

Talent Match service as an employer-branding tool for SMEs in the capital area.

Case: Otaniemi Marketing

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The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to examine how well known the concept of employer branding is to small and medium sized companies (SMEs) in the capital area of Finland. The companies interviewed in the research have all participated in the case company's service that aims to help companies recruit new talent and brand the organization. Hence, another subject of examination will be the success of the service in terms of employer branding. The case company for the thesis is Otaniemi Marketing. It is a small non-profit organization owned by private and public entities. The mission of the company is to brand and promote the area of Otaniemi. They also provide services and information to companies and individuals who want to work, live or study in Otaniemi. Otaniemi Marketing is also providing a service called Talent Match with Technopolis plc. It is a recruiting service aimed to match the right talent with the right employer. The service is targeted for SMEs without own Human Resources department.	
The theoretical framework of the thesis includes concepts of employer branding. The theory is divided into sections of: employer brand creation, employer brand positioning, employer brand communication and employer brand management. The theory models are mostly from Barrow and Mosley (2011), Parment and Dyhre (2009) and Martin and Hetrick (2006). The research method is qualitative interviewing, and the sample is constructed of five companies who have used the Talent match service. The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and by phone. The findings of the interviews indicate that there is little knowlege about the importance of employer branding among the SMEs. The results also highlight that the service in question has too narrow participants group and the online tool in the service is too complex for everyday use.	
Keywords Employer branding, employer brand, reputation, qualitative research	

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1 Introduction

The first part of the thesis introduces the topic and overall purpose of the report. The case company and the service in question will be introduced briefly. This section also presents the research problem and the investigative questions as well as the demarcation of the topic.

1.1 Overview and purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the concept employer branding. This is done by first looking at theoretical models and processes for the employer brand life cycle. After the theory introduction the focus moves into investigating how well small and medium sized organizations in the capital area of Finland recognize the concept and whether there is a need to educate them more about the subject.

Another focal point for the research is to talk about the employer branding and recruitment service of the case company. The purpose here is to examine how effective it has been for the interviewees' companies so far and to go through development areas and suggestions together with the respondents. The interviewees in this thesis are director level company representatives from five different companies. The research method is qualitative interviewing.

The topic of the thesis was created in a mutual agreement with the commissioning company Otaniemi Marketing. The mutually agreed focus area is employer branding, which is a mixture of marketing and HR. The Talent Match service they provide is a new service that has been running for roughly two years now. Because the service is quite new and there has not been much previously gathered data there was a definite need for research.

1.2 Case company introduction

Otaniemi Marketing is marketing and development focused firm. Otaniemi Marketing is owned by the City of Espoo and Technopolis Plc. The company is a non-profit organization that helps companies and professionals access information, networks and services. The company's key partners include Aalto University, Aalto University Student Union, Laurea and Metropolia Universities of Applied Sciences and VTT Technical Research Center of Finland (TalentMatch 2012). The organization's main mission is to promote Otaniemi as a good area to work, live and study, which can be called as place branding (Arni-Hardén, M. 20 Feb 2013).

Talent Match is a social career network service aimed for both companies and professionals. It is a service provided by Otaniemi Marketing together with Technopolis. Talent Match consists of a social media server on JobGo and of a physical networking event called Talent Talks. The online server includes a job seeker's CV and other qualifications beneficial for job hunting. The Talent Talks event consists of a presentation from a keynote speaker, networking and pitching sessions. The service allows a market place where talented people from all around the world are gathered to the same place at the same time to effectively network with the companies (TalentMatch 2012). Talent Match is aimed for both Finnish and International professionals, but the purpose of the service is to increase the amount of international employees in Finnish companies (Arni-Hardén, M. 20 Feb 2013).

Talent Match can be considered mutually beneficial since both the companies and professionals profit from the service. Benefits for companies include fast recruitments, connecting with the best talents and job seekers in a single place, keeping people informed about new job vacancies and finding prospective employees that match the personal and professional qualification of the job. Benefits for the professionals are building connections with companies, finding jobs that match their qualifications, expanding networks and enhancing the digital CV including personality and work behavior profiles on JobGo (TalentMatch 2012).

1.3 Research topic

The thesis topic is Talent Match service as an employer-branding tool for SMEs in the capital area. The purpose is to look at the current employer branding strategies of Ota-niemi Marketing's customer companies, and also whether Talent Match social career network has provided them help in their branding. The main purpose of the research is to find out whether these firms understand the importance of employer branding in recruitment and whether Talent Match should be more focused on the employer branding opportunities than it currently is.

1.4 Research problem and investigative questions

The research problem is: **How do the companies view employer branding and how can they use Talent Match to further improve their employer brand?**

The investigative questions are:

1. How does the company view employer branding?
2. Does the company have an employer-branding strategy?
3. How does the company perceive itself as an employer?
4. Has Talent Match helped the company in its employer branding attempts and how?
5. Does the company have international branding operations?

1.5 Demarcation

The main idea of this thesis is to look at employer branding as a concept and its importance to the interviewed companies. The effectiveness of the case company's service will also be analyzed in the process. Hence, the overall goal of this thesis is to gather knowledge related to the branding habits of the customer companies, not to suggest an improved employer branding strategy or to brand Talent Match as such.

I am specializing in marketing and therefore the thesis is constructed in the field of marketing. The topic was demarcated from marketing to branding and specifically in the field of employer branding.

The topic of the thesis is quite complex because it very much HR related. Talent Match is a career network provider and the purpose of it is to aid in the recruitment processes. Employer branding is a mixture of marketing and HR but the focus will be on branding rather than on recruitment.

2 Employer branding

This part of the thesis introduces the theory. The aim is to present theoretical information and models to introduce the topic of employer branding. This part is divided into four parts: employer brand creation, employer brand positioning, employer brand communication and employer brand management.

2.1 Employer brand creation

The first part of the theory called employer brand creation looks at the pre-requisites for setting up an employer brand. These include definitions, segmentation, values, personality and benefits.

2.1.1 Definitions

The term employer branding explains how an organization expresses what it can offer to its employees through marketing means. In traditional marketing, companies aim to attract and communicate to customers in the hopes of creating brand loyal customer relationships. Employer branding uses the same techniques in the form of people management (The Chartered institute of Personnel and Development 2012). What distinguishes employer branding from traditional branding is the fact that it focuses on employment rather than on product offerings (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503).

According to Jenner and Taylor (2007, 7) employer branding represents an organization's attempts to communicate to internal and external audiences on why it is a desirable employer. The Chartered institute of Personnel and Development (2012) explains employer branding as such: "a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture". This simply means that employer brand is a brand promise of a certain kind of work place. The best employment brands describe clearly what is expected from the employee and what are the career opportunities and compensations that come with the job (Tsao &

Perrin 2009, 2). Ambler and Barrow (1996, 187) on the other hand, suggest that employer brand is set of functional, economic and psychological benefits offered by employment.

2.1.2 Segmentation

Building an employer brand is the first step in the branding process. In order to build an effective brand it is crucial to segment the market and identify the specific target segment for your company. After knowing which segment to target in the employment market, it is easier to build a brand that supports the company's values as well as the target employee's values (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 100).

The TNS commitment survey that was conducted in 2002 and 2004 identified four different employment segments (figure 1).



Figure 1. Employee segments

The first profile, described as an **ambassador**, refers to the employees who are fully committed to their work and the organization they work for. The two things that drive their commitment are leadership within the organization and performance management. The second profile, **career oriented** employee, talks about employees who are more committed to their career than to the organization. Their commitment is driven

by empowerment in their work as well as performance management. The third profile is a **company-oriented** employee. An employee who is company oriented has more faith and commitment towards the organization that the work they do. They are more focused on the company-loyalty than on their career path. The company and equality within the firm commit them. The fourth type of employee is an **ambivalent** employee. These people are neither committed to the company nor the work they do. They tend to have lower skills and abilities than the other types of employees (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 100-102).

2.1.3 Values, Personality and Benefits

When building an employer brand, an organization has to consider values, personality and benefits. In the beginning of the brand building process, most companies already have a selected group of values that are followed in the company. Values state what the organization believes in. Corporate values often correlate with the brand values and can be quite similar. The most common core values include integrity, teamwork, respect and performance. When creating values it is important to stay realistic and avoid moving towards overly aspirational values. This way the values are credible and the company is able to follow what they promise (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 119-120).

Brand personality represents how beliefs, expressed in the form of values, are conveyed in terms of language and style. The personality of a company can usually be detected from its communication style. The communication style will reveal whether the company is fun, serious, down-to-earth or passionate. When companies want to communicate a specific type of personality to the outside world, they have to make sure the same message is communicated in an internal level. In an ideal case, the external brand personality should mirror the internal culture of the company (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 122).

Benefits in employer branding refer to the emotional and functional benefits that employees will gain from their work. In the process of defining employer brand vision, an organization must put emphasis on strengths and weaknesses as well as develop more qualities that will increase employee engagement. Examples of employment benefits

are fair salary, training possibilities, an interesting career and a positive work environment (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 123).

2.2 Employer brand positioning

The second part of the theory looks at how to position the employer brand. Concepts that follow are employer value proposition, employer branding process as well as a brand integration model.

2.2.1 Employer value proposition

The first step in employer brand positioning is the development of the value proposition. The value proposition consists of elements like organizational culture, management style, employment image and skills of current employees, as well as the impressions of product and service quality. The value proposition is believed to be a brand message that represents what the organization offers to its employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, 502).

EVP (Employer Value Proposition) presents current and prospective employees a reason to work for the company, in other words, it establishes the organization's competitive advantage as an employer. It is possible for the company's EVP to overlap with the Unique Selling Proposition statement, which is aimed for customers. In order to be a successful employer, an organization has to have an EVP that is reliable, attractive and different. In order to identify the current Employer Value Proposition companies should take a look at their identity, profile and image (Parment & Dyrhre 2009, 68).

Identity refers to examining who you are as an employer. This phase involves considering how the current employees see the organization. What are the shared values and beliefs in the company. Employees tend to have different opinions on which employment benefits are attractive. Therefore it is crucial to analyse the success of these benefits (Parment & Dyrhre 2009, 68).

Building an internal brand identity is important in the employer brand-positioning phase. According to Barrow and Mosley (2011, 109-110), there are three different kinds of employer brands having different positions in the company's brand hierarchy. The above-mentioned employer brands are called Monolithic, parent and subsidiary brands.

Monolithic type of employer brand refers to a case where a company uses the same brand name and visual presentations in every process. The brand that customers buy is the same brand that the employees work for.

The *Parent* brand has two versions. In the first version there are two brand levels, the corporate brand and the operating brand. The second version distinguishes one corporate brand that acts as an umbrella for multiple product and service brands within one organization.

Subsidiary brand offers an equivalent brand identity to the one of the parent brand's. In this case the employer brand is similar to the customer brand.

Profile looks at what kind of employer the company wants to be. This process involves interviewing the top management on how they want the company to be viewed as an employer as well as how the employees should perceive the company. Profile setting is more future oriented and involves having a clear vision and goal of the company (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 69).

Image simply means how the company is perceived as an employer by the outside world. The information is often gathered by using quantitative surveys or focus groups in order to collect reliable data (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 69). According to Martin and Hetrick (2006, 21) image can refer to multiple things. It can be seen as transmitted image of visually desired image created by corporate designers. It can be understood as received image including stakeholders' views on reputation, brand or symbols. The third interpretation includes construed image. This refers to the way in which the organization thinks the customers perceive it.

2.2.2 Employer branding process

According to Parment & Dyhre (2009, 56) employer branding is “ a logical process through which companies reach one main goal: to have a strong appeal for their current and future ideal employees.” They suggest that the employer branding process is made of thee aspects:

1. Employer branding and recruiting as be separate processes

Recruitment is a short-tem process to fill up vacancies whereas employer branding is a long-term effort to maintain a good brand image. It is targeted for both current and future employees. The strategy towards current employees is keep them satisfied and to avoid good employees from leaving the company. When it comes to the future employees, employer branding tries to attract new talents into the company.

2. Employer branding starts from the employer

Before employers can have a strong attraction for the new employees they need to learn what are the key drivers for the most appreciated employees. Employers need to have an idea of why their company is a unique and attractive place to work in comparison to other companies.

3. Employer branding helps to understand who is the ideal employee

Companies have different views on what is a talented employee. It is important to have a clear idea of the personality type and background that they are looking for in an ideal employee. This way the employer branding can be targeted more efficiently.

2.2.3 Brand integration

In traditional branding models customer brand position is the main perspective of the model. Employees in the company experience the same brand in a different way and have different motivators. Figure 2 presents an integrated brand model that considers both the customer and the employee side of the brand.

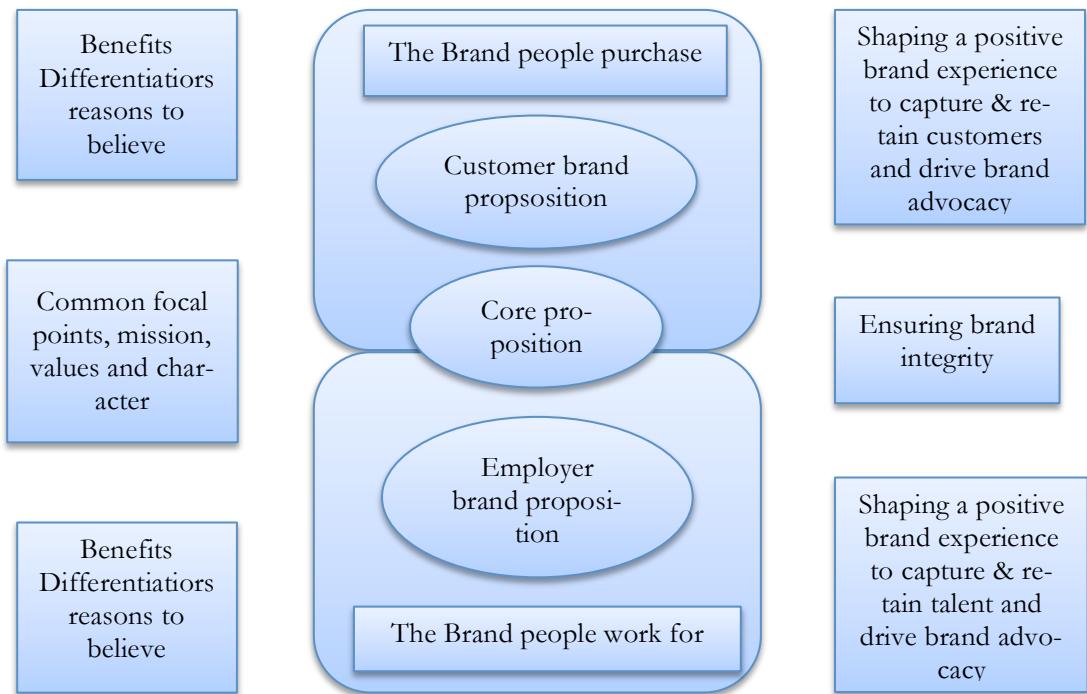


Figure 2. An integrated brand model (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 111)

When ensuring brand equity, the model suggests that some brand qualities need to be considered by every stakeholder's experience while others are precisely meant for the different needs and desires of employees and consumers. The customer brand and the employee brand perform in two different markets. The customer brand competes in the market for products and services while the employer brand focuses on talent and commitment. Even so, they closely interrelated. The job of the employer brand is to attract the right talent to a company and to maintain the employees' commitment to high performance, which supports the brand, aimed for the customers. In reverse, the customer brand has a great effect on the prospective employees' perception of the company. Once people have become employees, their personal appreciation of the external brand and their loyalty towards the company will help them to deliver the brand promise to the customers (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 110-111).

2.3 Employer brand communication

After having conquered the employer brand positioning stage, it is time to focus on the communication of the brand. According to Parment & Dyhre (2009, 132-133), in order for the brand communication to be successful and consistent the organization should pay attention to four main things:

1. **Knowing the organizational identity**- Being familiar with the history of the organization, and knowing how the main stakeholder groups are perceiving the company.
2. **Understanding the carriers of the identity**- Ensuring that the organizational identity and its possible changes are understood inside the company. The key elements of the identity include: employees, products, materials and physical stores, which all affect to the consumers' perception of the brand.
3. **The elements of communication**- The company must be able to identify all the possible communication elements. This includes: customers, employees, partners, PR and marketing agencies and branding companies. The type of communication elements differ according to industries and that is why an organization must be aware of the possibilities in their industry.
4. **The target communication**- Recognizing the target for the communication ensures a more effective result. Often the main target groups are customers, current or future employees and media.

2.3.1 Internal launch

Internal launch of an employer brand refers to the handling and communication of the brand inside the company among employees of the organization. The internal launch usually contains an action plan, launch and an instruction guide. Launching an employer brand can easily create difficulties unless it is carefully planned and accomplished. Barrow and Mosley's brand engagement model is build of three main elements: Ra-

tional understanding, Emotional engagement and Commitment and behavior change. These elements are used to support the launching process of an employer brand (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 130).

Rational understanding in the internal launch process aims people to understand the purpose of the employer brand. Why is it being launched right now and in what ways does it help the business? What is in it for the future employees? An employer brand needs a strong business setting to support a major launch (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 132).

Whether the brand launch is a gradual process or a fast action plan, clear and focused communication is the key. Consumers take in thousands of brand messages a day, which means advertisers have to keep the core messages simple and straightforward. The same rules apply to employees when they are the audience. Due to this the message of an employer brand should be direct and simple (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 133).

Another thing that plays an important role in the communication is the language used. The language used in the employer brand communication should be simple and avoid technical language like jargon. You would not communicate the brand message to the customers using jargon so why use it on employees. *What* is being communicated to employees is much more important than *how* does the communication occur. The clarity of the language becomes acutely important in companies where all the employees do not share the same language. Translating the brand message in several languages can cause misunderstandings and inconsistency in the core message. This is why most global companies use English as a communication language and make sure that the language is kept simple (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 133-134).

Validating an employer brand promise is much more difficult than making one. Without having brand commitment from the employees, the brand message will not be successful. Often, people will start to believe a brand message only after seeing tangible evidence that the values and propositions are truly being followed inside the organization (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 134).

Brand trust is based on consistency. Without a consistent communication from all the communication channels, the chances of building trust and credibility towards the employer brand are quite small. This applies to both internal and external communications. The external communication includes consumer advertising as well as recruitment marketing and can deliver powerful messages about your company. It is vital to ensure that the employees agree with the external brand promises before the messages are sent to the outside world. Involving employees in the brand communication can help to ensure a more reliable and realistic message (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 141-143).

The final aspect is maintaining continuity in the consistency of the message. Brand communication needs new creative ways to develop the brand message all the time. This does not mean changing the core message, but rather creating new innovative ways of telling the story (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 143).

2.3.2 Scope of communication

There are different types of communication in employer branding (Figure 3). A company might use general communication in order to strengthen its employer brand overall, targeting all consumer segments. The other option is that a company communicates to a specific segment of people in order to attract only one carefully selected target groups. The type of communication depends on whether the company is in a consumer market or whether they operate in a way that makes the employer branding interesting in a general level (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 136).

	Little presence in consumer markets	High presence in consumer markets
High interest for the organization's products/ services	3. Employer Branding important for the general public	4. Employer branding important for the general public and is an inherent part of the brand image
Low interest for the organization's products/ services	1. Employer branding important for a limited audience in a specific professional area	2. Employer branding especially important in some professional areas and to an extent for consumers

Figure 3. The scope of employer branding communications (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 136)

In case of low interest in the organization's products, the communication should be specific and targeted only to a small segment of professionals. In case both of the above mentioned criteria are met, the employer brand can easily overlap with the consumer brand. In such case people tend to think about the consumer brand image when considering the company as an employer (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 136).

2.3.3 Communication mix

The best way to communicate brands nowadays is to use integrated marketing communications (IMC). IMC refers to a more modern way of communication that is more personalized, customer oriented and technology based. The focus has been shifted away from the traditional one-way mass communication towards a two-way communication between the customer and the organization (Fill 2009, 256). The integrated model needs one consisted message that is used by multiple communication tools in order to reach a greater audience (Fill 2009, 259).

According to Research Now and K&A Brand Research, that looks at online preferences of American teenagers, shows that young talents do not embrace everything from the Internet. When comparing online and offline messages, the offline messages showed more reliability. Online messages and ads were perceived as annoying and confusing. An employer branding organization Universum, suggests that rather than focusing on one of these channels, companies should use different channels in their branding efforts in order to secure a strategic communication plan. Universum Global (2013) conducted a survey looking at young talents' preferences in communication tools and their effectiveness. According to the survey results when learning more about employers different communication channels work for different purposes. In order to build familiarity the channel needs to be widely reachable. To build awareness it is important to use a trustworthy channel to create the right kind of brand associations. Print media is the right mode of communication at this point. Online media is more effective when the prospective employees are more familiar with the organization. (Employer branding today 2013).

A quick poll conducted by Universum Global (2012) on the top communication channels to promote employer brand also support the relationship between traditional and online media. The poll measures the usage rate of eight different communication channels, which are presented in figure 4.

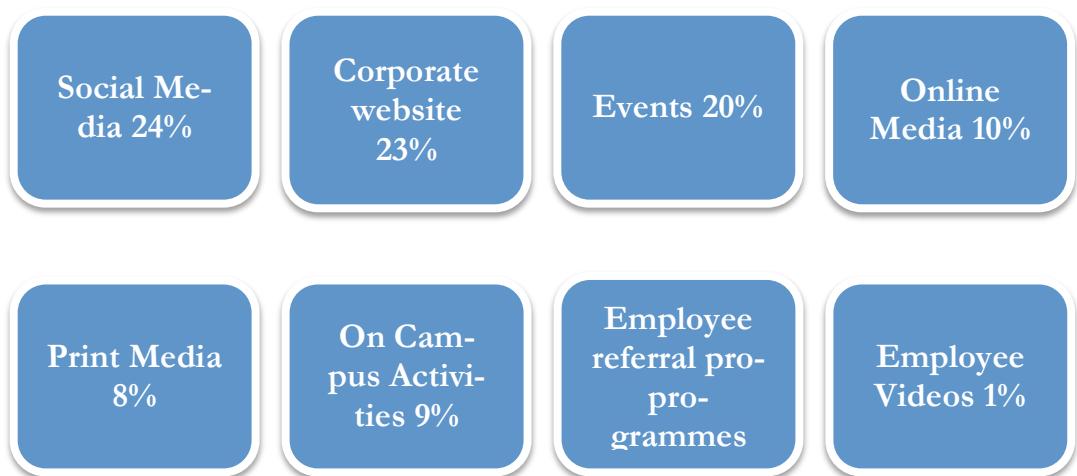


Figure 4. The usage rates of communication channels

Based on the poll results the top-three communication channels employer use to promote employer brand are social media, corporate websites and events (Universum 2012).

2.4 Employer brand management

This section focuses on how to manage the existing employer brand. The management aspects include company reputation, corporate social responsibility, international branding and the changes in labour market.

2.4.1 Brand reputation

Reputation, as defined by Fombrun and van Riel (2003, 10) is a "collective representation of a firm's past actions and results which describe its ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders". Reputation can be assessed by looking at the benefits it offers to different stakeholder groups, and can be used as a competitive advantage against competition. Reputation is concerned with an organization's external image and takes into account the past, present and future actions (Fombrun & Rindova 2000, in Martin & Hetrick 2006, 71). Grahame Dowling (2001, in Martin & Hetrick 2006, 22) suggests that reputation and brands go hand in hand. Corporate reputation is strongly linked to a brand and without a positive reputation it would be extremely difficult to create a successful brand.

Harris and De Chernatony (2001, 443) suggest a brand management model where reputation is linked with brand identity (figure 5). Their basic belief is that in order to create an overall positive perception of the organization and its brand, employees need to become brand ambassadors. In their model brand identity is closely linked to brand vision and the culture, the firm's positioning in the market, brand presentation styles and relationships and personality between employees and consumers. They claim that the brand identity of an organization is not always parallel to the reputation. Brand reputation is more important in terms of creating and measuring the performance of branding. This kind of thinking has caused organizations to monitor more carefully

how employees on different levels of the organization, all affect in the brand reputation (Harris & de Chernatony 2001, 442).

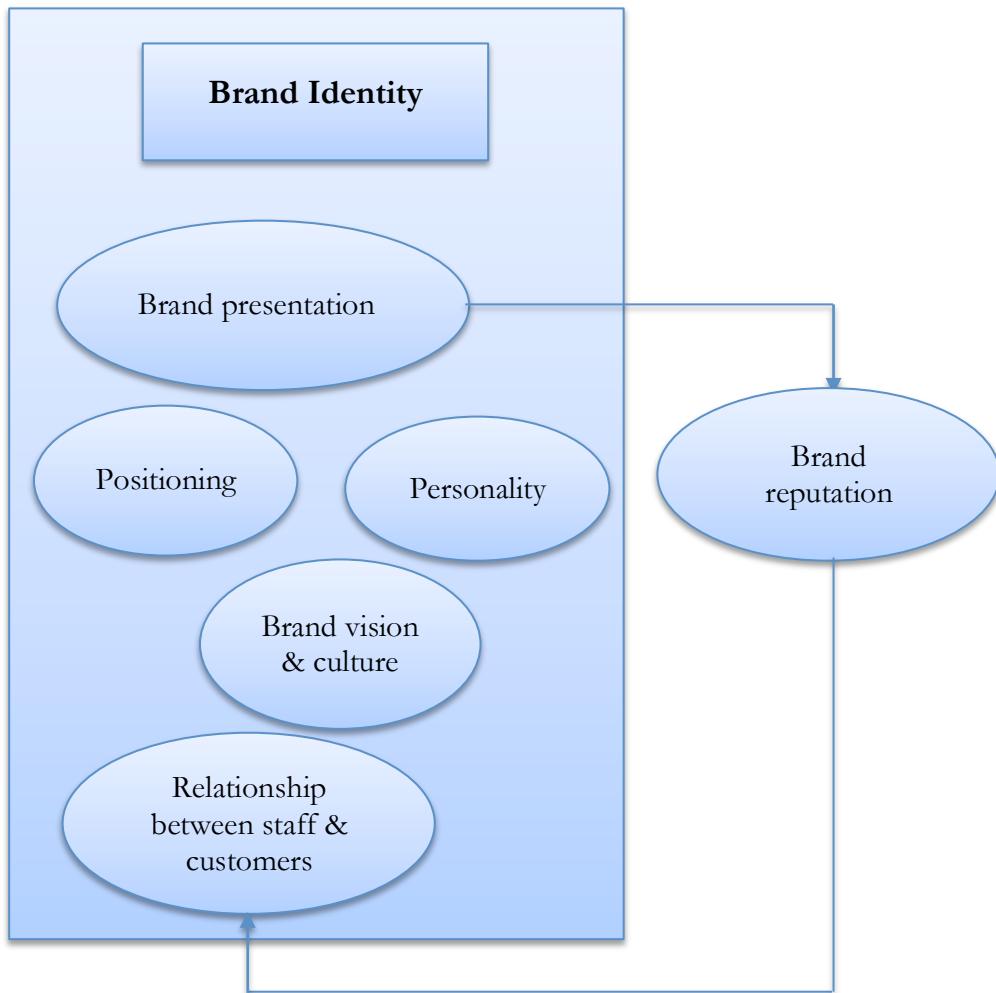


Figure 5. The relationship between brand identity and brand reputation (Harris & de Chernatony 2001, 443)

According to Hatch & Schultz (2001, 129-134), reputation results from the interactions and evaluations of stakeholder groups. They mostly come from:

- Informal interactions such as sales meetings, word of mouth, storytelling or customer experiences, which all affect on the firm's reputation and image. These types of evaluations are difficult to control.

- The business press, which includes business rankings based on industry and employment level. A lot of magazines, for example, rank the best place to work on a yearly basis.
- Potential stakeholders like consumers, funding organizations, shareholders and prospective employees.

2.4.2 Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has recently become one of the most rapidly growing interest in the business world. A wide number of companies are building their corporate identities and competing in the market based on their CSR policy (Martin & Hetrick 2006, 296). Studies have also suggested that good CRS policy has positive effects on employee engagement and commitment. Based on a study from the Work Foundation and the Future Foundation examining the impact of CSR to employer brand revealed that 20 per cent of people think of socially responsible employers as more attractive. There was also a clear link between companies that are socially responsible and the ones seen as good employers (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 153).

In employment context two of the key aspects in CSR are diversity and work life balance. Diversity in leading organizations, nowadays, focuses on equal opportunities, gender, nationality, style, race and culture. Work life balance emphasizes finding a balance between work and free time in order to perform good results. Negative effects such as stress resulting from too demanding work, often lower the employees' performance. This is an alarming issue that has caused many organizations to put more focus on the balance in work life (Barrow & Mosley 2011, 153).

Corporate Social Responsibility has two ways of improving the brand image in the eyes of the community. Firstly, the company can improve the brand reputation by gaining visibility as a trustworthy business, good place to work for and a fair neighbor in the community. Becoming a strong employer brand and receiving high ratings in good employer qualities helps to attract talented work force. The second way to score a better image in the society is to drive forward practices that meet the societal expectations. As an example, a company competing in the fast food market can introduce healthier

meal options in order to fight against obesity. This way the company will get attention in the media as a ‘socially responsible’ organization, which will have a positive impact on the overall brand as well as the employer brand (Martin & Hetrick 2006, 51).

2.4.3 Employer branding on a global level

The globalization of the business world has an effect on companies’ employer branding attempts. A global world offers more opportunities and a fast changing labor market for employees, which means that it is important to have a strong and attractive brand in order to get people’s attention (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 14). Due to transparency the labor market and the consumer market are becoming more similar. Thus, it is more challenging for companies to stay competitive in the consumer market without being attractive to employees (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 9). Many industries experience consolidation due to the merging of companies. When companies merge into a bigger and more global company, it has an effect on the brand. Brands become more global which affects to the brand image and employer branding strategies (Parment & Dyhre 2009, 17).

In order to successfully compete on the labor market, an organization needs to have a global employer brand strategy. In the best-practiced employer branding strategies the functions are handled from hiring to retiring covering the entire employee life cycle. In a global employer branding strategy the managers need to be able to: Understanding global issues and cultural diversity, localize the employer brand strategy, manage the employer brand for the long term (Brettminchington 2011).

2.4.4 Demographic changes in workforce

The emergence of Generation Y in the labour market has brought changes into the employer branding strategies. Younger people tend to be more global due to growing up with technology that allows communication across borders.

While many nations face a maturing population, the birthrates in most of the economically mature countries, are experiencing a downward trend. Due to this trend, many

western countries are facing difficulties in attracting the right talent (Brettminchington 2011).

In Finland, the aging population results an increase of foreigners in the labor market. The national working age is decreasing while the immigration decreases. In March of 2012, the city of Helsinki published a presentation of the expected labor market situation in the capital area from 2000 to 2020 (Figure 6). The data presents the amount of working age population from the ages of 20 to 64. According to the table, the current situation is that the foreigners (orange group) are dominating the working age population and in order for the economy to function, companies need to employ foreigners into Finland. This has an effect on the firms' employer branding as well. As most of the working age people are from other cultures, companies need to consider language and other cultural factors in branding. Employer branding and recruitment need to be communicated on a wider scale (Helsingin kaupunki 2012).

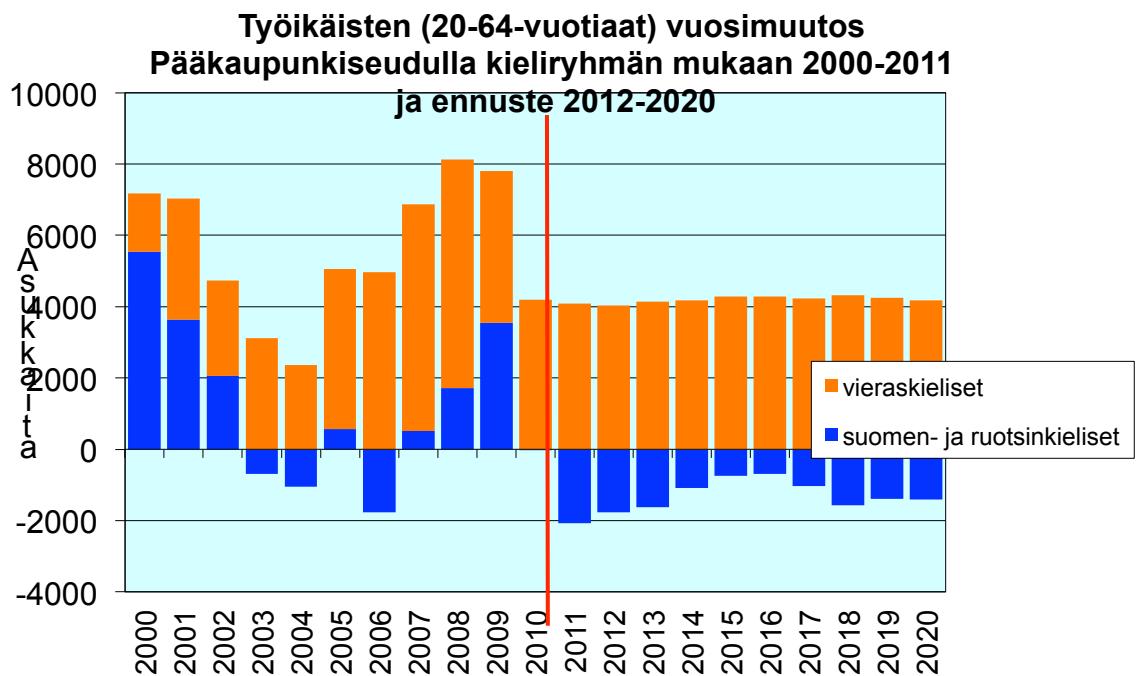


Figure 6. The yearly change in working age language groups in the capital area (Helsingin kaupunki 2012)

2.5 Summary of theories

What the theoretical framework highlights is that employer branding is an ongoing process. It starts off with employer brand creation, which includes thinking about the corporate values, personality and employment benefits. This phase also includes segmenting the employee market and defining what kinds of employees are important for the company.

After the pre-work for brand creation, an organization needs to be able to position its employer brand. This involves looking at the company's employee value proposition (EVP), which is the key factor that differentiates the firm from its competitors. EVP includes identity, profile and image of the company. Brand positioning includes finding the interrelation between employer and customer brands. The brand people work for and the brand people buy are closely related and they have a huge impact on one another. Satisfied employees work better towards the brand promise for customers.

Employer brand communication is linked to communication tools, target group for communication as well as the language used. Integrated marketing communications uses multiple tools to deliver the same message more efficiently. These tools can include social media, newspapers and events. The scope of communication depends on the target group. This differs among business sectors and product offerings. Lastly, the method of communication should be clearly targeted. The language and tone of the message should be modified according to the audience.

In order to manage the employer brand in long-term, the organizations need to focus on corporate reputation, corporate social responsibility and globalization. The reputation of the company affects the potential employees' perception of the company. Work-life balance and diversity are aspects of CSR that affect the employee life cycle nowadays. These are things that employers should include in order to attract talent. Another key aspect is diversity and internationalization. Companies are becoming more international all the time and they need to keep the employers up to date with their operations.

2.6 Theories used in the research

Since employer branding is still less familiar concept than product branding, it was crucial to introduce the topic starting from the very basics. The theory section consist of basic parts that were not used in the empirical part, but the most beneficial part of the theory were integrated into the interviews.

From the first section, which is employer brand creation, I integrated the definitions as well as values, personality and beliefs into the interview. These will be presented in questions one and three of the interview.

From the second theory section employer brand positioning, elements of employer value proposition are used in the research. More specifically, questions three and four will include discussions of how the company's image is perceived by potential employees.

The third section of theory: employer brand communication will be integrated into question two. This part discusses about the target group for communication as well as the communication methods used in each of the companies.

From the final theory part, employer brand management, I incorporated parts from global employer branding into the research. The fifth interviewee question is built based on this theory. Figure 7 provides a summary of the theories used according to each category.

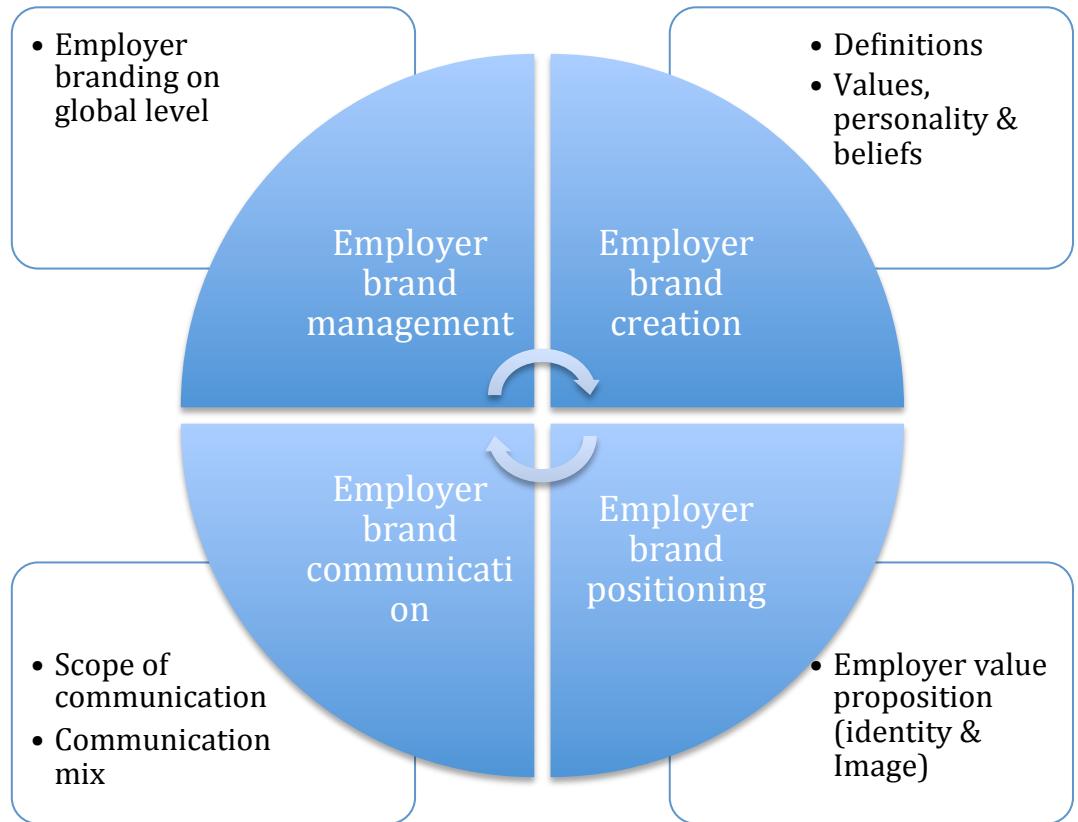


Figure 7. The theories used in research

3 Qualitative research

This chapter of the thesis explains the method used to conduct the research. The first section introduces the research approach and reasons for its selection. The next section reviews the design of the research as well as the data collection process.

3.1 Research methods

The research in this thesis was conducted through qualitative method. According to Bradley (2007), qualitative research is a method, which attempts to gain understanding of existing attitudes and opinion. Qualitative research is often unstructured and focuses on words, images, stories and concepts rather than measurements. Quantitative methods include focus groups, interviews and observation.

The qualitative method of research was selected because the main idea of the thesis is to find out customers' needs and opinions concerning the Talent Match service. The method used in this research was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are private one-to-one interviews between the interviewer and interviewee (Bradley 2007). This type of study requires listening to the interviewee's thoughts, which requires a substantial amount of time and focus. It was clear that qualitative method was the right one for this research since the thesis aims to find out emotions and needs of the customers.

3.2 Research design

The qualitative research was in the form of an interview. The interview questions were derived from the investigative questions with added sub-questions. The questions were:

1. How does the company view employer branding
 - How does the company define employer branding?
 - How important do you think employer branding is for your company?
2. Does the company have an employer-branding strategy?
 - How is the strategy implemented?
 - How is the brand communicated?

3. How does the company perceive itself as an employer?

- How would you describe your company as an employer?
- Does the employer brand align with company values?

4. The role of Talent Match in the company's employer branding

- What are the biggest employer branding issues for the company?
- How could TalentMatch help to solve these?
- How has Talent Match supported the company so far?

5. International Scope of employer branding

- How many international employees do you have now?
- How many international employees do you estimate to have in 5 years?
- How have you taken the demographic situation in Finland into consideration in your employer branding?

3.3 Data Collection

The target group for the research was companies who have used the Talent Match service at least one time. The sample of the research was five companies in technical business industries and the interviewees were company representatives who have been present at Talent Match. The companies are start-ups or SMEs that do not necessarily have separate human resources or marketing departments.

The data collection happened in two different ways: through face-to-face interviews or by phone. Three out of five were collected by face-to-face means and two were conducted by phone. The selection criteria between methods were based on interviewee preference. The interviews all lasted at least 25 minutes providing sufficient time for discussion. The language of the interviews varied according to the interviewee's language preference. The main language used was Finnish but one interview was conducted in English. The interview schedule is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Interview schedule

Interviewee	#1	#2	# 3	# 4	#5
Name	Timo Valtonen	Heikki Hallantie	Joseph Fakayode	Tatu Dufva	Sami Talpiainen
Company	Kiosked	Mobirox	Cloudberrytec	Connio	Kilosoft
Experience level	Head of Services	Marketing Director	Business Development & Marketing	Director of Product	Business Director
Business sector	Online smart content	Software solutions	Mobility solutions	Mobile solutions	Software development
Method of interview	Phone interview	Phone interview	Face-to-Face interview	Face-to-Face interview	Face-to-Face interview
Length of interview	30 minutes	25 minutes	45 minutes	25 minutes	25 minutes
Language of interview	Finnish	Finnish	English	Finnish	Finnish

Interviewee #1 Timo Valtonen is Head of services for Kiosked. He is also a partner in the organization. Kiosked is a Finnish based organization operating in the field of smart content platforms. The service allows brands to turn their content into storefronts and connect with followers everywhere. Kiosked has offices in Finland, The UK, USA and Singapore. The company has received a lot of interest and won multiple advertising and design awards (Kiosked 2013).

Interviewee #2 Heikki Hallantie works for a Finnish company called Mobirox. The firm is operating in the field of IT services offering development, design and project management. Their customers are mostly SMEs in the field of IT, commerce and edu-

cation. The company was founded in 2005 and is located in Espoo, Finland (Moxirox 2013). Hallantie is the Marketing Director of the organization.

Interviewee #3 Joseph Fakayode is doing business development and marketing in Clodberrytec. CBTec Oy is Finnish based organization founded in 2012 by former Nokia and Meego employees. The main operating area is mobility services with tailored solutions and professional services (Clodberrytec 2013). Fakayode recently graduated from Haaga-Helia UAS and has worked in the organization for about a year.

Interviewee #4 Tatu Dufva is from Connio. Connio is a Finnish based firm that operates in two countries: Finland and USA. The company provides mobile solutions such as strategy, design and development services for its customers. Connio aims to help its customers to engage with today's mobile consumers (Connio 2013). Dufva works as the Director of the product in the company.

Interviewee #5 Sami Talpiainen represents Kilosoft. Kilosoft Group Oy is a Finnish company founded in 2002. The operating area covers software development, network management and quality control. They provide services as well as consultancy for their customers (Kilosoft 2013). Talpiainen is a business director in the organization.

3.4 Reliability & Validity

Reliability is understood as a concept of repetition, which looks at whether the same results of the research would be obtained in another study with similar methods or by a different researcher (Ritchie & Lewis 2011, 270). Ensuring reliability in research is not a simple task since there are many possible threats. These threats include participant errors, participant bias, researcher errors and researcher bias. Participant error refers to a situation where a factor affects negatively to the participant's performance whereas participant bias causes the respondent to give out a false response. Researcher error occurs when a factor causes changes in the researcher's interpretations while in case of researcher bias the examiner is biased in response recording (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012, 192-193).

Validity is another key aspect while ensuring good research quality. Validity is understood as the accuracy of the research findings, and can be categorized into two dimensions: internal and external validity. Internal validity focuses on whether the research is investigating what was intended to research (Ritchie & Lewis 2011, 273) where as the external dimension looks at whether the findings can be generalized to fit similar target groups in different settings (Saunders et al 2012, 194).

The reliability of this research lies in the characteristics of the interviewees and the method of recording the results. All five of the interviewees are business professionals who all possessed knowledge and experience about the service in question. All of the respondents have been using the service, which was a strict requirement in interviewee selection. The research focused on opinions and current knowledge of the subject, which decreases the possibility of bias in the answers. One thing that could have affected negatively to reliability is participant error. In some cases the respondents seemed to mix the concept of employer branding into recruitment, which resulted the answers to get off topic. The recording of findings occurred simultaneously with the interviews, which means all the discussed topics were recorded immediately. This eliminates the possibility of forgetting crucial elements.

The research is valid due to sufficient number of the interviews and the background of the interviewees. The previous Talent Match event had 12 companies present and 5 of them were interviewed. All of the respondents are also experienced business professionals in their field and were able to answer to the presented questions. The chain of evidence in the thesis is clear and visible, which also provides validity. The amount of respondents makes the research easy to follow and all the respondents are presented and mentioned by name, which provides more faith in the results.

4 Findings

The fourth section of the thesis takes a look at the results of the qualitative research. The results are divided into five categories where each part represents a certain topic of the investigative questions.

4.1 Views on employer branding

The first section of the interview considers the interviewees' basic knowledge and perceptions of employer branding as a concept as well as a strategic decision for their company. When asked to define the concept in their own words, all of the interviewees had a rough idea what the term employer branding stands for. The definitions given included: "a way in which a company tries to attract talent", "organization's plan for visibility", "represents the company's reputation as an employer" and "the image a company portrays to potential employees, customers and other stakeholders".

In the first part, the respondents were also asked whether employer branding is important in their organization and how much effort is put into it. Interviewee #1 felt that employer branding is very important for their organization and the concept has been thought about a lot. He felt that they have not been able to execute the branding at a full potential, though, since they have only recently been able to hire a HR person. Before that, the product manager took care of branding and recruitment, which means there was neither time nor the right skills for employer branding strategy. According to interviewee #2 employer branding is not currently important for his firm. Mobirox is a small company employing only three people. They do not have the resources to focus on branding on any level at the moment even though they feel like it is important. Interviewee #3 admitted that employer branding is crucial for their industry. As a start-up company, CBTech needs top talent in order to grow and compete in their industry. Interviewee #4 mentioned that employer branding is important related to recruitment as it helps to find prospective talent but did not find a deeper need for it. Interviewee #5 felt that employer branding is important because even though a company does not focus on it, everyone already has some kind of image as an employer. He said they

have not put much effort to it but they have definitely thought how to differentiate themselves from competitors as an employer.

4.2 Employer branding strategy

The second focus area of the interview talks about the employer branding strategy. None of the five companies that were interviewed had a specific strategy for employer branding. This is understandable since all of the companies are relatively small in size and most of them are start-ups. Since the companies did not have a clear strategy, I focused more on the indirect employer branding: how and to whom they communicate their job vacancies and employment news.

Interviewee #1 said they use social media sites such as company website, LinkedIn, Monster, Twitter and Facebook to communicate for prospective employees. In addition to social media they have attended a few recruitment events. He explained that Kiosked also puts much effort into word-of-mouth. They have an internal rewarding system for recommending a good employee to the company. Their target group varies according to the open position.

Interviewee #2 told that their communication is targeted to graduating students from technical schools such as Aalto University and Metropolia UAS. They prefer targeting Finnish-speaking students since they do not have a need for non-Finnish speaking employees considering their business environment. They use word-of-mouth communication and have connections with the schools. They have also attended a few recruiting events and use social media sites like Twitter.

Interviewee #3 explained that their company targets graduated students in the field of business and engineering. They have used multiple different communication tools. These include social media such as company website, Facebook and LinkedIn, Outsourced HR companies like Barona and Academic Work as well as direct emails to lecturers at schools who forward open job positions to students.

Interviewee #4's company also uses a wide communication mix. They have participated into competitions like Finland's best place to work for which communicates a positive employer brand. They use word-of-mouth, LinkedIn, monster and have attended events. They have also used headhunters in finding top talent for their organization. Their main target audiences are developers. They do not target a specific age or nationality group; they put more emphasis on the skill set.

Interviewee #5's company follows a different pattern. They have a clear focus group: experienced business professionals around the age of 40. Finnish language skills are important for them due to the customer base. They communicate via Company website, LinkedIn, monster and events.

The most used communication tools of the interviewees are illustrated in figure 8. They spread into four clear categories shown above.

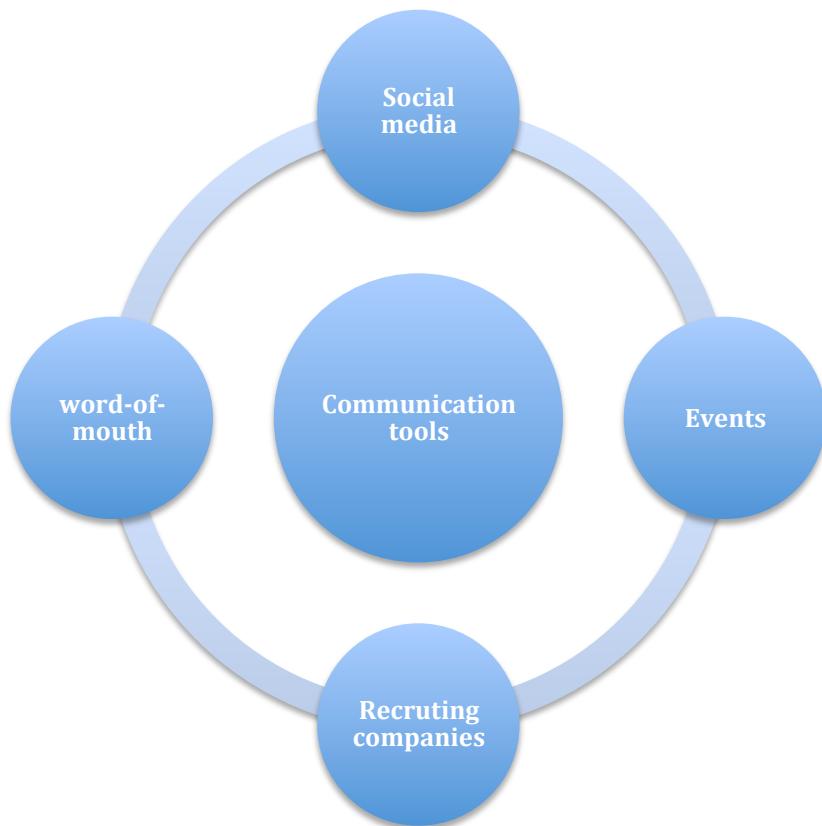


Figure 8. Most used communication tools among interviewees

4.3 Own employer brand

The third section of the interview investigates how the interviewees see their own company's employer brand. The respondents were asked to describe their organization with adjectives that they feel suit the employer profile. Another question was do they feel like the employer brand they described is in line with the company values.

Interviewee #1 described Kiosked as interesting, dynamic, challenging organization that has potential for anyone. He feels like these adjectives support the company values well. Interviewee #2 depicted Mobirox as a potential and reckoned employer that offers challenge and growth opportunities. He also feels like the values are aligned with the described employer brand. Interviewee #3 defined Cloudberrytec as fresh, energetic, productive, agile, international, caring, flexible and trustworthy organization. He thinks the values and employer brand somewhat align. Interviewee #4 described Connio as open, international and youthful company that develops and learns more everyday. The values agree with the employer brand. Interviewee #5 said that Kilosoft is an honest and hard-working company, where people are not a family but rather come to do their job to a good environment. He also feels like the employer brand and values go hand-in-hand.

Figure 9 highlights in a company specific form how the interviewees see their employer brand personality. The descriptions vary distinctively, and allow seeing the differences between the interviewed companies.

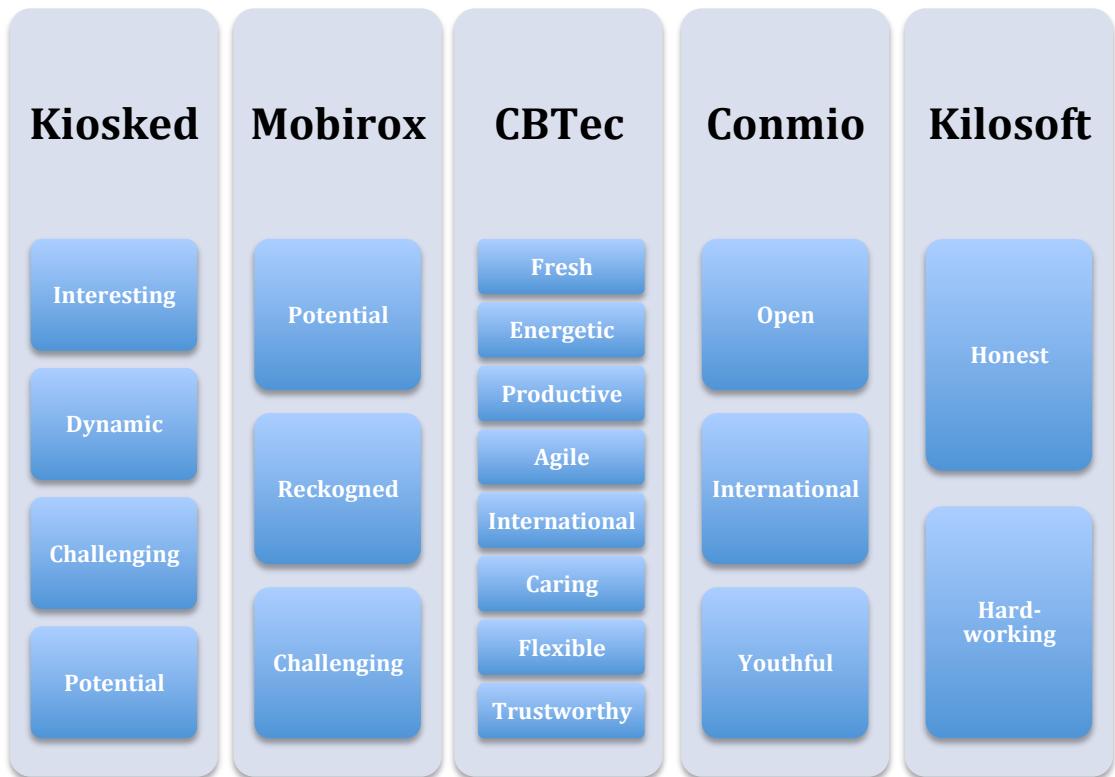


Figure 9. How interviewees rate their organization's employer brand personality

4.4 The role of Talent Match

The fourth part of the interviews inspected the Talent Match service in more detail. This section started by asking the interviewees how they liked the service and has it been beneficial for the organization. The focus was in both the event as well as the online recruitment tool. After having received the interviewee's basic perception of the service, I moved into the development ideas for the service. Figure 10 presents a summary of the interviewees' opinions on Talent Match service.

Interviewee #1 seemed content with the service. He said that the event helped to meet target groups that might not have otherwise been attracted. When talking about the online tool, he felt like it was too complex and heavy to use. It has been beneficial for screening candidates and booking meetings for the event but it should be simplified for everyday use. When asked about their employer branding issues, he explained that they are afraid they have left a negative image of the company to unselected job applicants. He said they have not had the time or resources to answer all the applicants that were

not selected and they fear that these people have a negative image of the company. He felt like this is something that Talent Match cannot help them to do but it is rather in their own hands to revise the recruiting process.

Interviewee #2 described the service as interesting but not beneficial for their organization. He said the target group was limited and they did not find any candidate from the event. Yet, he felt like being present in the event enabled them to brand the organization so in the context of employer branding it was beneficial. The main branding issue for them is to be on time with branding as well as to predict the need for new personnel. He did not feel like Talent Match could solve these issues because the service is not for them.

Interviewee #3 seemed to have benefited from the service the most. He said the concept of the event was good. The target group had been correct for them since at the time of the interview they had recruited one person from the event and five candidates were still in the interviewing process. He did mention that the participants could be younger and they had hoped for a little more Finnish applicants though. He also felt like the online tool has too heavy for a normal person to use and it should be simplified a lot. According to interviewee #3, his organization has many things to improve in terms of employer branding. He feels like the job descriptions are not done properly due to the lack of a HR person. Many people take care of the applications, which complicate the communication during an application period. They also do not have time to answer all the applicants, which can easily cause a negative company image. He feels like there is a need for Talent Match in their branding issues. He suggested an employer branding course or event that trains organizations to consider their employer branding more and helps them to understand which factors affect the brand.

Interviewee #4 said that their organization did not receive much value from the service due to the lack of developers among the participants. He admitted that for branding purposes, being present on the event was beneficial, although the branding focuses on very small audience. For their organization, the biggest branding issues are to first of all, find the correct talent and then to communicate to this group. They want to target

people who are not necessarily even looking for a job but would be perfect for the position. He felt like Talent Match could be helpful in this sense by expanding the variation among participants. They hope to see more developers and experienced business professionals. Even though nationality does not affect the hiring process in their company, they also felt like there were too little Finnish people present.

According to interviewee #5 the concept of the service was interesting and worked well. He mentioned the same problem with wrong target group in the event and therefore his company has not received value in the context of new recruits. He said they received business leads in the event and had a good opportunity to get visibility though. They do not have marketing or HR people in the organizations so he said it would be interesting to attend an event about branding in order to learn more. In order for them to participate again, the target group needs to be expanded in the same direction as interviewee #4 mentioned.

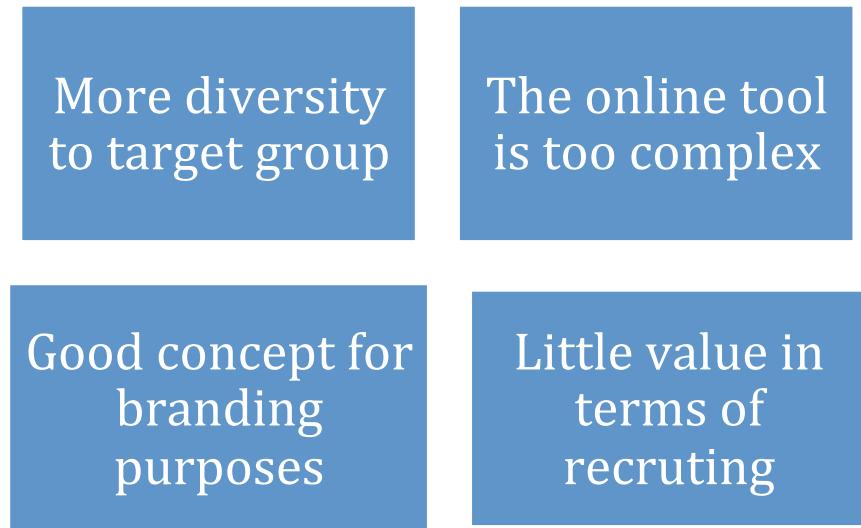


Figure 10. Interviewees' opinions on Talent Match

4.5 International branding operations

Because Talent Match is a service that aims to help foreigners enter the Finnish labor market, the last part of the interview questioned the companies international operations. Firstly, the respondents were asked how international the organization is by nationality. Table 2 presents the level of the companies' international orientation. They

were also asked about their future plans for international operations and whether they have been considering the labor market trend that has entered the capital area of Finland.

Interviewee #1's company Kiosked is very international oriented organization in its operations as well as workforce. Kiosked operates in Finland, Britain, USA and Singapore and therefore they need to be aware of branding across cultures. The global attitude is also present among the personnel. According to interviewee #1 Kiosked has around 50 employees out of which 30 are outside of Finland. This is a good example of a modern Finnish organization that values talent from different cultures and is able to look outside the national borders. They feel like they have currently a nice balance of cultures working for the organization and want to keep the same approach for the future. Interviewee #1 was aware of the employment situation facing the capital area in Finland and said that they have been considering this and their recruitment approach supports the trend. They want to hire people from different cultures and backgrounds. When it comes to branding they use English as the common language in the organization and all the external communication is also in English.

Interviewee #2's company has a very different situation. Mobirox is a small company of only three employees. All the employees are Finnish and they do not have a possibility to hire anyone who is not able to communicate in Finnish. He said this is because all of their current customers are Finnish and they need to be able to communicate to the customers. He was also aware of the workforce situation but could not say whether it would be possible for them to recruit foreigners in the future. This is possibly why Talent Match was not the most suitable service for Mobirox since the aim is to promote hiring foreigners.

Interviewee #3's company Cloudberrytec has a similar approach as Kiosked. They also operate globally in Finland, Sweden and USA. They have 12 employees from which 9 are non-Finnish citizens. The respondent felt like the company will probably continue the same path of hiring people from different cultures in the future as that is the main trend in Finland and it suits their business operations. They also use English for inter-

nal and external communication but use direct communication in country specific language.

Interviewee #4 works for Connio, which is an organization operating in two markets: Finland and USA. The company is located currently in Helsinki and New York. In the Finnish office they have 40 employees and half of them are non-Finnish born. In New York they have 5 employees. He is aware of the situation in Finland and it does not affect their organization because they only look at the personality and skills of the recruits. Nationality or background does not affect their decision. This is why it is hard to predict the future employment situation according to nationality he said.

Interviewee #5 works for Kilosoft, which is in a quite similar operating environment with interviewee #2's company Mobirox. They operate in Finland and all their customers are Finnish companies. They employ around 80 people and do not currently have any foreign employees due to the customer base and the need for Finnish skills. In case of a change in the customer base they would be ready to hire foreigners said the interviewee. He also seemed to be aware of the labor market trend but said there is nothing they can do about it as long as they have only Finnish customers.

Table 2. The level of international orientation (numbers from June-August 2013)

Company	Kiosked	Mobirox	CBTec	Connio	Kilosoft
Operating countries	Finland USA UK Singapore	Finland	Finland Sweden USA	Finland USA	Finland
Total number of employees (Finland)	50	2	12	40	80
Number of non-Finnish employees (Finland)	30	0	9	20	0

5 Discussion

The last part of the thesis is the discussion part. This section summarizes and discusses the research findings in the writer's point of view. The discussion of findings is presented in the form of investigative question. The conclusion part talks about the overall situation of employer branding knowledge in Finland based on research results. Lastly, suggestions will be made for the case company of how to take advantage of the current situation and what changes could be beneficial for them.

1. How does the company view employer branding?

The first question was involving how well the respondents know the concept. This was done by asking them to define the term as well as thinking how important employer branding is for the organization in question. All the company representatives were able to define employer branding in their own words. Some definitions were very short and simple some went more into detail. This proves that all the interviewees have at least heard of the subject and have some kind of idea on what it is about.

The second question that involved the importance of the concept proves a smaller commitment to the actual execution of employer branding. Almost all the respondents claimed that employer branding is very important and crucial for their organization. Yet, none of the firms that took part in the research had a strategy or plans to execute employer branding. This can be explained by the size of the organizations and the lack of correct personnel, but if the concept is so important for them why haven't they put more focus on this area. I think that even SMEs can have a successful employer brand by putting thought in the branding process. Employer brand does not look at the size of the company rather the actions it performs. Employer branding consist of small steps that any company can integrate into its daily actions. Perhaps being part of the interview provoked some of the firms to put more focus on this area.

2. Does the company have an employer branding strategy?

The second area of the interviews asked directly about the employer branding strategies or other ways of communicating to the prospective employees. The main aspects in this focus area were the tools of communication and the target group. As mentioned above, none of the companies have a strategy for employer branding. Some companies did not have any branding strategy since they are still in the early stage of business. All the companies have some form of communication to the external environment even if the communication is not thought in strategic point of view. All the companies use some kind of social media in means of communication. The most common were company website, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and job seeking websites like Monster. The other methods of communication used were recruiting events, external recruiting companies such as Academic Work and word-of-mouth.

When it comes to the target group some companies had very specific requirements to how they are targeting while for some the target audience varies according to situation. Two companies are only targeting Finnish-speaking professionals due to customer needs others are open and aspiring towards an international workforce. I got a feeling that none of the companies had a specific communication plan inside the company on how and what to communicate. Some of the interviewees admitted that the communication internally and externally is very mixed at the moment and this is an area that would need more focus.

3. How does the company perceive itself as an employer?

The third part of the interviews focused on the ways the company representatives see their organization as an employer brand. This was fairly easy question for the interviewees to answer but it seemed quite hard for them to form suitable adjectives. Even though the task was to describe the organization as they see it, it seemed like some interviewees had not thought about their organizational brand at all. On the contrary some interviewees had a very clear and precise perception of the brand, which suggests unity and openness inside the organization. Looking at the adjectives given, it is easy to see the personality of the organization. Mobirox and Kilosoft for example, who already revealed earlier to follow a more formal business style and operate only in Finland,

describe their companies in limited and safe adjectives. Interviewee #3 from CBTec on the contrary, came up with very different and personal adjectives that suit the organization and may differentiate it in the marketplace. He seemed to have a clear idea of the organizational personality. This part of the interview provided very interesting results that help to support the earlier answers of the interviewees and to test them if their answers and feelings go hand-in-hand.

4. What is the role of Talent Match in the company's employer branding?

The fourth part inspected the ways the companies have benefited from Talent match so far, and are there other areas they need help with. All in all, it seems like all the companies felt like the service has helped them to brand their organization at least in some level. Only one company out of the five had recruited employees from the event, which is the main idea of the service. This comes back to the problem with participants.

When discussing about the employer branding issues the companies are currently facing, all of the firms seemed to have some concerns about their current brand in the market. This is also one part where the interviewees started to mix employer branding with recruitment. Two of the interviewees identified to have a problem in communicating to applicants. They fear that the lack of communication has resulted into a negative image of the company. The three other companies identified most of their issues in recruitment issues like where to find top talent and how to anticipate the need for new employees. Three out of five interviewees felt like Talent Match could provide help for them in their above-mentioned issues, the others felt like it is something they need to fix internally.

5. Does the company have international branding operations?

The last part of the research focused on the international operations of the companies and more specifically how it affects their branding. Firstly, I asked about how international the organization's workforce is and how are the future plans concerning the workforce. After that the interviewees were introduced the current nationality situation in Finnish labor market and asked how their company takes that into account.

Three out of the five companies are currently making business in international markets. These companies also have multinational workforce and they seem to value the importance of cross-cultural teams. In all three companies, over half of the employees are born somewhere else than Finland. Two of the organizations are operating only inside Finland and cannot hire foreigners at the moment due to customer needs.

When talking about the labor market situation facing Finland, all of the representatives claimed to be informed about the situation. The three internationally operating companies seemed relaxed about it since they are already hiring foreigners and nationality does not play a role in their firm. The two companies operating in Finland acknowledged the situation but said there is nothing they can do about it as long as their customers speak Finnish. I think these two companies should think where their organizations are headed in the long term since the business in Finland is getting more international every year and hiring foreigners will be a crucial element.

5.1 Conclusion

After conducting the research, it is quite evident that the concept of employer branding is still fairly unknown in Finland. All the companies that were interviewed in the thesis had some kind of idea of what employer branding stands for and how it is related to marketing and recruiting activities. One factor that could affect to the reliability of the respondents' knowledge of the topic is the fact that the latest Talent Match event had a guest speaker Jonna Sjövall the country manager of Universum Finland, talking about the subject of employer branding. In the event Jonna asked the audience how many know what employer branding is, around five hands out of an audience of 50 people were raised. This is one factor that suggests ambiguity in the concept of employer branding among business professionals. Another factor that has led to argue this is the scope of the respondents' answers. In general, the interview answers started with employer branding in mind but some of the interviewees seemed to easily confuse the term with recruiting and HR, which led them to switch the focus on these areas. For example, when asked about how they communicate the company's employer brand to prospective employees, some respondents answered how they recruit their employees.

This shows that there is a wide gap in understanding the differences between these concepts. Based on these aspects there definitely is a need for expanding the knowledge about employer branding in Finland. This is something that Otaniemi Marketing can take advantage of.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the research results there are two things the case company Otaniemi Marketing should do: develop Talent Match according to the customer needs and consider the need for a new service focusing on employer branding. Both of these suggestions support the overall need for this thesis research.

According to the interviews Talent Match has two main weaknesses: the participants and the online tool. Almost all the interviewees felt like the concept of the service was very good but there should be more Finnish professionals among the participants. They also hoped to see more developers and experienced business professionals. At the moment, Talent Match seems to be marketed mostly to foreigners who look for a job in Finland. I think the marketing efforts should also be targeted towards the Finnish labor market in order to gain Finnish participants. Mixing foreign and Finnish participants would make the service more attractive for the companies taking part. Widening the target market might also bring a greater variety of experience level among participants. Another issue with the service was the heavy and complex online tool for making a personal job profile and reserving one-on-one meetings. Otaniemi Marketing should either abandon the online tool or to simplify it so that busy people have time to use it.

The other suggestion is to possibly set up a new service alongside Talent Match. The research in this thesis has identified that there is a need to help Finnish companies understand employer branding. This is one of the aims the case company initially set up for the researcher. I suggest that Otaniemi Marketing would come up with a complementary training service for the companies who use Talent Match. Prior to the Talent Talks event, the companies would have a training session about employer branding in order to learn the importance of branding. This allows them to take better advantage

of the event, and possibly attract more employee candidates. This can result into a more successful outcome, and hence, increase the customer experience of Talent Match. After this it is up to the companies whether they start using the learned tools or not. At this point, outsourcing all the firms' employer branding to Otaniemi Marketing is not advisable since there are too many companies who need help in this area. This would create too much work for the case company. At the present, raising awareness of the concept is the key issue. In the end, it is up to every company to make the strategic decisions for themselves.

5.3 Personal assessment

After having finished the thesis I feel that the overall aim of the study was achieved successfully. The in-depth interviews provided a lot of information about the familiarity of employer branding. In the beginning of the process, I did not expect the concept to be so vaguely known or to be mixed with recruitment actions. The interviews also provided good development ideas for Talent Match to take into consideration. The interviews with the companies were extremely interesting because all five companies have different methods and views concerning employer branding.

The thesis process affected also me in a positive way because it raised my knowledge about the concept and woke up a great interest towards the subject. I am considering a career in the field of employer branding. I am also in a close contact with the case company and have had discussions about the development of a new employer branding service.

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7 Attachments

Attachment 1. Interview framework

1. How does the company view employer branding
 - How does the company define employer branding?
 - How important do you think employer branding is for your company?
2. Does the company have an employer-branding strategy?
 - How is the strategy implemented?
 - How is the brand communicated?
3. How does the company perceive itself as an employer?
 - How would you describe your company as an employer?
 - Does the employer brand align with company values?
4. The role of Talent Match in the company's employer branding
 - What are the biggest employer branding issues for the company?
 - How could Talent Match help to solve these?
 - How has Talent Match supported the company so far?
5. International Scope of employer branding
 - How many international employees do you have now?
 - How many international employees do you estimate to have in 5 years?
 - How have you taken the demographic situation in Finland into consideration in your employer branding?