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INTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING AT LÄHITAPIOLA VELLAMO

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine and identify the strengths of internal employer branding and to develop improvement recommendations for LähiTapiola Vellamo. It was conducted to evaluate the current stage of internal employer branding between employees. The purpose of the research was to increase employee retention and improve the attractiveness of the employer within the organisation.

The theory of this thesis included the basics of internal employer branding as well as overall employer branding. It identified the different elements behind internal employer branding, including employer promise, organisational culture, employee satisfaction and performance, and employee retention. The method of the research was quantitative to receive a broad sample. The data was collected through an online survey. There were 63 answers from the survey which consisted of LähiTapiola Vellamo employees. All responses were analysed through a statistical program.

The research showed that the internal employer branding at LähiTapiola Vellamo is excellent, and the employees show satisfaction with their employer. Importantly the employees would recommend LähiTapiola Vellamo as an employer and do not have ideas about leaving. The work atmosphere was identified as a key branding aspect for the employees, salary and other benefits, and flexible work hours. Considering the results, improvement suggestions were difficult to identify, but feedback sessions, training opportunities, and exit surveys were recommended.

Keywords: internal employer branding, employee satisfaction, employee retention

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the research will introduce the topic and its importance to the case organisation, and the research aims, objectives and questions and, and the research methodology.

1.1 Background

Employer branding has become more and more crucial due to the increase of competition in finding and retaining the best talents. The importance of internal branding in any organisation is essential to not only improving the satisfaction of employees, which is shown to customers through delivering the brand values but in addition, it will promote the employer to potential employees and competitive companies in the same field. According to Bach (2005, 267) development in the job markets has increased the importance of corporate social responsibility which has adjusted companies' HR departments to pay attention to branding as a way of attracting and retaining employees. Marketing departments see branding as a tool for enduring in competitive markets. (Bach 2005, 267-268.)

Creating an employer brand for the company will attract more skilful employees that share the same values and priorities. There are three steps to creating employer branding: value proposition, external marketing, and internal branding/ internal marketing. Internal branding establishes employees that share the values and goals of the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.) Organisation's success in carrying the brand promise for customer expectations can be enabled by internal branding. Employees working in the service encounter of a company are highly carrying the brand promise to customers. The company is responsible for training and motivating the employees to deliver the brand promise. (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky & Wilson 2009)

Reduced retention, satisfaction with the job, and job performance are correlated to neglecting the organisation's promise to the employees which can be avoided by creating an accurate employer branding message. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.) One factor that is relevant to employee retention is a supportive working

environment. A supportive working environment is related to HRM which is a crucial element for obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Employees might have a higher chance of finding another company if the current is not conducting a supportive working environment. There are specific practices conducted in the workplace that can improve retention: financial rewards, benefits, training and career advancement, work environment, and balance between work and life. (Kundu & Lata 2017.)

This research studies the internal employer branding of LähiTapiola Vellamo. The company operates in highly competitive employer markets of finance which showcases the importance of the topic to the case organisation.

The research will focus on current employees' views of LähiTapiola Vellamo as an employer, employee retention, and attraction through the working environment. Current employees have the most fitting view from inside the company. The importance of employer branding can be seen from multiple surveys and rankings done for organisations to evaluate successful companies' employee wellbeing through different methods. These rankings and certificates are used in marketing and HR departments to create an employer brand that is attractive to applicants and current employees.

1.2 Research aims, objectives, questions, methodology, and process

The research aims to identify the strengths of employer branding and the improvement needs of the internal employer branding for the case organisation. This is done by analysing the current state of internal employer branding. From internal employer branding development, the organisation will have a better understanding of the needs of the employees to increase retention as well as improve the attractiveness of the workplace within.

The research questions for the thesis: How do LähiTapiola Vellamo employees see the organisation's internal employer branding? And how can it be developed? The objectives of the research: assessing the current state of internal employer branding, crystallising the most relevant factors of internal employer branding for the LähiTapiola Vellamo employees and giving improvement suggestions to

LähiTapiola concerning their internal employer branding. From the research LähiTapiola Vellamo will receive a current internal employer branding position and suggestions for improvement.

The research methodology will be quantitative research. The empirical part of the research will be done by survey method to receive data from large number of people, which indicates reliable result as well as to be able to generalise the findings. Research-based development work is applicable in situations where the aim is to renew practises and discover knowledge from the subject. The data collection will be systematic and evaluated critically using the theory as a base. (Moilanen et al. 2022, 18.)

The first part of the research is the introduction to the topic as well as to the objectives. In the second part of the research will be covered theory base from internal employer branding and its elements, in addition to the conceptual framework for the topic. The third and final part consists of the empirical part, data collection which is then analysed and suggested improvements based on that.

2 INTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING

Internal branding shares the idea about employees willing to commit to the organisation's stated values and targets when the organisation's culture is positive. There is an asset of employer brand loyalty related to internal branding. Employer brand loyalty can be obtained by developing the organisation's culture which is a part of employer branding, and it may increase employee retention. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.)

According to Bellou et al. (2015) branding goes through every part of the relationship between the organisation and the employee from the recruitment process until leaving the company. They constructed a model of different aspects to consider when building an employer branding to make an ideal employer, all these aspects can be looked at internally and externally. The first aspect is remuneration, which includes salary and other benefits. The second aspect is the

relationships between colleagues and managers. The third aspect was stated as corporate image which includes the commercial and social image of the company. Most of the aspects of constructing employer branding from the employees' perspective are decided by the higher management and organisation, which indicates a long-term strategic issue. When the employer meets the anticipated standards, the satisfaction of the employee grows, and this indicates beneficial loyalty towards the organisation as well as referrals and networking. (Bellou et al. 2015.)

Promoting the organisation as a great place to work in internal employer branding can be done through various matters. Activities such as offering development possibilities, such as grants to employees and family members and inviting them to visit the workplace, can create positive satisfaction and the feeling of connection to the organization, improving the employer's brand internally. (Bareket-Bojmel & Shuv-Ami 2019.)

2.1 Employer branding

Ambler and Barrow (1996) define employer branding as follows; "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". These different benefits include, for example, development, monetary rewards, and the feeling of belonging. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding is the principle of branding in the use of human resources management which is attracting potential employees and making sure that the current employees are meeting the company's strategy and culture. It is about creating a unique identity for the employer and differentiating from all competitors of the company. Where product branding is aimed toward external buyers and stakeholders, employer branding focuses on the external and internal side of the organisation's image as an employer. Human capital is something that is crucial for organisations that highlight the importance of developing employer branding. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.) Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021, 35) define employer branding as all relevant information about the organisation as an employer and is a broader view of the

organisation compared to employer image or employer reputation, however, they are all related to each other. According to Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) the purpose of employer branding is to make a promise. More thoroughly the employer branding is for current and potential employees to create expectations about the workplace from aspects of loyalty, employer image, and recognition of the employer.

Employer branding establishes two assets from each aspect: potential employees and current employees. From potential employees, employer brand associations create a level of attractiveness that build the image of the organisation. Current employees seek good employer branding for increased loyalty, productivity, motivation, and retention of the employees. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.) Employer branding can be viewed from an internal and external point where attraction-, retention- and engagement of employees are connected. Additionally, overall marketing is part of employer branding which brightens the value of the cooperation of the marketing department and recruitment department. Even the financial success of the organisation is important to employer branding although it can not be controlled, this is due to the attractiveness of the organisation from the financial stability aspect. Word-to-mouth interactions with employees, customers, and acquaintances create brand images (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 11.) This type of created image can last a long time even subconsciously, which can harm the employer's branding and make the development process longer when the starting point is even low.

Different job sectors are seen more interesting compared to others for example marketing, tech, and finance have already a good start from the attraction point of view of industries. This brings value to the employer branding of specific organisations operating in the field. Strong employer branding reduces the costs, this is due to employees choosing to work in an organisation with good employer branding for a lower salary compared to working in an organisation with bad employer branding and a higher salary as well as the need for lower budgeting to the recruitment of new employees. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 11-17.)

Corporate social responsibility is important to applicants in the job market. Being socially responsible and having values are respected nowadays even in large corporations. (Bach 2005.) Good social responsibility creates a better image of the organisation and improves its reputation as an employer. The research is often made from external images through stakeholders and potential employees, but it can also be applied internally to employees' work performance and work ethics. Socially responsible organisations attract more applicants which relate to good employer branding. Employer branding shares the organisation's reputation with potential employees by showcasing how great it would be to work there. (Vercic & Coric 2018.)

External employer brand is associated with the reputation and attraction of the organisation and the elements building those are the overall image of the industry, image against competitors, and attractiveness within the target group (Mosley 2014, 82). External employer image is often weak when asking from job applicants who did not receive a job offer from the company, but with excellent recruitment experience, this can be minimised. Different rewards to the organisation can improve the external employer branding even when it is not directly coming from the organisation itself. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 11, 15.) For example, the LähiTapiola group was rewarded with one of Finland's most inspiring workplaces awards from Eezy Flow's People Power® survey (2023) in the category of large organisations. This award was handed out to workplaces that are investing in their organisation's employee experience and good employee strategy implementation. (Ruohonen 2023.) These kinds of evaluations that come from outside the company can give out a genuine view of how it would be to work in a specific organisation and create trust towards employers but additionally build a stronger loyalty towards current employees.

As covered, there is a vast importance of successful employer branding in creating a competitive advantage for the organisation, on account of the competition of talented employees (Arasanmi & Krishna 2019). Employer branding offers a competitive advantage to organisations from employees that are talented and willing to keep developing, this also improves the satisfaction

and loyalty of employees. Organisations can create an employment experience that is different and adds value to the employees by offering benefits from the available resources. (Bellou et al. 2015.) The other advantage of a good internal employer brand relates to customers and how the employees deliver their brand promise. When employees receive appropriate training for the job as well as feel supported and trusted inside the organisation, they can offer better service to customers when working in the service encounter. Additionally, an organisation's clear communication about the brand values reinforces employees' abilities to advocate those values to customers in each service encounter. (Punsjairi & Wilson 2011.)

2.2 Internal employer branding elements

Berthon et al. (2015) constructed an employer branding model to identify key factors related to the issue of current employment markets becoming more and more competitive and companies need to assess and possibly improve their image among employees. This model was developed towards attracting potential employees but can be used to evaluate current employees' visions about the attraction of the organisation as an employer. The study concluded five different values to consider, these included interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and application value. The first interest value was defined as providing a work environment and practices that encourage employees' creativity toward the company's offering. Social value implies a great connection between co-workers and managers as well as providing an atmosphere of fun and joyful. From the other perspective, economic value includes a salary that would be higher than average and other benefits and security towards employment. Development value refers to career improvement opportunities and such characteristics as recognition and belief in oneself. Lastly, the application value creates opportunities to take those acquired skills to teach or mentor others. (Berthon et al. 2015.)

Based on previous studies, Dassler et al. (2022) have created a model from elements of employer attractiveness from the perspective of current employees. It divided the different attributes of what employers can offer to current employees

and employees' actions based on that, whilst taking into consideration the mediating and moderating factors. The attributes affecting employer attractiveness are divided into transactional, ideological, and relational where transactional attributes represent tangible assets such as salary, benefits, training, and development. The ideological attributes represent intangible assets such as organisational culture, whereas relational attributes relate to the relationships with other employees and members of the organisation. Employees' actions based on those stated attributes when they are positive are performance, work attitudes such as commitment and satisfaction of job, expectations of compensation, retention, and referrals or word-of-mouth. This model shows the consequences of positive employer attractiveness on current employees' actions. (Dassler et al. 2022.)

Branham (2004, 29) identified the different factors that influence employee retention and thus internal employer branding. These factors are the job not meeting expectations, the mismatch between person-organisation fit, deficient feedback, and coaching, lacking development opportunities, employee dissatisfaction, weak work-life balance, and stress, and finally the lack of trust towards managers (Branham 2004, 29). The factors are covered more thoroughly further in the research. Another internal employer branding aspect that fewer studies concentrate on is the current employee views on external employer image where the employees value outside perception of the employer impacts their own behaviour and retention (De Stobbeleir et al. 2018).

Based on the stated and following literature conceptual framework for internal employer branding aspects have been created (Figure 1). It includes the different aspects that construct internal employer branding which is the overall organizational culture and employee satisfaction as well as the employer promise.

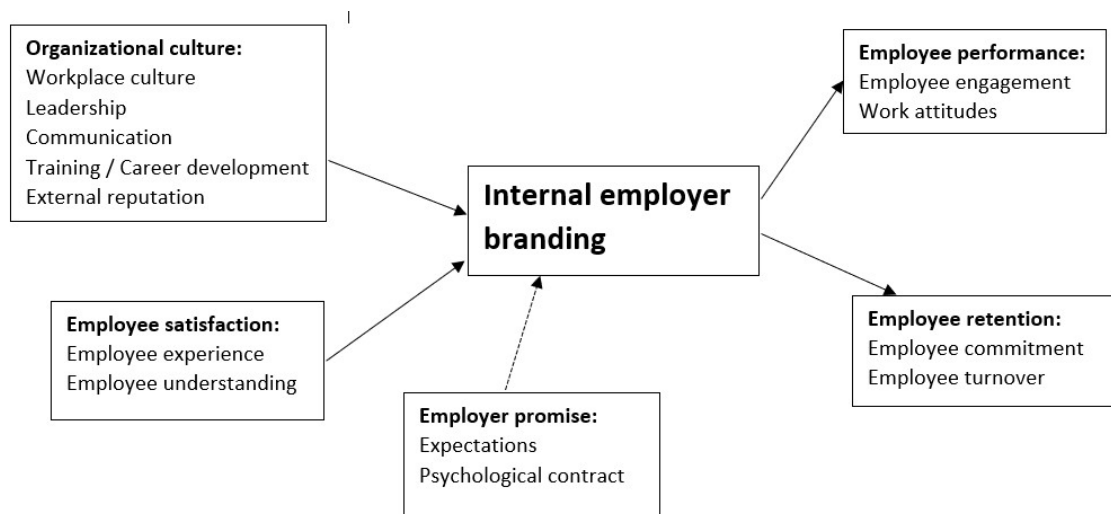


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on internal employer branding (Storhammar 2023)

Organisational culture includes workplace culture, leadership, communication, training and career development, and external reputation. Employee satisfaction includes factors related to it for example employee experience and employee understanding. When these internal employer branding factors have been successfully imported into working practices, they can influence employee performance which covers employee engagement and work attitudes as well as employee retention.

2.2.1 Employer promise

The brand promises targeted to current and potential employees define the values and strategies that the employer brings to their employees, and it starts by defining a few of the most important values. The brand promise should be interesting and true to the organisation. It can be stated through the employee's and the employers' perspectives for example there is a difference between meaningful work tasks and the feeling of doing meaningful work. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 195.) When employees are trained and appropriately informed about the brand values, they are more likely to deliver those brand promises to customers. Internal communication is highlighted as crucial for employees being able to stand behind those expectations as well as trust towards employees. (Punjaisri & Wilson 2011.) When an organisation delivers the expectations

directed to the employees, they will repay the organisation with increased engagement (Arasanmi & Krishna 2019).

One reason for employees to leave an employer is the failure to deliver the expectations and promises that were made in the recruitment process. The expectations might have been unrealistic from the employee's perspective or unmet from the employer's perspective. Open discussion lowers the probability of failed expectations. When expectations are met the greater change is for new hire success, job satisfaction, and long-term retention. Receiving employee referrals can be a method for reducing failed expectations since they are commonly communicated realistically about the organisation. (Branham 2004, 39-41.)

In the recruitment process, the clarification of both applicants and the employers' expectations towards the job and the employee is important to cover in order to reduce employee turnover. This is to have a clear and accurate picture of the job from the beginning and to help in the selection process of deciding about a suitable organisation-person fit. By covering the following elements employers can reduce the not realistic expectation. The first element is the responsibilities and duties of the job for example providing a sample of work tasks or providing the opportunity to follow another worker. Another element is showing the level of empowerment practiced on the job. A program for training and development is another crucial element and identifying the key performance evaluators for the job tasks. The recruiter can describe a successful employee in the position to indicate what expectations have been set. As well as offering information about a career path, expectations of performance towards an employee can be identified to avoid unrealistic expectations. A realistic job preview can be done during the employment to follow up. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 141-143.) It can additionally lower the costs of recruitment since if you were to lose an employee during a realistic job preview, it is likely they would have left soon from the organisation (Branham 2004, 40).

2.2.2 Organisation culture

The most important thing for businesses today is the culture, as stated by Green (2017, 2). The culture of the workplace affects employees since that is established from their mindset and attitudes, thus a negative culture affects on caring for the customers, the effort put into the work, and lastly the willingness to stay with the organisation. The question to ask is not whether your company has a culture but what kind of culture has been established in the organisation and does it correspond to the wishes of stakeholders. The employer of an organisation should make sure that employees' negativity or stress isn't coming from the organisation's culture even though they can't be sure that the employees stay happy and positive constantly. (Green 2017, 2-4.)

Organisational culture can be quite easy to establish but rather difficult or even impossible to try to change, according to Everson (2003), and usually, it is done from top to bottom of the organisational hierarchy. This culture change does not integrate into the employees well since they might feel threatened. There can be many different types of cultures in the organisation, for example, blame culture where employees know that even when making the slightest mistake, they can be in trouble, or then the opposite culture style of problem-solving where the key driving force is to doing better in the future and allowing an optimistic view. This problem-solving culture can create positive impacts such as the ability to being honest and making moderate risks as well as creating a more positive and productive workplace culture, but on the other hand, when managers brush aside issues that demand actions it can create a loss of respect from employees. This shows that no organisational culture style comes without risk. Another factor influencing the organisation's working culture comes from empowering the employees by offering a delegation of authority where making decisions is as efficient as possible and with no micromanagement (Everson 2003.) This type of delegation of work and giving the employees autonomy in situations that are appropriate offers them a possibility to showcase their talents and emphasise their knowledge.

Values of the organisation are the rules for working strongly with others and they can create a culture where employees think and work similarly to be sufficient. The values are also applicable to interaction with customers since it acts as a guide for employees on how to operate during those interactions. Greatly established values guide managers and employees in challenging situations with customers. The reasons for established values are not affecting the culture are that they became outdated for today's workforce or even that the employees aren't aware of those values. Additionally, values should not be not clear or there shouldn't be too many of them as well as the company should stand behind those values. (Green 2017, 14-16.)

Employers' internal communication to engage employees that are experiencing the brand each day should increase their motivation by focusing on the content and experience compared to communication to external recruitment marketing which focuses on the image of the employer (Mosley 2014, 214). Organisational culture includes management of employee performance to improve work outcomes and help achieve goals. Open and honest communication between the manager and employee is the key to successful job performance, this includes defining the organisation's goals. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 195-199.)

Communication in the organisation includes feedback from the managers about job performance and success, which is important for employee engagement and retention as well as for the employer to confirm that the organisational goals and expectations are aligned. Feedback should be given more than on annual bases and not only when it's asked for. Open communication and to give feedback come back to building relationships with the employees. Continuous communication can be a part of the company's culture by training the managers for giving feedback and training the employees to receive it. (Branham 2004, 77-80.) Organisations can improve their culture by involving employees by listening to their concerns about the workplace along with conducting positive communication around the workplace (Phillips & Connell 2004, 170).

Employers need to find employees that fit into the organisation's culture for example some organisations are deadline-driven, and others rely on flexible

working hours and creativity within the job. These characteristics should be considered when searching for new employees, to minimise turnover of employees. The culture can be defined by a company's identity through its values, practices, support programs, attitudes, and policies. Factors such as leadership, and social support influence the possibility for the employees to obtain a good work-life balance, as well as rewards and recognition, training, and development of career showcase the level of commitment towards employees from the organisation. Organisations that take care of their employee's life balance between work and personal life, will acquire more satisfied and loyal employees with improved retention. A good culture also offers employees that can't work full-time to work fewer hours for example students, this allows them to balance their personal life more accurately without having to resign completely from the workplace. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 145, 170-174.)

An organisation's work environment can be addressed by solutions that make the employee like and find the workplace appropriate, generally seen that when the job has been designed well, it increases the satisfaction of the job. Workplace design is correlated to the work environment since it relates to how the workplace is organised and thus employees spend most of their time in the workplace it should be designed to meet the demands and wants of the employees. The functionality of the workplace does not mean the newest and largest spaces, but it means the tools, the area, and supplies that make it easier for employees to accomplish their tasks and communicate with managers and colleagues. A packed workplace restricts productivity. Security of the job provides stability to employees which generates a good working environment, this could be done for example improving the employability of the employees by offering development training, and increased roles, and responsibilities. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 158-160.)

There is a significant relationship between perceived employer branding and expectations of compensation for current employees. The higher score the organisation received in employer branding measures, the lower salary the employees were prepared to work for, for comparing a company with a low

employer branding score, the need for higher compensation was expected. (Mouton & Bussin 2019.) Usually, there is a gap between what employees feel like they should get paid and what the organisation is paying for. The pay defines the worth and value of employees' contributions to their work. Organisations need to create an equal and fair payment system that encourages employees to work, this can be done by comparing with the industry average and often offering some kinds of bonuses. The payment system must create value for the employee as well as for the organisation. Another offering from the organisation towards employees is benefits such as insurance, vacation time, and discounts. Further rewards and recognition bring motivation to employees and increase satisfaction and retention which shows the importance of including those in the organisation's culture. These can be nonmonetary for example thoughtful gift cards or monetary such as yearly bonuses. The reward system can be from achieving goals or performing well in a specific timeframe, but most importantly it shouldn't be out of reach. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 184, 189-194.) Employees can be motivated towards higher job performance with a high enough level of rewards. Ensuring fairness and consistency within the compensation system is advisable. (Branham 2004, 130-132.)

Organisational culture is affected by its leadership skills, level of empowerment, teambuilding programs, displaying ethics, building trust, organisational commitment, and professional growth. Commitment relates to the employee's motivation to do the job, but one could be committed towards the company but not towards the job for example or one can be committed towards other employees but not to the company. Employees' professional growth brings value to the individual as well as the company since then the employee can fill more difficult and different positions. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 204.)

Sustainable human resource management in organisations can create psychological benefits for employees when they are perceived as cared for within the organisation and their performance capabilities are maintained. This psychological benefit as sustainability towards employees needs an organisational environment created successfully within the organisation, in order

to be seen in the eyes and minds of employees. Social identity is related to employer branding which is important when wanting to differ from other competitors and ultimately achieve organisational commitment. Perceived sustainable support from their supervisors have seemed to represent the whole organisation since commonly the employees have direct communication with their supervisors that communicate the organisation's goals. (App & Buttgen 2016.)

Good training for new employees is part of organisational culture. The first day of the job must be oriented correctly so that the new employee is attracted to the company from the beginning, only doing paperwork or in the worst case doing nothing creates a poor first impression. If the first few months are not planned properly it can affect the employee's willingness to stay in the organisation since that is often when employees decide their future in the organisation. Assigning a mentor for the new employee would strengthen the relationship with the company. (Green 2017, 37-38.) Generally, the priority for managers is on the operational side and there aren't enough resources put into people management. Managers' operational process is measured by financial targets and indicators of performance thus they have a significant relation to engaging employees. (Sparrow 2012, 66-67.)

The possibility for an individual's career development plays an essential role in organisational culture but the responsibility for those opportunities spreads to all three parties which are the organisation, the manager, and the employee. The organisation has to offer systems and policies that encourage professional growth, as well as offer training prospects. Managers' responsibility comes from firstly identifying the development needs for the future. Secondly, assessing employees' strengths, and helping to enforce goals. The employees need to bring talent knowledge to managers and constantly seek for improvement and development. The balance between all three parties' expectations and responsibilities is important. (Branham 2004, 99-100.)

Organisational brand equity is defined as the outcomes coming from because of the specific employer brand name in the life cycle of employment through the attraction phase into the turnover of employees and is a part of employer branding. Brand equity is established by five components. The first component is knowledge which identifies employees' level of awareness concerning employers' missions and visions, and product offerings. The performance component brings value to the brand compared to other competitors. The last three components are psychological image, judgments, and emotions. These five components have an effect on employee turnover through organisational commitment. Brand equity relates to employee retention which indicates the importance of employers focusing on strengthening employer branding through those stated elements, for example building their knowledge about the brand and creating positive feelings from the employees towards the employer. (Bareket-Bojmel & Shuv-Ami 2019.)

2.2.3 Employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction measures the degree to which the employee is pleased with the job. Satisfaction can be divided into five factors that are, the satisfaction of work, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, and the relationship between colleagues, but taking into consideration that different employees value each of the factors variously. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 156-157.)

Employee experience can be defined as the interactions between employer and employee from both aspects, this includes ideas and thoughts about the organisation as an employer, work, and the environment. Employees want to feel valued and enjoy their time at work since a big part of adult life is spent there. The advantage of good employee experience from the employer's perspective comes from fewer sick leaves and less turnover of employees, but additionally, it creates a better employer brand. Lowered turnover is created through trust between the employer and the employee. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 77.)

Customer experience is strongly related to employee experience and counts as high as 60% importance since motivated employees will be better at customer service than unmotivated employees, although the importance depends on the

amount of interaction between employees and customers. This also applies to purchase decisions where the customer is more likely to make the purchase with an organisation that has a good reputation as an employer. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 79.) Green (2017, 3) shares the claim of employees has to come first to their employers and not customers since mostly when poor customer service occurs the managers are behind it. Usually, employee experience is the first thing to improve when wanting to in promote a good customer experience. Employee experience can be improved by addressing problems within the workplace, such as overwork, harassment, weak teamwork, management abuse, and poor work-life balance. Stress has a considerable impact on productivity and overall work experience. All this negative working environment has an impact on employee turnover. (Branham 2004, 147-148, 151.)

Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021, 9) compare organisations not having knowledge about their products to leading employer branding without paying attention to employee experience. There can be numerous reasons why managers aren't paying attention to their employee's well-being, for instance, not following employees' job performance enough to acknowledge their accomplishments. For managers, it is important to notice whether the employees feel unvalued or unrecognised. Recognising employees does not require monetary pay, but it can include the manager's recognition and keeping the employees informed, and up to date on their professional goals. (Branham 2004, 122-125.)

Employee understanding can be defined as what the employees consider to be important and meaningful for them. It can be analysed by measuring, for example, the employee's expectations, skills, and goals. Different goals demand different strategies in employee understanding, for example, you cannot achieve improved decision-making power by analysing satisfaction with current working methods (remote work) but instead, you must analyse employees' current views of their possibilities to have an influence. If only conducting employee surveys but not implementing the changes that need to be made, it can create an illusion for the employees that the organisation isn't interested in making a difference. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 29, 46.)

2.2.4 Employee performance

Engaging employees to improve their performance in the workplace. More engaged employees are passionate about the work. They are more motivated to find innovative solutions to create a competitive advantage for the organisation. They are more likely to remain in the company compared to an organisation where the engagement level of employees is low. Engagement encourages more confidence in employees which can generate successful businesses. Additionally, customer service is improved with higher employee engagement which can directly influence business performance since an emotional connection between the customer and employee is established and the customer feels that they exceeded their expectations. The needed outcome shows the necessary means for employee engagement improvement since not all organisations share the exact requirements such as understanding or creativity. Many different factors have a significance on employee engagement, for example, overall leadership and management. (Sparrow 2012, 11-19.) When an organisation delivers the expectations directed to the employees, they will repay the organisation with increased engagement (Arasanmi & Krishna 2019). Making the work engaging for employees benefits for their satisfaction with the employer. The following components are related to employee engagement: the feeling of purposeful work, challenges that can be achieved, autonomy to perform, improvement, collective appreciation, and acknowledgement. (Mosley 2014, 98)

Before employee's turnover from the organisation, they become disengaged from the company's values and representation to customers. This disengagement affects customer service and interactions. By committing to recognising disengagement, organizations can decrease employee turnover and increase revenue. Disengagement factors consist of needs that the employer does not meet; these include the need for trust, hope, feeling a sense of worth, and competence. (Branham 2004, 19-20.) Sparrow (2012, 22-24) created a four-step guide toward engaging employees for better performance. The first step is understanding where employees have a certain level of understanding of requirements and tasks relevant to the job. Before this step is handled it's not

possible to move forwards in the performance process of employees. The second step is commitment emotionally to the organisation for delivering expectations. The third step for improving engagement is an attachment from financial and psychological aspects; this level comes when employees are willing to stay within the organisation even when other appealing offers appear. The fourth step is the feeling of the significance of the conducted work, where it gives the employee value for a meaningful life. Employees that reach the significance level can help other employees to reach there. (Sparrow 2012, 22-24.)

When employees are trained and informed properly about the brand values, they are more likely to deliver those brand promises to customers. Internal communication is highlighted as crucial for employees being able to stand behind those expectations as well as trust towards employees. (Punjaisri & Wilson 2011.) Employee engagement of the work correlates to employee experience since when the employee is dedicated and motivated about the job it strengthens the satisfaction of work (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 13).

It has also been studied that engaged employees are more likely to have fewer sick days (Sparrow 2012, 10). Internal employer brand image has a significant effect on absenteeism at the workplace. Employees' rate of being absent from work in relation to the days of being at work correlates to internal employer image where the more positive view employees have the less absenteeism occurs. Thus, it has been researched that the current employee's perception of the external employer image has a greater effect on work absenteeism than the actual internal image. (De Stobbeleir et al. 2018.)

2.2.5 Employee retention

Employee retention can be defined as organisations retaining and restoring their employees in the company for as long as possible. Kossivi and Kalgora (2016) studied the different factors influencing employee retention from the theory, and accordingly, there are several factors named that can affect the rate of retention. Those factors chosen for deeper research were opportunities for development, compensation, work-life balance, management, social support, autonomy, work

environment, and training. Work-life balance is more appreciated nowadays in organisations as a way of enhancing employee retention. Compensation was something that divided the opinions, some believe that there is a high correlation between compensation and retention but others state that there is not a direct influence. (Kossivi & Kalgora 2016.)

Factors determining an employee's decision to leave an organisation differ from the managerial perspective; according to Branham (2004) most managers perceive employee turnover reason as money, however, the exiting employee's decision to leave is 80-90% times something other than money. These factors can be "push" factors where an employee's prospect comes from the organisation's internal issues. As the employment market changes, the managers' perceptions of employee turnover vary, since during the "war of talent" which started in 1995 employers demanded retention since there were not enough skilled workforce for the employment market, this was done by offering multiple benefits and compensations to employees. After the surplus of employment becomes steadier, employers' concern about employee turnover declines. (Branham 2004, 3, 6-7.) Internal employer branding has been studied to have a significant impact on employee retention rates, and the companies with a high score in employer branding were more satisfied with the employer. For example, in a case where a current employee is approached by another company, the significance of employer branding has a vast correlation to employee retention. (Mouton & Bussin 2019.)

Even though compensation can be a factor influencing organisational commitment and the employee's intention to stay in the organisation, but alone compensation isn't enough, as Chew (2008) stated: "For example, low pay might drive an employee out, but high pay might not necessarily keep them." According to Fernandez-Lores et al. (2016), affective commitment can be described as the emotional bond between the employee and employer. Affective commitment is constructed by seven different categories which are emotional attachment, enthusiasm for the brand, sense of belonging, persistence, evangelisation, and orientation in the long term. However, only three of the categories had a

significant effect and these were long-term orientation, emotional attachment, and enthusiasm with the employer brand. Long-term orientation indicates the intention to stay loyal and committed to the employer. The enthusiasm for the employer brand can be explained by the positive emotions toward staying proactive with the employer such as taking on projects. Emotional attachment is the relationship between an employee and the employer from factors such as belongingness, affection as well as support. These categories show how the employee perceives and experiences commitment to the employer. Employees' work experience is a crucial factor in affective commitment, and it contains aspects from leadership to work atmosphere. (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2016.)

Hadi and Ahmed (2018) are highlighting the importance of the retention of employees as opposed to spending organisations' resources in the recruitment department which includes everything from job advertisement to training of new employees. The value of the development of employees is to create loyalty for the organization which generates employee retention, where they can enhance their talents within the current organisation instead of finding another. This can be done e.g. by creating training that is specifically focused on the job tasks. Development opportunities additionally create a better image of the employer since it's most likely that employees value opportunities for developing their skills. From the side of employees, self-development takes them from relying on a specific organisation to being able to work in many different organisations and this is where they can create value for themselves. (Hadi & Ahmed 2018.) Promises about career development opportunities are researched to have a significant impact on employees' intention to stay in the organisation. This is due to psychological contracts of employees where they perceive to have an obligation towards the organisation and the organisation's obligations towards the employee. (De Vos & Meganck 2009.)

Employee turnover is not necessarily a bad thing considering if all employees could choose to leave voluntarily when they can't see themselves uniting with the organisation's strategy and goals, which would create opportunities for new talents and ideas (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 40). On the other hand, highlighting

some of the issues of employee turnover to organisations include high costs, quality of service, loss of expertise, administrative problems, reduced job satisfaction for remaining employees, and organisational image. These issues should be considered in every organisation. From the individuals aspects of leaving the organisation, there are also negative impacts such as stress regarding job transition and change. As well as loss of benefits, financial loss, losing the social network, and problems to career. These negative aspects can occur even if the choice to leave was voluntary. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 5-7.)

Younger generations invest in different job preferences such as short-term jobs, that offer vacation time, and acquire new skills over job security. They enjoy autonomy within the workplace and often are pleased with remote-job opportunities. (Branham 2004, 97-98.) The millennial workforce will be the biggest employee group and as an employee, they are more likely to change jobs and industries if there are higher earning possibilities elsewhere or more meaningful work opportunities. This means offering a great employee experience is crucial to reducing turnover. (Green 2017, 7.) Mappamiring et al. (2020) studied the factors of employee retention from the perspective of millennial employees because they highlighted the difference between behavioural change towards working between generations. The millennial generation is often seen at the bottom of the current order of management in companies whereas the older generations are usually in the top and upper management roles. This is said to build issues concerning the gaps between different goals and intentions of generations regarding definitions of work, work motivation and loyalty, and engagement. The research divided aspects influencing millennial employees' intention to stay in the organisation. These aspects are fundamental aspects such as management support and relationship, organisational culture, rational aspects such as salary, workload, flexibility, and training, and finally psychological aspects such as bullying, satisfaction with the job, and organisational image. It was found that all these stated aspects are correlated to each other and have some stage of influence on the millennials' intentions to stay within an organisation. (Mappamiring et al. 2020.) Supposedly the aspect of

influencing millennial employee retention can be used considering all generations since the factors are all general and apply to all employees.

The employee needs and the employer delivering those needs correlate with the turnover of employees. There are general reasons for the correlation between employee retention and job-related factors. The first factor is job satisfaction as was already said by Mappamiring et al. (2020). Another factor is the employee's identification with the organisation's mission, vision, and values through organisational commitment (Phillips & Connell 2004, 94). Employees tend to have higher intentions to stay in the organisation if the person-organization fit is adequate since usually the preferences in working in a specific company are coming from individuals' perception of the organisation's reputation and values, and how correlated those are to the individual (Chew & Chan 2008). For many companies, the person-organisation fit fails when the managers of the organisation are lacking the dedication to finding the right people for the jobs (Branham 2004, 49).

Alternative jobs are stated to have an impact on employee turnover in the case where the employee feels that there are available jobs and that continues the study for job searching attitudes where the employee participates in activities such as sending out applications and participating in interviews. The next factor studied is the feeling of attachment to jobs referred to as job embeddedness where leaving the job could feel like a sacrifice for the employee. These stated factors on employee retention are generally applied and provide an indication of reasons for turnover but cannot be applied to any specific organisation directly. (Phillips & Connell 2004, 94-96.)

According to Arasanmi and Krishna (2019), organisational support is important regarding employer branding since it can be a method of anticipating the retention of employees and their commitment to the workplace. This is due to employees wishing to work in an organisation that can support their emotional needs. As well, the feeling of attachment is correlated with commitment. Employees see organisational support within the interactions with supervisors

and this brings the importance of finding suitable managers to the organisation. (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019.) In Addition to organisational support, there are other factors influencing employee retention. The first factor is the experienced work atmosphere where there is a feeling of being valued and respected and the general climate is good. Another factor is the relationship with supervisors, in which the relations highlight the feeling of being cared for. Interaction with other employees is the next factor influencing retention, this includes the ability to communicate with colleagues. The last factor is organisational engagement which shows the connection between the employee and the organisation. When these factors are conducted at a satisfactory level, employees tend to stay within the organisation. (Kundu & Lata 2017.) Armstrong (2022) designed a chart (Figure 2) concerning reasons for employees leaving a certain company. This chart indicated above mentioned factors relating to employee turnover.

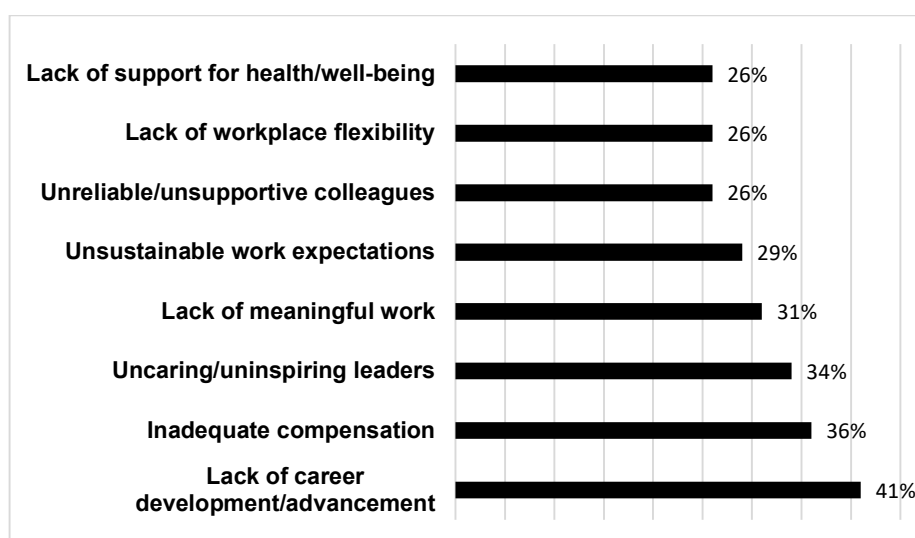


Figure 2: the most common reasons given for employees quitting their previous job in 2021/22. (Armstrong 2022, modified by author)

As internal employer branding aims to increase retention in the organisation, Branham (2004, 2) determines an exit interview or a survey for receiving accurate information about employee turnover in a specific organisation. This exit interview or survey offers valuable analysis for organisations to recognize the “push” factors for turnover. The exit interview should be conducted through a third party

that comes from outside the organisation, in order to receive fully honest feedback and it can be done face-to-face, by phone, or through an internet survey. However, the exit interview shouldn't be conducted on the last day of employment but for example week after the departure, to give time to the employee for any unresolved emotions. Interviewing all departing employees is important and even those changing location or position inside the organisation. (Branham 2004, 219-221.)

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Choosing a methodology for research requires an understanding of two types of data collection methods that each follow different approaches. Commonly those methods are either quantitative method or qualitative method or even a combination of both. (Kuada 2012, 91). Choosing the right methodology comes from the research problem, which is usually the research question, as well as the research goals. The research problem can be about identifying different phenomena or finding a solution for the specific situation. (Heikkilä 2014, 12.)

The qualitative research approach is for discovering the meaning of the research task, by using participants' individual perceptions and understanding. Qualitative research data can be collected through focus groups, interviews, or observation methods. If the research objective is to test a hypothesis or obtain statistical data, the quantitative method is used. The quantitative research method follows a theoretical framework behind the data collection and it's popular in the social sciences. Quantitative research data collection can be through a survey. (Kuada 2012, 101-104). The sample size for quantitative research is large and analysing the data from a statistical perspective such as numerical and percentual data is useful (Heikkilä 2014, 15.) The data from qualitative research comes from fewer subjects than in quantitative research, but the size of the data for example a translation of an interview is more extensive than in a survey study (Moilanen et al. 2022, 78).

Many companies are conducting employer branding research toward the external and internal image. Common research regarding employer branding is conducted

as a quantitative study including open-ended questions and general improvement ideas. When conducting an online survey, the results come from a large sample and can be expected to be reliable and not just guessing or subjective. The objective of the research comes from the aspect of developing internal employer branding as opposed to the need of management. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 48-51) Defining the current state of internal employer branding can help to identify development needs from the current employee perspective and find what they visualise as being meaningful. (Huhta & Myllyntaus 2021, 121).

The advantage of conducting an online survey through a survey tool like Webropol is the low cost, quick, and easiness to use from each point of view. Designing the questions for a questionnaire is crucial since the questions must be clear and accurate for a better understanding of the respondents. In addition, the length of the questionnaire should be no more than 15 to 20 minutes. (Moilanen et al. 2022, 91, 97.)

3.1 Data collection

The research question for the thesis: How do LähiTapiola Vellamo employees see the organisation's internal employer branding? And how can it be developed? Based on the research question, a quantitative method was chosen in order to generalise the findings and receive the data broadly within LähiTapiola Vellamo where the population size is large. There have been internal job satisfaction questionnaires conducted in LähiTapiola Vellamo but the lack of internal employer branding studies determined this topic. The quantitative method was suitable for this research since the objective was to find out employees' views on the topic and develop internal employer branding based on the answers to improve employee performance and retention.

The online survey was sent with a cover letter to all 130 current employees of LähiTapiola Vellamo and it was available for answering for one week from 30.3.2023- 6.4.2023 and a reminder notification was sent once. The population size of the employees is 130 which included everyone working in LähiTapiola Vellamo. The survey was designed on the online platform Webropol (see

Appendix 1), and it was conducted in the Finnish language in order to receive the highest amount of responses from the employees. The questions for the survey were chosen based on the theoretical framework conducted previously in this research and it included topics of employer promise, organisational culture, employee satisfaction, employee performance, and employee retention. The survey was designed to be as interesting and easy as possible. The survey questions were evaluated with the target company. There were multiple choices, scales, and open-ended questions. For respondents, it was stated that the survey was confidential, and any single answer could not be identified. No question was mandatory to answer. The background questions were related to respondents' gender, age, education, and years of working in the company.

3.2 Analysing quantitative data

In quantitative research, the data is transmitted to a statistical program for further analysis since these programs are most suitable for analysing quantitative data. In an Internet survey, the answers are automatically transformed into the data, thus the input process of the data is quick and there are no used errors. It's important to analyse the data in such a way that the research question is answered. (Heikkilä 2012, 118-120, 138.)

The reliability and validity of the data are important when analysing the data. Validity can be used to describe to what extent the data has been successfully measured according to the research question. Reliability shows that the data doesn't result from coincidence and that it can be reproduced. The accuracy of results is related to the sample size considering the effect of a random error is greater in a smaller sample. (Heikkilä 2012, 177-178.)

From the Webrpopol survey platform data was directly transmitted to Excel for producing figures and tables, which was convenient for analysing the data. First, the data was translated into English since the survey was conducted in Finnish. The background information (gender, age, education, and duration of employment) was put into a table for clear visualisation of the divisions of respondents to be able to compare answers between different background

information. The open-ended answers were taken to Webropol's Text Mining tool for easier review. The frequency distributions were presented in figures and tables. Cross tabulations included age, duration of employment, and versus educational background. As this is a population survey (covering all the employees of LähiTapiola Vellamo) and not a sample, it is not reasonable to test significance, e.g. background variables and other research findings.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the survey that was first transferred into Excel. After presenting the results, the analysis is conducted.

4.1 Results

The number of respondents to the survey was 63, meaning the response rate was 48%. In *Table I*, the results display background information gathered from the survey's first four questions where respondents' gender, age, education, and duration of employment was asked. There were 72,1% female and 27,9% male respondents, but only 61 answered this first question. The age division was narrow considering no group takes more than half of the sample, and all age groups are represented. The largest group was between 26-35 years old with 30,1%. The smallest age groups were the youngest 18-25 years old and over 56 years old with 15,9% out of the sample.

From the educational background of the respondents, there were two groups representing over 80% of the whole sample, which consisted of high school/ vocational school and the University of applied sciences. Only one respondent had a primary school education and there were only 3 respondents that have a University education. In the duration of employment at LähiTapiola Vellamo, the group of 4-9 years of the working relationship between the organisation had 30,2% of the sample. Quite many respondents 19% have been working at LähiTapiola for over 20 years which can be an indication of the satisfaction of employees for LähiTapiola as an employer.

Table 1 Background of respondents

Question		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Women	44	72,1%
	Men	17	27,9%
	Total	61	100 %
Age	18-25	10	15,9%
	26-35	19	30,1%
	36-45	13	20,6%
	46-55	11	17,5%
	Yli 56	10	15,9%
	Total	63	100 %
Educational background	Primary school	1	1,6%
	High school/vocational school	28	44,4%
	University of applied sciences	25	39,7%
	University/ Master's degree	3	4,8%
	Other	6	9,5%
	Total	63	100 %
Duration of employment at LähiTapiola Vellamo	Less than a year	6	9,5%
	1-3 years	16	25,4%
	4-9 years	19	30,2%
	10-20 years	10	15,9%
	Yli 20 years	12	19,0%
	Total	63	100 %

The following topic of the survey included questions about the employer promise, which is the starting point of internal employer branding and is shown in *Figure 3*. Both questions about the employer promise were answered similarly using the Likert scale. Over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement of LähiTapiola Vellamo meeting their expectations as an employer (89%). As well as, 86% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their job description met their expectations. This shows that LähiTapiola Vellamo kept their employer promise to the employees.

Employer promise

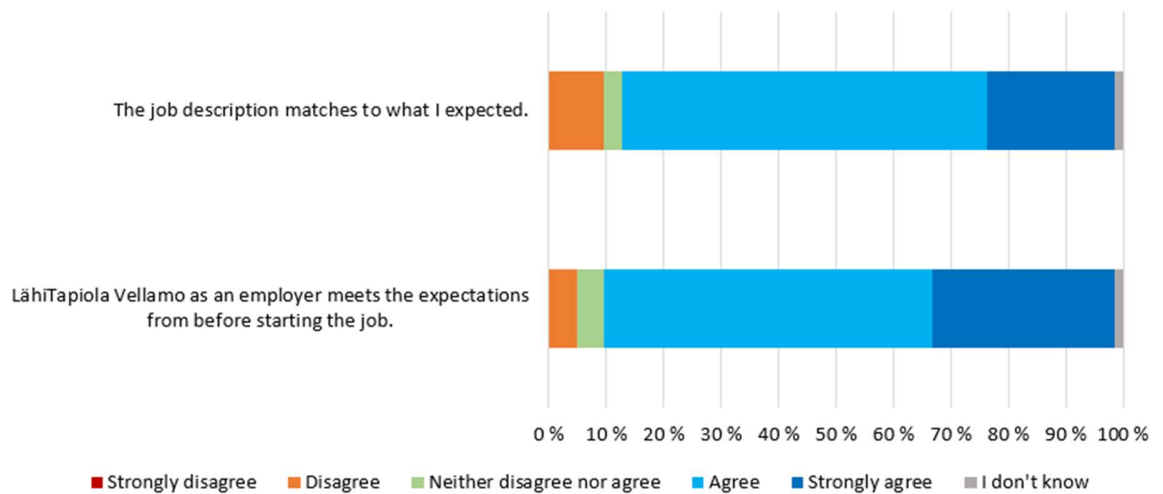


Figure 3 Employer promise

Employer branding aspects were asked first from the perspective of importance between different aspects and then ranking the aspects as to how they are achieved at LähiTapiola Vellamo. Both of these perspectives can be viewed in *Figure 4*, where each aspect is ranked. Almost all aspects received similar results.

From the importance of different aspects of employer branding for the employees, the following results were received. The respondents ranked each topic on a Likert- scale of 1-5 from not at all important to very important. There was a sixth option, "I don't know", which was excluded from the averages to receive accurate numbers. The mean of all of the aspects was 4,3 which indicates that all aspects are quite important for the respondents and not much deviation between them. The most important aspect was the work atmosphere (4,8), which indicates the value of great colleagues and general well-being in the company. Salary and other benefits (4,5) and flexible work hours (4,5) received the second-highest scores. This is compared to the lowest score of education within the industry (3,4), although actual career development opportunities (4,0) were seen as more important.

How the different aspects are achieved at LähiTapiola from very poor to excellent can be seen in *Figure 4*. The option of "I don't know", wasn't counted for the

mean (4,2). The highest scores LähiTapiola Vellamo received for flexible work hours (4,6) and location and working opportunities (4,6). The lowest average was received from salary and benefits (3,7) where additionally the division between respondents was broader, as well as career development opportunities (3,6). Overall LähiTapiola performs well in each category but these stated aspects can be taken into consideration for improvement needs.

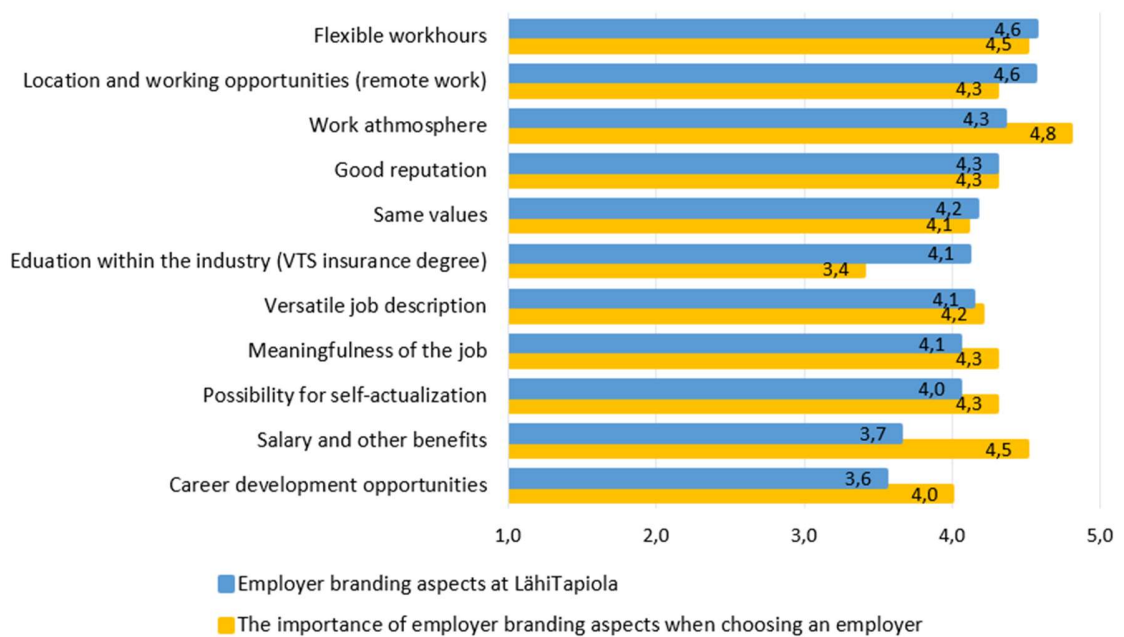


Figure 4 Employer branding aspects at LähiTapiola and their importance

The respondents were asked about their overall perception of LähiTapiola as an employer with an open-ended question, and below there are some statements that were brought up the most. Since there were 35 open answers, not all can be stated here. Most of the answers showed a positive attitude towards LähiTapiola as an employer and there were many respondents who felt that you couldn't have a better employer.

- Good and reliable employer that takes care of the employees (n=18)
- Employees are being valued and respected (n=7)
- Great benefits for employees (n=6)
- Positive values (n=1)
- Recommended as an employer overall (n=3)

To measure how different features can be used to describe LähiTapiola's work atmosphere and work community, a Likert-scale of 1-5 from very poor to excellent, and in addition, the option of "I don't know", which wasn't counted for the average and the answers can be seen below in *Figure 5*. Here the overall mean was 4,2 on a scale from 1-5. The best feature was relaxed (4,4) and the lowest was constructive (3,9).

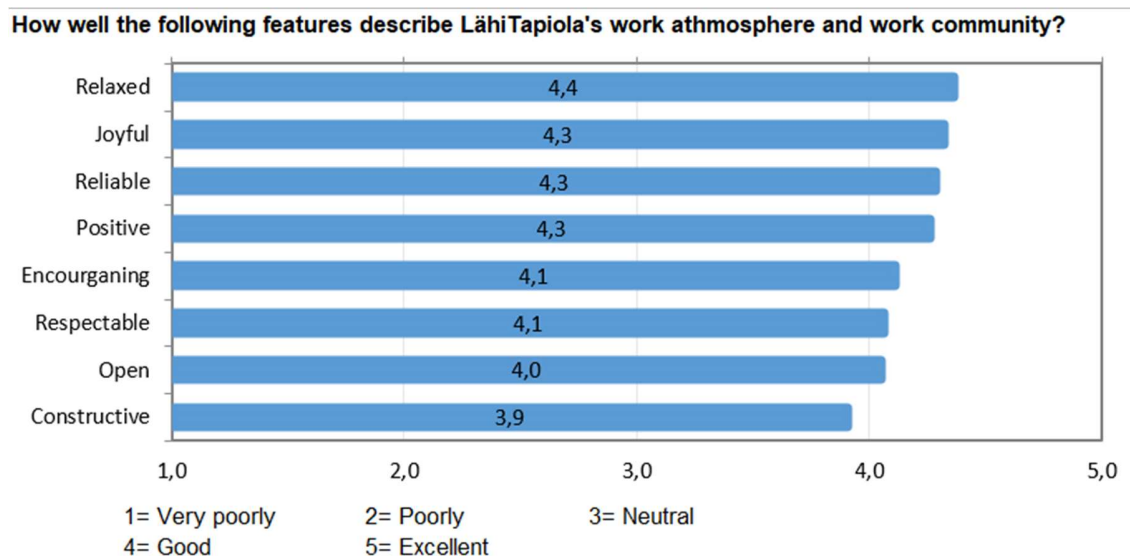


Figure 5 Features of work atmosphere and work community at LähiTapiola

Respondents were asked about the current work atmosphere in LähiTapiola. Here the factor was measured using a scale from 5-10 where the mean was 8,4 and the standard deviation 1,1. A follow-up for the work atmosphere was an open-ended question about how the overall work atmosphere could be improved. This received 29 responses and below there are mentioned the most common ways. Overall, the employees wish an improvement in communication and spending time with each other since during the pandemic, remote work has increased which influences the atmosphere.

- Better and more open communication (n=7)
- Cooperation between different teams (n=3)
- More recreation days and morning coffee breaks for all employees and teams (n=5)
- Lowering the rate of remote work (n=1)

To measure the level of openness in communication from the employees about workplace practices and habits, a scale from extremely poor to extremely well was used where the mean was 4,0. Only 2% of the respondents thought that they could poorly address their opinions about workplace practices. 78% of the respondents thought they could address opinions well or even extremely well. Respondents were asked an open question about their thoughts about interaction with a manager and 45 respondents answered. Most of the respondents felt they could openly and easily interact with their manager with a low barrier to bringing up any issues (n=38). Few quotes that were translated into English from the open-ended answers:

“My manager is easily approachable, and I can voice my opinion on any subject”.

“Very good. I feel like I can address all of my worries and concerns as well as succeeding and do good things with my manager. I also feel that my manager sincerely wants to take feedback from their actions and improve”.

Organisational culture was measured by different aspects using a scale from completely disagree to completely agree which is shown in *Figure 6* and the overall mean of organisational culture was 4,3. All respondents agreed that LähiTapiola is a financially stable employer (4,1) and only one had a neutral vision. Most respondents feel that their manager is treating all employees equally (4,2) as well as they feel a strong social cohesion with the organisation (4,1). The respondents that felt that LähiTapiola cares about their general well-being (4,3) and their well-being at work (4,1). The most mixed response came from the statement of LähiTapiola’s investments in the constant development of the employees (4,1).

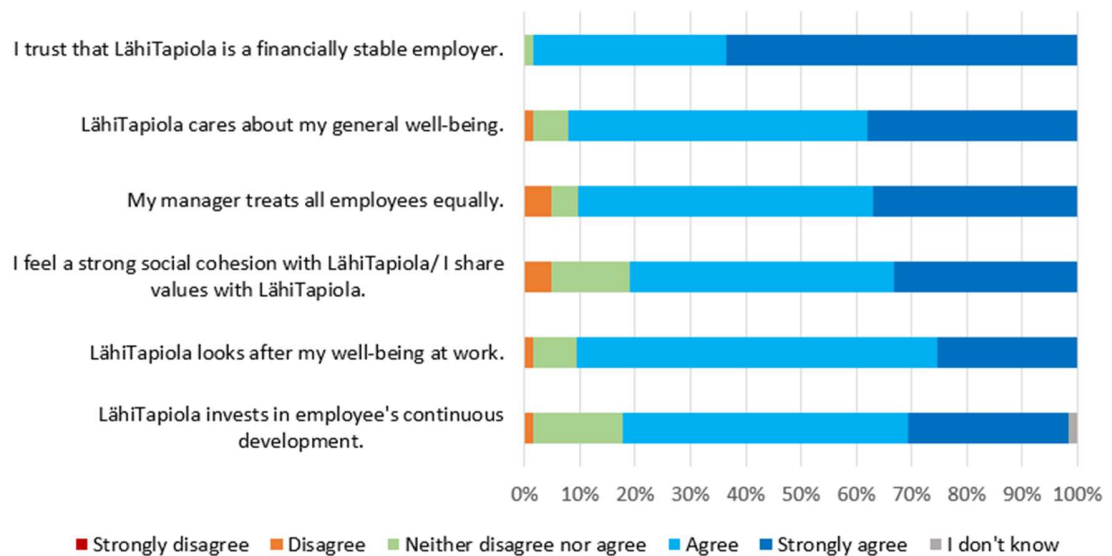


Figure 6 Organisation culture

Figure 7 presents the respondent's employee satisfaction. Most of the respondents feel that their job is meaningful (4,2) and only 6% disagree with that statement. Overall respondents are satisfied with their relationships with colleagues (4,6) and manager (4,5), this shows that social aspects are positive for the employees. The most division was received from the match between salaries and job descriptions (3,1), either they feel the need for an increased salary or a change in the job description. 81% of the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with their job description (4,0), on the other hand, 18% of the respondents felt that their workload wasn't suitable. A majority of 83% of respondents agreed that they had the opportunity to influence their job (4,1), but only 49% did agree that they had the opportunity to advance in their personal careers (3,5). The overall working environment was seen as functional and an asset to further their work (4,0).

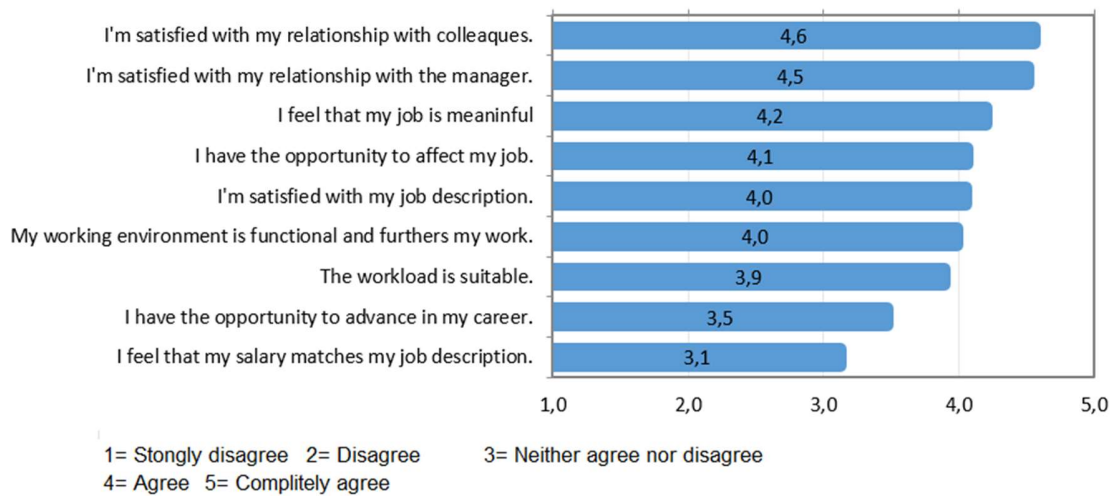


Figure 7 Employee satisfaction

To measure the satisfaction of received feedback, a Likert-scale measure of 1-5 was used from completely disagree to completely agree. The majority of the respondents agreed that they receive an adequate amount of feedback from their work (4,0), although 6% felt that they would need more feedback. Employees' motivation was measured on a scale from 1-5 from completely disagree to completely agree. 80% of the respondents agreed that they are motivated to do their job (4,1) and 5% disagreed. An open-ended follow-up question for the respondents was to identify approaches for increased motivation which received 32 responses. From many responses, the need for increased salaries would be a good way of motivating employees and additionally commissions and bonuses. Few respondents wanted more feedback and compliments from their managers to increase motivation and positive feedback from customers was valued. All open-ended responses can be found in the attachments.

To measure employee retention, respondents were asked if they would stay at LähiTapiola for the rest of their careers (4,2) and if they would first try to find other job descriptions inside LähiTapiola before searching for another employer (4,1), which can be seen from *Figure 8*. 75% of the respondents thought that they would rather first seek other job descriptions at LähiTapiola before looking from outside if wanting a different job. 6 respondents disagreed with that statement which shows the commitment from the employees towards LähiTapiola. Less than 5% of the respondents wouldn't stay in LähiTapiola for the rest of their

careers but 22% neither agreed nor disagreed. There are more than of 64% respondents that would stay at LähiTapiola.

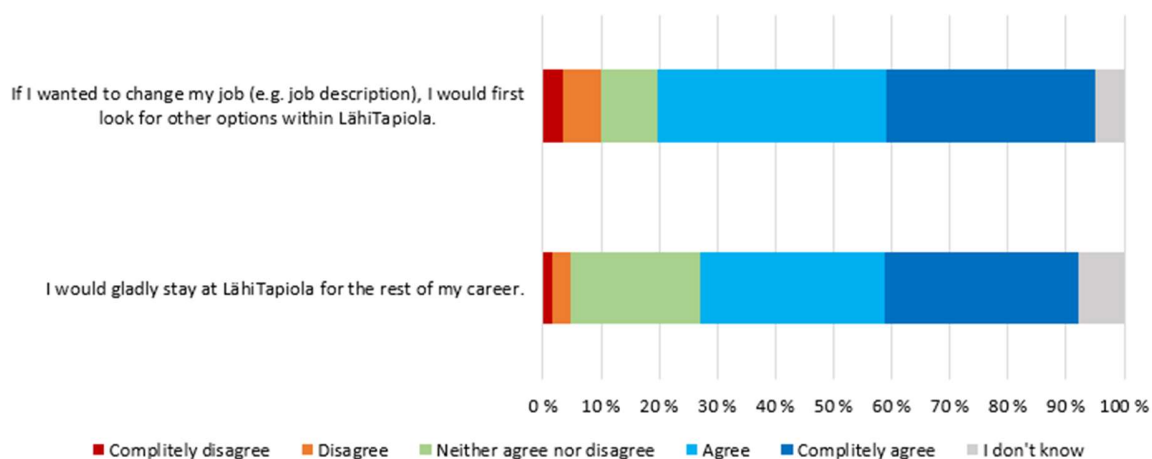


Figure 8 Employee retention

Respondents were asked about factors influencing a decision to change an employer with an open question, which 38 respondents answered. There were many different types of answers, and below there are some topics that were mentioned.

- Salary increase (n=18)
- Changing circumstances for example moving (n=4)
- New challenges (n=8)
- A job that matches the education (n=3)
- Decreased work atmosphere at a current job (n=7)

Respondents' intention for to change workplace can be seen in *Figure 9*. There are 24% of respondents who had the idea of changing workplaces which is a minority and 63% hadn't thought about changing. Respondents were asked about their probability to recommend LähiTapiola as an employer. The mean was 8,9 and the standard deviation was 1,3, which is excellent for the organisation's recommendation rates.

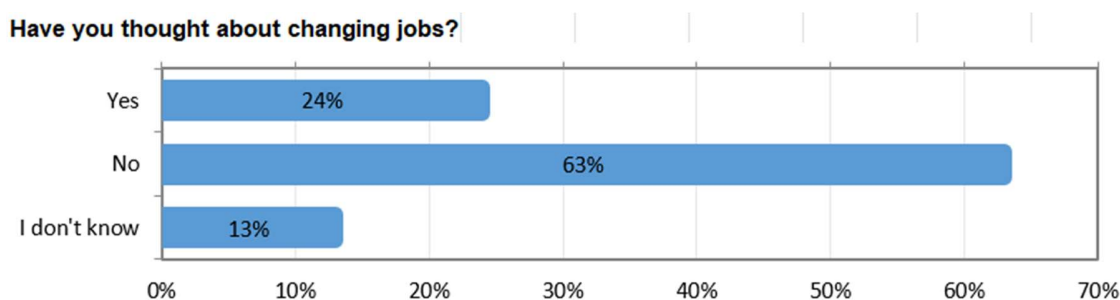


Figure 9 Thoughts about changing jobs

Overall younger respondents 18–25-year-olds had more negative answers regarding different questions. They saw the career development opportunities (3,2) as well as flexible work hours (4,2) and meaningfulness of the job (3,5) at LähiTapiola to be inferior compared to older respondents as seen in *Table 2*. Versatile job description (3,8) and good reputation (3,7) when choosing an employer weren't seen as important from 18-25 years old than the rest of the respondents. On the other hand, they valued location and working opportunities (remote work) more (4,7) when choosing the employer as opposed to older generations.

Table 2 Age division in employer branding aspects

How important do you see each of the stated aspects when choosing an employer?

	Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	Over 56
Location and working opportunities (remote work)		4,7	4,5	4,2	3,9	4,3
Good reputation		3,7	4,5	4,1	4,5	4,7

How are the following aspects being achieved at LähiTapiola?

	Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	Over 56
Meaningfulness of the job		3,5	4,2	4,2	4,3	4,4
Career development opportunities		3,2	3,5	3,5	3,7	3,9
Flexible workhours		4,2	4,5	4,8	4,6	4,8

Over 56 years old respondents and 18-25 years old respondents felt that their personal salary matched poorly with the current workload or job description whereas other respondents agreed more with that statement. 18–25-year old's didn't feel as strong social cohesion with LähiTapiola or shared its values (3,4) as opposed to older respondents, which can be seen from *Table 3*. Regarding the educational background of the respondents, no substantial differences between

answers were found, other than high school/vocational school respondents were more satisfied with the match between their salary and job description (3,5) than respondents with a university of applied sciences background (2,6), as seen at *Table 3*. When looking into differences between answers according to the duration of the employment, respondents that have worked at LähiTapiola for over 20 years felt that they shared LähiTapiola's values and had stronger social cohesion (4,4) than respondents with shorter employment.

Table 3 Cross tabulations between background questions

	Age					Duration of employment					Educational background	
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	Over 56	Less than a year	1-3 years	4-9 years	10-20 years	Over 20 years	High school/vocational school	University of applied sciences
I feel that my salary matches my job description.	2,4	3,3	3,3	3,7	2,7	3,3	3,2	3,1	2,9	3,2	3,5	2,6
I feel a strong social cohesion with LähiTapiola/ I share values with LähiTapiola.	3,4	4,1	4,1	4,6	4,3	3,8	3,9	4,1	4,1	4,4	4,2	3,8

The cross-tabulation of gender and the importance of employer branding aspects are shown in *Figure 10* for both female (n=44) and male (n=17). There the most important aspects of internal employer branding for both genders are presented. The most important aspect is the work atmosphere for both genders. In addition to the previous, women valued more flexible work hours, location, and working opportunities, whereas men valued salary and other benefits slightly higher. The lower percentage for men in these aspects might be because they evaluated most aspects as "important" rather than "extremely important" which influences the results.

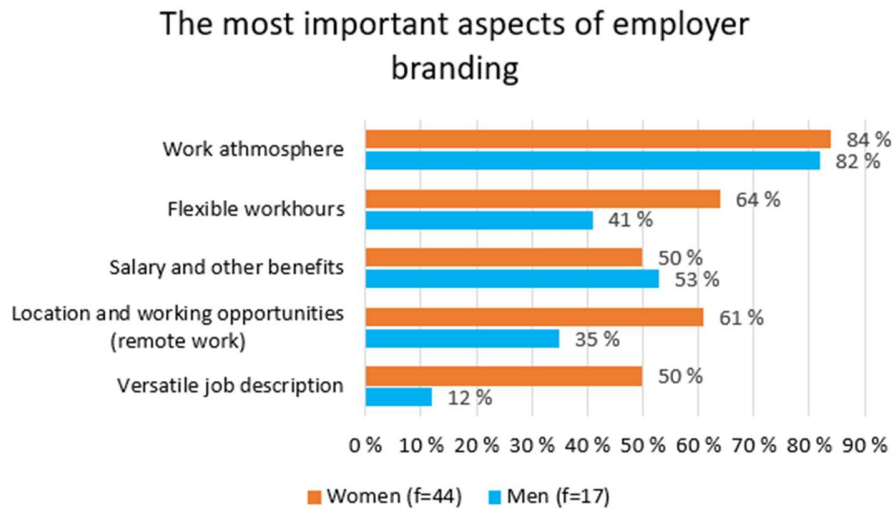


Figure 10 The most important aspects of employer branding for both genders

4.2 Analysis

Overall, the results were very good and many things should be kept at the same level. Respondents gave in-depth data about their personal vision of employer branding in LähiTapiola Vellamo. LähiTapiola Vellamo is seen as an employer that takes care of their employees as well as values and respects them, which is shown in the number of benefits the company offers, for example, a respondent evaluated LähiTapiola Vellamo as an employer whose value can't be understood unless you go to work somewhere else, which says a lot about the satisfaction of the employee.

Regarding the organisational culture at LähiTapiola Vellamo, respondents felt positive about it. They see LähiTapiola as a financially stable organisation and this can indicate a certain trust in the company and its ability to retain employees even when facing uncertain times. Respondents value the possibility of doing a meaningful job and want a versatile job description that keeps them motivated throughout their careers which can be seen from *Figure 4* as well as the open-ended answers from the factors that could increase motivation. From intangible assets, respondents value positive feedback from supervisors as well as from customers. Respondents value a good work atmosphere, salary, and benefits as well as being offered flexible work hours as seen in *Figure 4*. Most of these

aspects are achieved at LähiTapiola as can be seen from *Figure 5*, for example, flexible work hours, and work atmosphere.

The work atmosphere is highly seen as positive but could be improved by creating a culture of better and more open communication with superiors and colleagues, this is supported by Branham (2004,77-80) and Phillips and Connell (2004, 170) as they highlight the importance of good communication to employees. Most respondents are satisfied with the relationships between managers and colleagues, which has a significant influence on the work atmosphere since those are the people employees spend eight hours a day with. Interactions with the supervisor were seen as great. Career development opportunities have a crucial role in the employees' employment (Branham 2004, 99-100) which can also be seen from the research (Figure 4). However, the respondents feel that there could be room for improvement, and they don't agree with having the opportunity to advance in their careers (Figure 8).

Salary and other benefits received lower scores (Figure 5) and although the result is good, there is always room for improvement. As seen from *Table 3* the 26-55-year-olds were more satisfied with the salary compared to 18-25-year-olds and over 56-year-olds and in addition to graduates from the university of applied sciences, which can indicate room for improvement especially in those niches. However, according to Mouton and Bussin (2019), when a company receives higher results from employer branding, the employees are prepared to work with less compensation, and this statement can be identified from LähiTapiola Vellamo younger employees and graduates from the university of applied sciences. Considering the stated, tangible assets like salary and other benefits could have been measured separately in the survey, to measure satisfaction in both aspects.

The results could indicate that remote work had had a negative impact on the work atmosphere, although this can't be confirmed since we don't have results from research that was conducted before the pandemic before the rate of remote

work increased. Many employees nowadays value remote work possibilities in their working life (Branham 2004, 97-98), which can create a dilemma for employers when deciding on these subjects.

The results showed a positive stage in employee retention from the respondents. Most respondents had not thought about changing jobs and would rather stay inside the company in a different role or a team. Internal job transition is appreciated, and this can be confirmed by the long employment of the respondents. Although increased salary in another organisation would be a reason for some respondents to change jobs, respondents still highlight the value of their current employment, and changing to another employer would require something to get worse in LähiTapiola to make that change. This demonstrates the importance of good internal employer branding overall in employee retention where employees look for other aspects of their job besides remuneration (Chew 2008).

4.3 Recommendations for the commissioner

As the results were great and many things should be kept where they are, it is difficult to find real improvement needs and recommendations for the commissioner. The results showed that employees felt that their salary wasn't adequate, and the organisation could address this aspect for improving the satisfaction and retention of employees, this could be done by for example offering bonuses for great work outcomes (Phillips & Connell 2004, 184, 189-194). Although the overall work atmosphere is at a great state, open communication was responded to as a way of improving the work atmosphere and motivation. From this, a development idea for monthly feedback and communication hour with an employee and supervisor could be implemented as well as within working teams considering communication is a crucial part of a successful work atmosphere which was highlighted by Branham (2004, 77-80). This could create a more active communication culture and any issues could be addressed more quickly.

Employees value internal job transition as well as overall career development possibilities and the results of the research showed that currently this could be improved at LähiTapiola Vellamo. Branham (2004, 99-100) stated that all three parties (organisation, manager, and employee) have responsibility for career development, therefore Lähitapiola Vellamo could increase their training possibilities and frequently offer those to interested employees. This requires that employees play an active role in seeking training and other possibilities as well as managers identifying talents.

If there is no exit survey conducted when an employee departs from the company, this could be added to company practices, which was recommended by Branham (2004, 219-221). For future recommendations, the company could benefit from an exit survey to receive data from departed employees whose perceptions are commonly distinctive from current employees.

5 CONCLUSION

The research assessed the current state of internal employer branding through a thorough survey conducted among the employees of LähiTapiola Vellamo. The research question for this study was: How do LähiTapiola Vellamo employees see the organisation's internal employer branding? And how can it be developed? Overall, the results showed that the current state of internal employer branding at LähiTapiola Vellamo is in a good state and current employees are mostly satisfied with the organisation as an employer. The research revealed the most important factors of internal employer branding for the LähiTapiola Vellamo employees, which were a good work atmosphere, salary, and other benefits, as well as flexible work hours. Since the respondents were all current employees of LähiTapiola Vellamo, they had a clear idea about its culture and practices. Most employees haven't thought about switching employers and they would recommend LähiTapiola Vellamo as an employer. The mismatch between job descriptions and remuneration as well as overall pay was considered inadequate. The transition of jobs within LähiTapiola was seen as a good way to reduce employee retention by offering new challenges for employees and maintaining valuable employees inside the organisation. It was also seen that a decrease in

the overall work atmosphere or working conditions could result in employee turnover, which was supported by Kundu and Lata (2017).

Since great results were received, development recommendations were quite limited. Some development suggestions given were related to communication. Open communication was needed from many respondents where the development idea of monthly feedback sessions with the employee and their supervisor and between teams was presented. Career development opportunities, for example, the offering of internal training possibilities, was stated. An exit survey was recommended to utilise former employees' opinions about the organisation's practices and overall recommendations.

The research is easy to implement again, which indicates the reliability of the research, and it would be suggested for the organisation to measure long period attitude changes, especially when new generations start to take over the employment sector. A satisfying sample of the population of LähiTapiola Vellamo employees was received from the survey indicating that the results are reliable. Differences between different departments and teams could have been analysed if a background question regarding that had been implemented into the survey. The validity of the research was assured by conducting a survey that followed the theoretical framework of the study. As internal employer branding is a broad topic with many different elements, to obtain more thorough information about it, the elements of this research could have been narrowed towards a more specific study.

The choice of method was appropriate for this research since it made it possible to collect data from a big sample and made sure all respondents felt that they could answer thoughtfully. A satisfactory respondent percentage was received although the answering period was rather short, most of the answers were received within the first two days of sending out the survey. One reminder notification was enough. The theoretical framework of internal employer branding and its elements were achieved from the data collection and found that it was applicable to the organisation.

Since the research was aimed at current employees, future research could be conducting an overall external employer branding analysis to develop its attractiveness to possible applicants. Another study could be to identify differences between regions considering this research was for one region employees only. For a more detailed analysis of each internal employer branding element, future research could be aimed at only one aspect of organisational culture and its effect on employer branding. There could be a possibility to analyse remote work challenges and possibilities further from the overall employee satisfaction and performance perspective since that creates differences between generations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey form

Sisäinen työnantajakuva LähiTapiola Vellamossa

1. Sukupuoli

- Nainen
- Mies
- Muu
- En halua vastata

2. Ikä

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- Yli 56

3. Koulutustausta

- Peruskoulu
- Lukio/Ammattikoulu
- Korkeakoulututkinto (AMK)
- Ylempi korkeakoulututkinto (Ylipisto/YAMK)
- Muu, mikä?

7. Miten seuraavat osa-alueet toteutuvat LähiTapiolassa?

	Hyvin huonosti 1	Huonosti 2	Neutraalisti 3	Hyvin 4	Loistavasti 5	En osaa sanoa
Palkkataso ja muut etuudet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ilmapiiri työyhteisössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Etenemismahdollisuudet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joustavat työntekijät	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monipuoliset työnkuvat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hyvä maine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kouluttautuminen alalla (vts tutkinto)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Samat arvot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työn merkityksellisyys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mahdollisuus toteuttaa itseään	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sijainti ja työskentelymahdollisuudet (Etätyö)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Muu, mikä? <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Millaisena arvioisit LähiTapiolan työnantajana?

9. Kuinka hyvin seuraavat ominaisuudet kuvaavat LähiTapiolan työilmapiiriä ja työyhteisöä?

	Erittäin huonosti 1	Huonosti 2	Neutraalisti 3	Hyvin 4	Erittäin hyvin 5	En osaa sanoa
Avoin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kannustava	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Illoinen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arvostava	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rakentava	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luottava	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Myönteinen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Kuinka hyvä työilmapiiri vallitsee työpaikalla tällä hetkellä?



11. Kuinka työilmapiiriä voisi mielestäsi parantaa?

12. Voitko kertoa avoimesti mielipiteesi työpaikan käytännöistä ja tavoista?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Erittäin huonosti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Erittäin hyvin

13. Millaiseksi koet vuorovaikutuksen esimiehen kanssa?

14. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin.

	Täysin eri mieltä 1	Eri mieltä 2	Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä 3	Samaa mieltä 4	Täysin samaa mieltä 5	En osaa sanoa
LähiTapiolassa panostetaan työntekijöiden jatkuvaan kehittymiseen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LähiTapiola välittää yleisestä tyytyväisyydestäni töissä.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LähiTapiola välittää yleisestä hyvinvoinnistani.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tunnen vahvaa yhteenkuuluvuutta LähiTapiolan kanssa/ Jaan LähiTapiolan arvot.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Esihenkilöni kohtelee työntekijöitä tasavertaisesti.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luotan, että LähiTapiola on vakavarainen työnantaja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin.

	Täysin eri mieltä 1	Eri mieltä 2	Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä 3	Samaa mieltä 4	Täysin samaa mieltä 5	En osaa sanoa
Koen, että työlläni on merkitystä.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olen tyytyväinen suhteeseen työkavereiden kanssa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olen tyytyväinen suhteeseen esimiehen kanssa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Koen henkilökohtaisen palkkani sopivan työmäärään ja työtehtäviin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olen tyytyväinen työnkuvaani.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työn kuormittavuus on sopiva.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minulla on mahdollisuus vaikuttaa työhöni.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minulla on mahdollisuus edetä urallani.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työympäristöni on toimiva ja edesauttaa työntekoa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Työstäni saama palaute on riittävää.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Täysin eri mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Täysin samaa mieltä

17. Olen motivoinut tekemään työtäni.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Täysin eri mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Täysin samaa mieltä

18. Mikä motivoisi sinua suoriutumaan työstäsi paremmin?

19. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin.

	Täysin eri mieltä 1	Eri mieltä 2	Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä 3	Samaa mieltä 4	Täysin samaa mieltä 5	En osaa sanoa
Jäisin mielelläni LähiTapiolalle töihin koko urani ajaksi.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jos haluaisin vaihtaa työtäni (esim. työnkuvaa), etsisin ensin muita vaihtoehtoja LähiTapiolan sisältä.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Jos vaihtaisit työpaikkaa, mikä siihen olisi todennäköisesti syynä? Mikä syy saisi sinut vaihtamaan työpaikkaa?

21. Oletko ollut aikeissa vaihtaa työpaikkaa?

- Kyllä
- En
- En osaa sanoa

22. Kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelisin LähiTapiolaa työnantajana?

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Erittäin todennäköisesti

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