groups do you have in mind? Did you somehow define them beforehand? (18:08 – 18:17)

C: Of course, they are now being increasingly defined, but ultimately, everything that comes from the digital business or wants to work in this area is interesting to us if there is a passion and expertise. Yes, so of course, it should be people who are also interested in cloud, online and marketing technologies. It's a very international audience. We ourselves are also very international, we have employees from more than 40 nations sitting here. This also makes it more exciting, because you can also focus on cultural differences to target the individual markets. This may be also a point about Employer Branding strategy to adapt the whole thing locally at some point, i.e. to act differently in different markets. Yes, I think so age-wise, everything that comes from the university, so professionals or high potentials, graduates, management level, so actually everything and across all fields of activity. So, from the developer to marketing people, business development, customer service. So, there's everything here. (18:18 – 19:54)

H: Ok. Very interesting definitely. I would like to ask about how you defined your strategy? So, you said that an Employer Brand in itself is not so firmly defined. But have you somehow considered a course of action beforehand or is that more trial-and-error as you go? (19:55 – 20:22)

C: Well, there is a lot of thought about it beforehand, for example in terms of target group or in terms of which channel we actually reach which audience with and does that even make sense to go into the depths. For example, Instagram, clearly, this is the rather younger, newer generation that is a bit requires a bit more craziness than maybe the chief executive level, yes. So, because they have not grown up with it, I don't think they are this much interested in the culture here in the company but might be more interested in facts and figures. So finally, we are already considering who can we target where and what expectations we have of certain channels. So if I am now planning the career fairs for next year, at which recruiting fairs we want to go to, I will of course also look at them in a very specific way beforehand: what are they actually offering, in which markets are they, which target group is visiting, what do we want to achieve and, yes of course, we must also formulate goals, what do I expect, how many visitors does the organizer expect, how many do I expect or do I hope will also come to our booth, how many I can perhaps recruit from it, which are actually actively job-seeking and to break down: “I expect at least three positions to be filled through the fair and so the budget, which we invest, is justified.” So, it may also be important to know that we are investor-driven. That means, in general, all expenses must always be justified, and we cannot, for example, make popular sponsorships of anything that might also be interesting for Employer Branding like sponsoring a sports club or something. We cannot do something like that, because that would be perceived as burning money by our investors. So, of course, we have a bit of the limits somewhere. (20:24 – 22:26)

H: Yes, sure. What do you see as the most effective channels to conduct Employer Branding? (22:26 – 22:35)

C: Definitely, events of any kind. So, these can be recruiting fairs. You can take presences at conferences where you actually offer a workshop or give a speech on a particular topic. What I would also like to do but is still a bit vague and in planning is own events. I could imagine, for example, doing such a (company-sponsored)* family party, which of course, I would like to be done in public. That is to let people see it and to have this event being branded. So that the people can see: “cool, this is an employer doing something for families and stuff, right?” We are actually also very family-friendly, have very flexible working time models and really a lot of people have children and work part-time, like, for example, me. This means, of course, carrying something like that to the outside world, or whether it be taking part in any sporting events that can be branded, I do not know, Berlin company

run, or, in Amsterdam, our colleagues have also taken part in such a thing and were there with branded t-shirts. Just anything that somehow generates attention, right? That's what I actually think is actually the most effective: see and be seen. This is something that is difficult, I say, to be justified internally, because you always don't really know what's the return of investment is. One has of course a certain sense of expectation but something like mouth-to-mouth propaganda is of course difficult to measure, right? But actually, I think that's more or less the most effective. Because on the usual platforms, I think you are not seen. Unless and about this, we are also striving to ensure that, you phrase everything really catchy, right? What captures people. Starting at the position title, but that's also a bit worn out of course. I don't think the job ad is dying out, as you read so often. I don't assume that, but it's just a very crowded market and that's why you obviously have to look for other ways or participate in meet-ups where it is easy to network. I think that's a very, very important issue, which is really coming up very right now and you just have to stay on the ball there, yeah. (22:36 – 25:11)

H: And where do you see Social Media in Employer Branding? Is it useful? In theory, this is not a really represented topic, so I would like to have some practical experience, whether this is more important for you to maybe also draw attention to the fact that you do events and so on or whether it runs on the side? (25:12 – 25:48)

C: No, Social Media is definitely a very important channel. That's not just these trendy channels of Social Media, I also consider Xing or LinkedIn, for example. LinkedIn, above all, but also Twitter are channels that we also have used very strongly for our business-to-business. Facebook is now increasingly used more for business-to-customer. As I said, I set up the Instagram channel because I find that a very important channel to give good visual insights. We haven't been active there that long. I believe a month now and you can already see that at least videos are also much better received than photos. So, it's definitely an important area, Social Media, I would never give up on it, because in the end, where you and I are. I am actually also a fan of, maybe even place and try out so-called banner advertisements or real-time ads or something, because in the end each of us is constantly and permanently messing around online somewhere. You just have to figure out where people are and catch and generate attention at the right time. This is it actually. And we can also imagine, that was also a channel that I may have forgotten earlier, to create a few guerrilla campaigns or something. Or offline campaigns, for example, in local retail or do a take-away campaign, somehow present ourselves on coffee cups, maybe even in the environment of the competitor, where you know, there are interesting candidates rumbling around. So, all that sort of thing. You can get creative a bit and that's actually a lot of trial-and-error, because with many channels, we just don't have any experience yet. So, you definitely have to be creative and try many things, but clearly, Social Media, absolutely necessary. (25:49 – 28:03)

H: Yes, sure. In connection with job ads, you had just mention that one doesn't stand out with it. What are such things for you that you want to stand out from other employers? (28:04 – 28:18)

C: So, we put small stories at the beginning of job advertisements that are actually relatable to each of us (and explain how Marketing Company is useful in daily life)*. We really try to describe our tasks in the most concrete way possible and avoid universal phrases. Because you really read them in all sorts of ads. Really specifically addressing career opportunities and actually using our benefits, so that what we actually stand for and what we offer to set a distinguishing feature. (28:19 – 29:18)

H: Where do you see the strongest distinctions from other employers? (29:19 – 29:23)

C: So, despite our company size, we're actually still very familiar and harmonious regarding the people who work here. It's also something we actually always get to hear from applicants and also employees. They always say: "the people who work here are just great." Because it's actually like that. Everyone is very open here, everyone is very helpful here, there is no lone-wolf mentality here, but it is really about supporting each other. Of course, it is always hard to put that into one or two words. But that is something that I think sets us apart, which we should also focus more on and actually have to support these creative ideas like how we support departmental communication with each other. Because, for example, we have something like a, like a Lottery-Lunch where 3 employees are mixed freely every 4 weeks. They then have to go out to eat together or like a virtual coffee chat. This means, that you drink coffee virtually every 4 weeks with people from other offices with whom you are matched and can just chat with and exchange with them, so that you just get to know each other. Things like that, so we try to be creative and really have that interplay and yes. (29:26 – 30:54)

H: Very interesting definitely. I'm almost at the end, too. My last questions relate to the success factors and perhaps also to the problems that occur with Employer Branding. Where do you see factors that are really important to really succeed with Employer Branding? (30:55 – 31:18)

C: I think that all those somehow involved in Employer Branding need to have some consensus on what we mean by it and what we want to achieve with it and I believe the biggest crux is actually the management of a company, in our case, just to involve the founders really and that they are convinced of this topic and also go along with it. I also believe that this is one of the hurdles, or problems that some may encounter and where I also see a hurdle, is to formulate the employer brand to involve actual employees as much as possible. I sometimes believe that certain workers, perhaps also from different countries and in different positions, have very different views than, for

example, management and to actually put it together and maybe ask what our concrete employer brand is. That should actually be the starting point, and I think that's also the biggest hurdle to really do that then to proceed with the strategy. (31:20 – 32:50)

H: Ok. And where do you think where problems really arise, where you also have challenges, which you first have to solve in order to really get Employer Branding to succeed? (32:51 – 33:05)

C: So, as I said, to have the management on board and to have their support and have a consensus as I said. What do we mean by this and what do we want to do with Employer Branding and then, as I said, to establish the whole thing in the company, so everyone knows, we are working on our Employer Branding, there are one or two employees who take care of it and to build this standing in the company in such a way that everyone participates in it. So, that is related to something like storytelling, for example. I mean, employees are the employer brand, after all. They make us to what we are, and they actually have to be the content suppliers and I see it as a big hurdle. So, I notice this from my daily tasks and in how many channels I manage. And I always try to be onto so many people in order to just be updated with what happens here in the company. Be it funny stories, be it events that take place here and actually work at the events and draw information out of every conversation and stuff. So that's already big hurdle in my opinion. To include the whole company. (33:06 – 34:39)

H: I can imagine that this is going to be a bit difficult. Especially if you get bigger and bigger, you have more and more problems. Okay, yeah good, so then I'm actually through with my questions. It was very enlightening. (34:40 – 34:56)

(identifying information) (34:56 – 36:48)

Name: Participant D

Gender: Female

Employer Branding Experience:

Company: Consulting Company*

Industry: Management Consulting

Date: 22.11.2018

Language: English

Source of Contact: Personal Network

Type of Interview: Written

Can you describe your company and its activities in short?

As one of the big four consulting companies, the firm I am working for is dedicated towards tax, advisory and financial audit. It is a worldwide operating company. In Germany alone, it has more than ten thousand employees spread over more than twenty locations. Generally, the business is a B2B oriented one. It's employees are most of the time consultants and advisors who travel back and forth between their solicitors. However, there is also administrative staff like IT, HR and, for instance, also our employer branding department.

What does employer branding mean for your organization?

In my organization the employer branding department acts as an interface between marketing and human resources. In general, employer branding is a very important tool in our industry as the overall image of consulting companies is quite poor due to the fact that many people associate extensive traveling and overtime hours with our business. Of course, we have many employees who are extremely career oriented, however, it is our task to turn this image into a more positive one.

Even though our task is quite essential for our company, the appreciation of our work within the organization is relatively little, as we are the ones who "spend the money" instead of the other departments who "earn the money".

What are your organization's objectives for employer branding?

First of all, our main task is dedicated towards image and branding purposes like I explained during the first question. All of our efforts are hopefully leading to a good recruitment quota with suitable candidates for the jobs. Also, our consumers may see our employer branding campaigns, which, in turn, may also lead to a positive impression on their side.

Who is responsible of employer branding in your organization?

In my organization we have a dedicated team of around twelve people purely working on employer branding. The team core, sitting in our office located in Berlin, consists of seven staff members who are focusing on the display of adverts, social media efforts, event management, and the integration of our activities on our career page. In addition, there are five people who are working in different regions and visit different universities periodically. We also identified students of 100 universities who act as so-called student ambassadors. Most of the time, these student ambassadors are former interns and are asked to pass on their experience to their fellow students.

How did you set up your employer branding strategy?

Our employer branding strategy was set up by the management board of the company. Thus, there is a worldwide employer branding strategy that was based on market research, which may be adapted for every country. In Germany, we follow most of the prescribed methods, however, we are also collaborating with a German employer branding agency, that helps us to identify the most important channels for our purposes and target groups. Moreover, we hired a creative agency to design the presentations for our university presentations. With the help of a monthly controlling, we adapt the media plan according to the success factors.

What are success factors for managing employer branding right?

Generally, to manage employer branding the right way, the mission, vision and value setting is very important as a guideline for the whole company. Our employees need to identify themselves fully with those statements as this can help people to understand the big goals they are contributing to. Also, the employees of the employer branding department need to identify themselves with the culture and principles promoted within our campaigns.

Additionally, it is also quite helpful to have a dedicated team for employer branding with assigned tasks.

Moreover, for our work it is important to understand the needs and preferences of potential applicants to attract and retain employees. Therefore, the focal point of our activities is talent attraction. Since we are in a highly competitive industry, it is also necessary to distinguish our company and its working conditions from the competition. Generally, an overall long-term strategy is necessary to envision “where the journey leads to”.

Measuring and controlling are also crucial. To get an overview about the success of our activities, we measure the engagement of our career page, social media and our events as well as the number of applications regularly.

What are challenges in managing employer branding?

Like I said previously, one of the most challenging things is that current employees also identify themselves with the employer branding strategy. Thus, it is important to find a good balance between showing “the real world” and embellishing things a little. If the company exaggerates in how great a company and its working environment is, current employees may feel that their company is not authentic anymore. They may also feel uncomfortable with “lying” about a climate that’s actually not that good as it seems to be in the advertisements.

Furthermore, it is challenging to distinguish a company against its competitors. Especially in our industry the big four have quite similar approaches towards employer branding as their target groups are very similar.

Also, the fluctuation in this business is quite high, thus, we need to find talented and qualified people within short periods of time. However, our long-term goal is, of course, to retain people for longer periods of time.

What are your target audiences for your employer branding efforts?

Our main target groups are undergraduates for internships, graduates and professionals. We focus mostly on business economists, auditors and scientists with excellent grades and skills and a quite diversified knowledge.

How did you determine your target audiences?

The majority of our employees advise and verify our clients work. Thus, they need to be experts in their field.

What are the most convincing arguments for recruits to start working at your company?

Personal and professional development is one of the main arguments we try to focus on. Therefore, our motto is “Your Career. Your Choice!” We offer a diversified service portfolio to our clients and, thus, our employees are welcome to try our new areas. Most of the time our employees are also working with clients of different fields and are able to get many insights.

Since our company has established a quite good awareness within its industry, there are also a lot of people who want to have our name as part of their CV. They see working at the firm as a great career opportunity.

How do you differentiate yourself from other employers with employer branding?

Within our industry it’s not that easy to differentiate ourselves. However, we try our best by setting up global challenges and workshops where young talents are invited to travel to our headquarters and talk to experts. We are also offering many employee benefits like a smartphone, grants for food and Moreover, it’s Germany headquarter is located in Berlin, which represents a huge benefit towards its competitors as many employees appreciate living in the capital city.

What are the most effective and efficient channels for reaching target audiences?

As we target different groups of people with various skills, there are also different channels that work best for each individual group. There is no such thing as one channel that’s best for all. Also, the purposes vary between the channels. For example, we find fairs and exhibitions work best for image purposes whereas university presentations and little challenges are leading to job applications. We reach students with the help of challenges and social media campaigns. Especially millennials are quite conscious of their work-life-balance. Thus, we focus our social media activities on behind the scenes clips and pictures. Also, quizzes are promoted in communication campaigns with the help of print and online advertising as well as a flyer campaign at universities. For simple job announcements we find Twitter the most helpful and far-reaching.

App. VI. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

When considering an ideal employer, how important are the following to you?

Please state importance on the given scale. (1 = not at all important; 5 = extremely important)

- Recognition/appreciation from management
- A springboard for future employment
- Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization
- Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization
- Gaining career-enhancing experience
- Working in an exciting environment
- Innovative employer – novel work practices/forward-thinking
- The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity
- The organisation produces high-quality products and services
- The organisation produces innovative products and services
- Good promotion opportunities within the organization
- Job security within the organization
- Hands-on inter-departmental experience
- An above average basic salary
- An attractive overall compensation package
- Opportunity to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution
- Opportunity to teach others what you have learned
- Acceptance and belonging
- The organisation is customer-orientated
- A fun working environment
- Having a good relationship with your superiors
- Having a good relationship with your colleagues
- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- Happy work environment
- The organisation provides flexible-working hours;
- The organisation offers opportunity to work from home;
- The organisation provides on-site sports facility.
- The organisation has fair attitude towards employees;
- Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations;
- Humanitarian organization – gives back to the society;
- There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work.

Think about your latest job search experiences or imagine that you are on job search online.

When searching for interesting employers, which online sources would you consider useful?

Please rate the usefulness of the following information sources on the given scale. (1 = not at all useful; 5 = extremely useful).

- Employer websites
- Employer Rating websites (kununu, glassdoor, etc.)
- Job-listing websites (Monster, Stepstone, Indeed, etc.)
- LinkedIn
- XING
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube

When searching for further information about employers, which online sources would you consider useful?

Please rate the usefulness of the following information sources on the given scale. (1 = not at all useful; 5 = extremely useful).

- Employer websites
- Employer Rating websites (kununu, glassdoor, etc.)
- Job-listing websites (Monster, Stepstone, Indeed, etc.)
- LinkedIn
- XING
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube

Now, I want you to rank the information sources according to the value they had to help you determine an employer. You do not have to choose every source listed. Which of these sources provide information that determined or would determine your decision for an employer?

- Employer websites
- Employer Rating websites (kununu, glassdoor, etc.)
- Job-listing websites (Monster, Stepstone, Indeed, etc.)
- LinkedIn
- XING
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube

Demographics:

How old are you?

Gender?

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

What is your current employment status?

App. VII. TABLES OF QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Table 11 Full list of item means

Item	Item mean (five-point Likert scale)
The organization has a fair attitude towards employees	4.48
Happy work environment	4.47
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	4.43
The organization provides flexible working hours	4.25
Having a good relationship with your superiors	4.22
Gaining career-enhancing experience	4.18
Supportive & encouraging colleagues	4.18
Acceptance and belonging	4.16
Recognition / appreciation from management	4.10
Job security within the organization	4.09
The organization both values & makes use of your creativity	4.01
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization	3.99
Good promotion opportunities within the organization	3.95
An attractive overall compensation package	3.93
A fun working environment	3.86
Innovative employer - novel work practices & forward-thinking	3.83
An above-average basic salary	3.75
Working in an exciting environment	3.75
Hands-on interdepartmental experience	3.71
The organization offers opportunity to work from home	3.67
The organisation produces high-quality product & services	3.67
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization	3.66
A springboard for future employment	3.63
The organization produces innovative products and services	3.56
There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work	3.47
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	3.34
The organisation is customer-oriented	3.33
Humanitarian organization - gives back to society	3.17
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a university or similar)	3.13
Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations	3.06
The organization provides an on-site sports facility	2.53

Source: Author's own findings

Table 12 Initial analysis of reliability, KMO & Bartlett's test with variance explained

Cronbachs Alpha			0.846						
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling			0.815						
Bartlett's Test of Spherity			$\chi^2 (465) = 2241.82, p < .001$						
Component	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction of sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% variance	Cumulative %	Total	% variance	Cumulative %	Total	% variance	Cumulative %
1	5.96	19.24	19.24	5.96	19.24	19.24	3.61	11.65	11.65
2	2.53	8.16	27.40	2.53	8.16	27.40	2.69	8.67	20.32
3	2.10	6.76	34.16	2.10	6.76	34.16	2.37	7.65	27.97
4	1.57	5.07	39.23	1.57	5.07	39.23	2.19	7.06	35.03
5	1.46	4.72	43.94	1.46	4.72	43.94	1.75	5.63	40.67
6	1.33	4.30	48.25	1.33	4.30	48.25	1.73	5.59	46.25
7	1.21	3.90	52.15	1.21	3.90	52.15	1.41	4.54	50.80
8	1.08	3.47	55.62	1.08	3.47	55.62	1.31	4.22	55.02
9	1.03	3.33	58.95	1.03	3.33	58.95	1.22	3.93	58.95
Source: Author's own findings									

Table 13 Reliability analysis of six-component solution

Reliability Analysis							
	Item mean (5-point Likert scale)	Subscale Reliability			Total Reliability		
		Corrected item-total correlation	Alpha if item deleted	Alpha of Subscale	Corrected item-total correlation	Alpha if item deleted	Alpha of total scale
Social and Appreciation Value							
Recognition / appreciation from management	4.10	0.484	0.787	0.802	0.428	0.801	0.811
The organization has a fair attitude towards employees	4.48	0.508	0.781		0.445	0.802	
Acceptance and belonging	4.16	0.460	0.790		0.361	0.804	
Having a good relationship with your superiors	4.22	0.569	0.770		0.444	0.801	
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	4.43	0.618	0.761		0.393	0.803	
Supportive & encouraging colleagues	4.18	0.560	0.771		0.408	0.802	
Happy work environment	4.47	0.555	0.773		0.382	0.804	
Economic and Career Advancement Value							
Gaining career-enhancing experience	4.18	0.402	0.717	0.721	0.487	0.799	0.811
Good promotion opportunities within the organization	3.95	0.574	0.620		0.493	0.797	
An above-average basic salary	3.75	0.535	0.644		0.255	0.810	
An attractive overall compensation package	3.93	0.532	0.646		0.406	0.802	
Interest Value							
Innovative employer - novel work practices & forward-thinking	3.83	0.387	0.586	0.635	0.377	0.803	0.811
The organization both values & makes use of your creativity	4.01	0.379	0.593		0.435	0.801	
The organisation produces high-quality product & services	3.67	0.425	0.560		0.364	0.804	
The organization produces innovative products and services	3.56	0.479	0.517		0.386	0.803	
Application and CSR Value							
Humanitarian organization - gives back to society	3.17	0.416	0.500	0.604	0.264	0.810	0.811
The organisation is customer-oriented	3.33	0.430	0.480		0.281	0.810	
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	3.34	0.397	0.530		0.439	0.800	
Self-Image Value							
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization	3.99	0.433	0.605	0.278	0.808	0.811	
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization	3.66	0.433		0.274	0.809		
Work-Life Balance Value							
The organization provides flexible working hours	4.25	0.532	0.683	0.301	0.807	0.811	
The organization offers opportunity to work from home	3.67	0.532		0.308	0.808		

Source: Author's own findings

Table 14 Average ranking of information sources

	Included (%)	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Employer websites	68.7	1.71	1	7
Job-listing websites	61.2	2.46	1	8
Employer Rating websites	57.8	2.67	1	9
LinkedIn	47.1	3.65	1	9
Xing	43.3	4.10	1	9
Facebook	32.1	5.69	1	9
Youtube	29.9	6.21	2	9
Instagram	23.8	7.30	3	9
Twitter	23.3	7.45	1	9

Source: Author's own findings

Table 15 Group differences in age ranges regarding EVP attributes

Group differences in age ranges regarding employment benefits													
Kruskal–Wallis test													
Age range	N	An attractive overall compensation package				A fun working environment				Happy work environment			
		Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank
18 - 24	76	3.72			119.68	3.97			148.15	4.51			145.07
25 - 34	171	4.01	8.567	0.036	146.79	3.88	9.646	0.022	141.48	4.48	9.948	0.019	139.67
35 - 44	25	3.96			141.10	3.64			118.02	4.52			142.66
45 - 54	6	4.33			176.00	2.83			62.92	3.67			50.83
Total	278												
Jonckheere–Terpstra test													
Observed J-T-Statistic		11941.500				9067.000				9646.000			
Mean J-T-Statistic		10401.500				10401.500				10401.500			
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic		615.870				616.880				588.236			
Std. J-T-Statistic		2.501				-2.163				-1.284			
Effect		0.150				-0.130				-0.077			
p-value (one-tailed)		0.005				0.015				.105			

Source: Author's own findings

Table 16 Group differences in age ranges regarding communication channels

Group differences in age ranges regarding information sources																	
Kruskal-Wallis test																	
Usefulness for finding interesting employers					Usefulness for further information about employers												
Age range	N	Employer websites			Facebook				Twitter				Instagram				
		Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(3)	p value	Mean rank
18 - 24	76	3.66			126.42	2.29			155.65	1.97			158.60	1.91			153.20
25 - 34	171	3.79			140.30	2.01	11.228	0.011	136.27	1.63	9.158	0.027	133.85	1.68	7.949	0.047	136.20
35 - 44	25	3.96	10.979	0.012	152.60	1.52			102.76	1.48			116.32	1.40			112.30
45 - 54	6	4.83			227.83	2.83			180.00	2.00			155.25	2.17			173.17
Total	278																

Jonckheere-Terpstra test													
Observed J-T-Statistic		11949.500			8851.000				8768.000				9158.500
Mean J-T-Statistic		10401.500			10401.500				10401.500				10402.500
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic		635.966			633.633				602.668				600.279
Std. J-T-Statistic		2.434			-2.447				-2.710				-2.071
Effect		0.146			-0.147				-0.163				-0.124
p-value (one-tailed)		0.008			0.007				0.003				0.019

Source: Author's own findings

Table 17 Group differences in genders regarding EVP attributes

Group differences in genders regarding employment benefits																						
Mann-Whitney test																						
Gender	N	Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization						The organization produces innovative products and services						Good promotion opportunities within the organization								
		Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Male	174	3.88	7292.5	0.006	129.41	22517.50	-2.724	-0.164	3.68	7292.5	0.009	147.59	25680.50	-2.621	-0.158	4.09	6695.0	0.000	151.02	26278.00	-3.635	-0.219
Female	102	4.16			154.00	15708.50			3.35			123.00	12545.50			3.72			117.14	11948.00		
Total	276																					

Gender	N	Hands-on interdepartmental experience						An above-average basic salary						Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations								
		Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Male	174	3.79			145.36	25293.00	-2.004	-0.121	3.83	7284.5	0.008	147.64	25688.50	-2.635	-0.159	3.16	7655.5	0.043	145.50	25317.50	-2.024	-0.122
Female	102	3.55	7680.0	0.045	126.79	12933.00			3.58			122.92	12537.50			2.89			126.55	12908.50		
Total	276																					

Gender	N	Humanitarian organization - gives back to society						Supportive & encouraging colleagues						The organization provides an on-site sports facility								
		Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Male	174	3.07	7434.0	0.019	130.22	22659.00	-2.355	-0.142	4.11	7437.0	0.012	130.24	22662.00	-2.501	-0.151	2.63	7615.5	0.042	145.73	25357.50	-2.032	-0.122
Female	102	3.35			152.62	15567.00			4.27			152.59	15564.00			2.34			126.16	12868.50		
Total	276																					

Source: Author's own findings

Table 18 Group differences in gender regarding communication channels

Group differences in genders regarding information sources																						
Mann-Whitney test																						
Gender	N	Usefulness for further information about employers																				
		LinkedIn				Facebook				Twitter												
Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item Mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect		
Male	174	2.96	7384.5	0.016	129.94	22609.50	-2.404	-0.145	1.91	7241.5	0.007	129.12	22466.50	-2.692	-0.162	1.63	7735.5	0.048	131.96	22960.50	-1.977	-0.119
Female	102	3.30			153.10	15616.50			2.31			154.50	15759.50			1.86			149.66	15265.50		
Total	276																					

Source: Author's own findings

Table 19 Group differences in education levels regarding EVP attributes

Group differences in education levels regarding employment benefits																	
Kruskal–Wallis test																	
Education Level	N	A springboard for future employment				Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization				Hands-on interdepartmental experience				Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations			
		Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank
High school graduate	31	3.68			145.94	4.13			152.85	3.61			132.23	3.42			170.65
Prof. degree	13	3.62			137.35	4.31			173.42	3.23			96.81	3.15			152.73
Bachelor's degree	116	3.81	12.788	0.0124	156.28	4.09	11.457	0.0219	148.47	3.65	9.781	0.0443	133.00	2.91	10.180	0.0375	129.19
Master's degree	113	3.44			121.50	3.80			122.94	3.82			151.19	3.06			137.77
Doctorate	5	3.40			122.70	4.00			134.70	4.20			182.20	3.60			190.40
Total	278																
Jonckheere–Terpstra test																	
Observed J-T-Statistic		10609.500				10446.500				14256.000				11947.000			
Mean J-T-Statistic		12476.000				12476.000				12476.000				12476.000			
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic		669.355				650.439				667.699				673.269			
Std. J-T-Statistic		-2.789				-3.120				2.666				-0.786			
Effect		-0.010				-0.011				0.010				-0.003			
p-value (one-tailed)		0.002				0.001				0.004				0.217			
Education Level	N	There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work				The organization provides flexible working hours				The organization offers opportunity to work from home							
		Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank				
High school graduate	31	3.84			169.68	4.06			122.94	3.19			111.03				
Prof. degree	13	3.31			126.04	4.46			159.12	3.62			130.35				
Bachelor's degree	116	3.56	10.790	0.0290	146.93	4.11	14.678	0.0054	127.08	3.56	12.076	0.0168	130.50				
Master's degree	113	3.28			124.62	4.45			156.96	3.93			157.42				
Doctorate	5	3.60			151.20	3.40			84.90	3.80			143.40				
Total	278																
Jonckheere–Terpstra test																	
Observed J-T-Statistic		10642.000				13975.000				14799.500							
Mean J-T-Statistic		12476.000				12476.000				12476.000							
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic		679.961				661.662				688.763							
Std. J-T-Statistic		-2.697				2.266				3.373							
Effect		-0.010				0.008				0.012							
p-value (one-tailed)		0.003				0.011				0.001							

Source: Author's own findings

Table 20 Group differences in education levels regarding communication channels

Group differences in education levels regarding information sources																	
Kruskal–Wallis test																	
Usefulness for finding interesting employers																	
Education	N	Employer Rating Websites				Facebook				Twitter				Instagram			
		Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank
High school graduate	31	3.74			162.19	1.94			146.18	1.61			145.15	1.68			146.66
Prof. degree	13	3.46			139.04	2.15			156.12	2.15			176.77	2.08			180.00
Bachelor's degree	116	3.53	9.538	0.049	144.63	2.09	15.447	0.004	156.47	1.72	10.76	0.029	146.12	1.80	15.228	0.004	150.74
Master's degree	113	3.29			125.60	1.63			118.85	1.44			125.22	1.39			121.13
Doctorate	5	4.20			195.20	2.00			127.70	2.20			176.80	1.80			144.20
Total	278																
Jonckheere–Terpstra test																	
Observed J-T-Statistic					11084.500				10241.000				11056.500				10425.500
Mean J-T-Statistic					12476.000				12476.000				12476.000				12476.000
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic					685.836				670.479				632.727				629.363
Std. J-T-Statistic					-2.029				-3.333				-2.243				-3.258
Effect					-0.122				-0.200				-0.135				-0.195
p-value (one-tailed)					0.02				0.000				0.014				0.001
Usefulness for further information about employers																	
Education	N	Facebook				Twitter				Instagram							
		Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank	Item mean	H(4)	p value	Mean rank				
High school graduate	31	2.29			152.35	2.06			160.74	2.16			164.71				
Prof. degree	13	2.23			153.62	2.38			180.15	1.92			164.38				
Bachelor's degree	116	2.28	16.279	0.003	155.98	1.79	17.841	0.001	146.53	1.83	13.58	0.009	146.33				
Master's degree	113	1.73			117.38	1.45			119.89	1.48			121.79				
Doctorate	5	2.20			140.60	2.20			182.10	2.00			160.30				
Total	278																
Jonckheere–Terpstra test																	
Observed J-T-Statistic					10058.000				10250.000				10313.500				
Mean J-T-Statistic					12476.000				12476.000				12476.000				
Std. Deviation of J-T-Statistic					679.786				646.560				643.996				
Std. J-T-Statistic					-3.557				-3.443				-3.358				
Effect					-0.213				-0.206				-0.201				
p-value (one-tailed)					0.000				0.000				0.000				

Source: Author's own findings

Table 21 Group differences in employment status regarding EVP attributes

Group differences in employment status regarding employment benefits																						
Mann-Whitney test																						
Employment Status	N	A springboard for future employment						Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization					Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization									
		Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Employed	166	3.49	7137.5	0.002	126.50	20998.50	-3.171	-0.191	3.84	6852.0	0.000	124.78	20713.00	-3.749	-0.226	3.54	7471.0	0.007	128.51	21332.00	-2.678	-0.161
Student	109	3.82			155.52	16951.50			4.20			158.14	17237.00			3.83			152.46	16618.00		
Total	275																					
Employment Status	N	Working in an exciting environment						Hands-on interdepartmental experience					The organization has a fair attitude towards employees									
		Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Employed	166	3.66	7656.5	0.021	129.62	21517.50	-2.315	-0.140	3.80	7831.0	0.043	145.33	24124.00	-2.025	-0.122	4.43	7922.0	0.048	131.22	21783.00	-1.979	-0.119
Student	109	3.89			150.76	16432.50			3.58			126.84	13826.00			4.54			148.32	16167.00		
Total	275																					
Employment Status	N	Humanitarian organization - gives back to society						There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work					A fun working environment									
		Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Employed	166	3.05	7531.0	0.014	128.87	21392.00	-2.461	-0.148	3.36	7525.5	0.013	128.83	21386.50	-2.486	-0.150	3.76	7775.0	0.033	130.34	21636.00	-2.130	-0.128
Student	109	3.32			151.91	16558.00			3.63			151.96	16563.50			4.00			149.67	16314.00		
Total	275																					
Employment Status	N	Happy work environment						The organization provides flexible working hours					The organization offers opportunity to work from home									
		Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect
Employed	166	4.39	7641.5	0.013	129.53	21502.50	-2.472	-0.149	4.34	7631.5	0.017	146.53	24323.50	-2.378	-0.143	3.78	7751.5	0.037	145.80	24203.50	-2.090	-0.126
Student	109	4.60			150.89	16447.50			4.10			125.01	13626.50			4.10			126.11	13746.50		
Total	275																					

Source: Author's own findings

Table 22 Group differences in employment status regarding communication channels

Group differences in employment status regarding information sources																														
Mann-Whitney test																														
Usefulness for finding interesting employers																														
Employment Status	N	Employer Rating websites				LinkedIn				Facebook				Instagram																
		Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect											
Employed	166	3.34	7630.0	0.022	129.46	21491.00	-2.297	-0.139	3.10	7781.5	0.042	130.38	21642.50	-2.037	-0.123	1.83	7841.5	0.046	130.74	21702.50	-1.996	-0.120	1.55	7666.5	0.015	129.68	21527.50	-2.432	-0.147	
Student	109	3.64			151.00	16459.00			3.37			149.61	16307.50			2.00			149.06	16247.50			1.77			150.67	16422.50			
Total	275																													
Usefulness for further information about employers																														
Employment Status	N	LinkedIn				XING				Facebook																				
		Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect											
Employed	166	2.96	7790.0	0.044	130.43	21651.00	-2.013	-0.121	2.69	7619.5	0.023	129.40	21480.50	-2.277	-0.137	1.91	7311.5	0.005	127.55	21172.50	-2.839	-0.171								
Student	109	3.25			149.53	16299.00			3.03			151.10	16469.50			2.28			153.92	16777.50										
Total	275																													
Usefulness for further information about employers																														
Employment Status	N	Instagram				YouTube																								
		Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect	Item mean	U	p value	Sum of ranks	Z	Effect																	
Employed	166	1.63	7737.0	0.024	130.11	21598.00	-2.260	-0.136	1.87	7790.0	0.038	130.43	21651.00	-2.075	-0.125															
Student	109	1.90			150.02	16352.00			2.10			149.53	16299.00																	
Total	275																													

Source: Author's own findings