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SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMPLOYER BRAND COMMUNICATION

Focus on SMEs in Finland

Case study: Smarp Oy

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ABSTRACT

In today's business environment, due to the lack of highly skilled employees, employer brand communication has been a necessity for organizations in all industries. Despite various tools produced to alleviate the employer brand communication, social media has been selected as highly effective tool for employer brand communication due to its significant benefits. Given that enhancing employee engagement in social media is a new challenge for brand marketers nowadays, this thesis aims at describing the process of applying social media in employer brand communication and explaining the ways to engage employees on social media at work.

Throughout this study, case study method is employed with support of a content analysis procedure. Primary data was collected mostly from the case study named Smarp Oy, including the interviews with top management of the company, author's observation and analysis of social media used internally at the case company. The secondary data was collected carefully from only the case company's website and blog, in order to avoid inaccurate results.

Findings of the research indicate that in order to be successful in applying social media in employer brand communication, an investment in facilitating the usage of social media at work is required. Building a good cultureship is crucial to eliminate fears and to encourage employees to share opinions in social media. Moreover, an accurate measurement method is highly recommended to measure internal efforts put in social media and to develop the communication plan.

To conclude, the author has achieved the research objectives and this study is a beneficial reference for further research on the same topic. For further research, generalization of this topic is an obvious contribution to the industry. Moreover, as new technologies have been developed constantly, a prediction of new trends in internal branding would be very interesting.

Keywords: Employer branding, social media, employee engagement, communication, psychological contract, case study

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ABBREVIATION

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
EMV	Earned Media Value
EVP	Employer Value Proposition
PPC	Pay per Click
SaaS	Software as a Service
SME	Search Engine Marketing
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
Social PPC	Social Pay Per Click or Pay Per Click on Social Media
WOM	Word of Mouth
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the application of social media in employer branding communication. It aims at giving the readers a comprehensive understanding of social media utilized internally and explains how to engage employees in social media at work. In this introduction chapter, the background of the research will be covered, followed by the research objectives which define research question and sub-questions. Besides, scope and limitation of this research will be mentioned. Theoretical framework will be explained. At the end of this chapter, thesis structure will be provided.

1.1 Background

“It is never an idea, technology, market forces, or access to capital that makes a company innovative. What differentiates an innovative company from an average company is the people working inside the company.” Jag Randhawa

Brand and employer brand in the 21st century

Historically, the word “brand” comes from the Norse word “brandr”, which stands for “fire” or “burn” (Clifton 2009). It indicates the act of producers burning the mark on their products. However, in the world of mass-marketing nowadays, the actual “brand” that we know was originated from the industrial revolution at the end of 19th century. During the revolution, factories were built and products were produced at a faster pace. The industrialization diversified the range of existing products. Consequently, the number of products increased without any change in consumer’s demands. Thus, market expansion is a must for further business development. Consumers are, however, likely to be loyal to the local brands which were used for many years. As a result, companies were motivated to raise the value of their brands to strengthen the competitiveness over the local brands and create a trustable image in consumer’s mind. Since then, people literally “live the brand”. (David 2005.)

In the 21st century, branding process have considerably changed. In recent time, “brand” has been among the most popular words in the business world.

Everybody is talking about brands and every company has plan to brand new products. The definition of brand varied from a name or a logo to a culture within an organization (Knapp 2000). In terms of mass-marketing, brand is a process of distinguishing a product from its alternatives and building up a trustable image for that product. An effective brand is more than designing and applying a nice logo or a catchy name on a product. It must, in fact, engage their customers and create a deeper connection with them. In other words, branding process can decide not only the business's sustainability but also the future of brand's success or failure. (Knapp 2000.)

Recently, the business environment has changed all over the world. Due to the economic crisis, it is essential to every organization to adapt to the changing nature of business world. A significant consequence of the crisis is the organizations' attempt to reduce cost, improve productivity and create more connection with all of stakeholders. On the other hand, the fast-paced lifestyle leads to a constant change in our career objectives. Many people are now seeking for jobs based on the culture within the companies, financial reward is no longer a motivation for all talents, they are paying much more attention to the workplaces where they can make contribution to the growth of the organization in a meaningful way and be both financially and emotionally rewarded. The change in people's career objective has formed up a new competition among the employers, which is called "the war of talents". To survive that so-called war, it is crucial to stand out as an employer of choice in order to attract and retain the best people. By other words, companies regardless of industries need to establish an image of the brand in the context of employment, which is called "employer brand". (Barrow & Mosley 2005.)

Social media as a top communication channel to promote employer brand

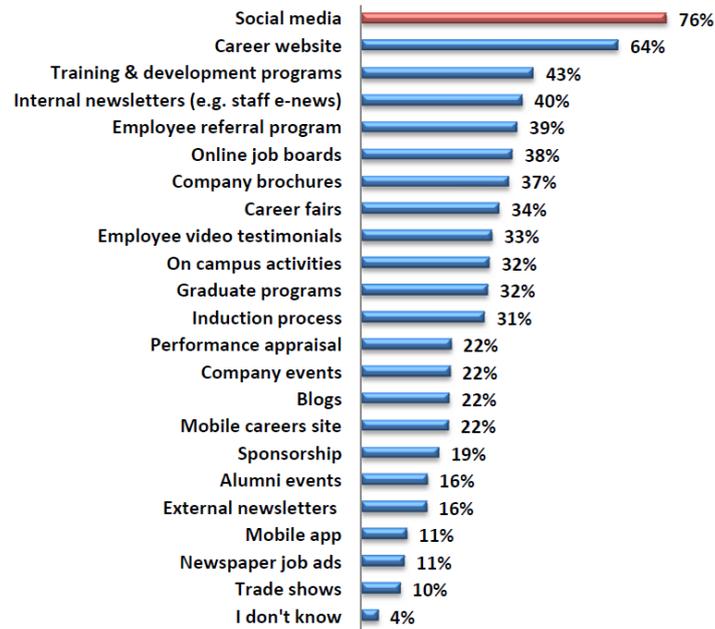
Social media has been recently a phenomenom in online communication. Like "brand", it is likely that nobody is immune to social media. For example, Facebook and Twitter are used as social networking, Wordpress and Tumblr are used for sharing ideas. Regarding the uploading of photos and videos, Instagram and Youtube are the most common channels. Besides, Wikipedia is an effective

tool for sharing knowledge. Social media has not only changed the way people live but it also has provided new methods for doing business and promoting their brands. (Jue et al. 2010.)

As mentioned above, the nature of business environment has changed considerably. The invention of internet and social media eliminates all existing borders and facilitates the flows of information, which altogether enhances communication's efficiency (Jue et al. 2010). Nevertheless, social media has positive and negative sides. The intensive flow of information in social media worldwide has increased the complexity and competitiveness of the business environment. If one positive post can be reached by million of people, a negative one can be reached by the same number of people. Those threats therefore pose challenges to management. (Jue et al. 2010.)

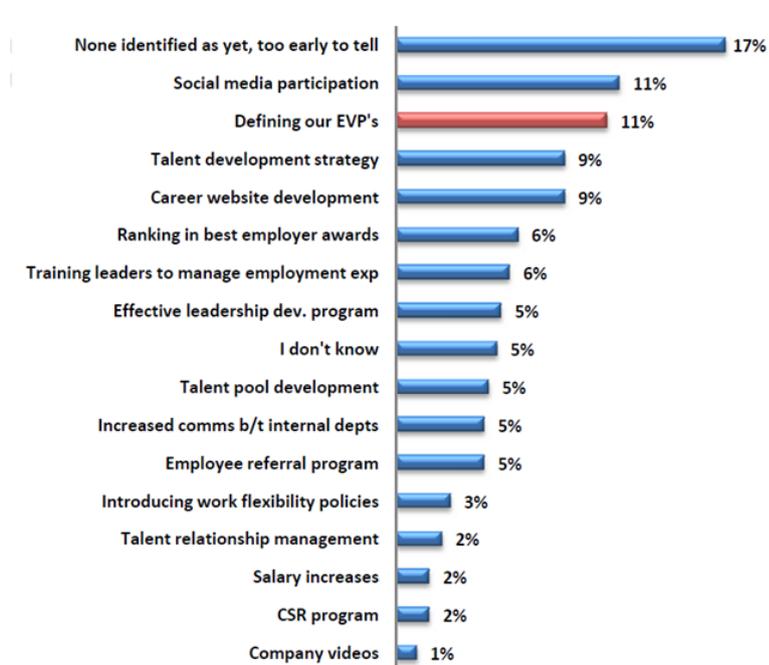
In external communication, social media has been found effective in establishing a stable brand image, sending brand's messages and improving customer relation through participation and interaction (van Zyl 2009, 915). Additionally, social media has been also adopted to internal communication and used as strategic tools in human resources management for accessing more information on candidates (Kluemper & Rosen 2009, 567), for cost effective recruitment, and for retaining the best people within the organization (van Zyl 2009, 907). In addition, among many benefits of using social media internally, it is useful to maintain conversation with employees, which can make a huge impact on promoting employer brand (Wandel 2008).

According to a survey made by Employer Brand International, although many communication media are in used, social media is the most popular channel during 2014. Employer Brand International's survey also indicates that social media participation along with defining Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is the most effective activities in enhancing company's employer brand.



Employer Brand International 2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Study

FIGURE 1. The main communication media used to communicate employer brand during 2014 (Brett 2014)



© Employer Brand International 2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Study

FIGURE 2. Most effective activities in enhancing company's employer brand (Brett 2014)

There are multiple ways to explain the rise in the use of social media to communicate employer brand. First of all, social media is described as a useful channel for “real-time interaction” (Kent 2010 645). On the other hand, van Zyl (2009) refers social media as an application that provides a cost-effective way to approach the new relationship and maintain the existing one. All of these definitions point out the fact that social media is associated with establishing relationships, which is usually long-term in business context, by creating and maintaining a two-way communication between various parties involved in it. (van Zyl 2009.)

Additionally, the inventions of internet and web 2.0 have diversified communication methods. These new methods facilitate the wider sharing of information and ideas, and create an easier access to information. However, social media are just the tools supporting all those sharing activities. It is people that are the ones who directly influence in stakeholders’ brand perception. As a result, reputation management in today business is in a need of communicating not only with customers and investors, but also with the people who are affecting their perception in both product brand and employer brand. Those are, in fact, employees.

Recently, there have been a few studies on the possibilities to adopt social media in communication in order to establish, maintain and develop the reputation of any organization of all kinds as an employer of choice. Specifically, the research has mainly focused on how the applications can be used. Many researchers have paid attention to distribution of communities on social media and the current employees’ participation and interaction online. For that reason, this research needs to step further and aims at describing the connection between social media and employer brand management. In other words, it indicates the ways of enhancing employee engagement on social media in order to communicate employer brand. The following subchapters will provide more details of the thesis’s objectives.

1.2 Research objectives and research questions

According to Yin (1998, 10), defining the research questions is highly important in the direction of any research. It influence the strategy that is adopted to attain the specific accomplishment that the researchers aim at (Saunders et al. 2012).

The objectives of this thesis is providing an understanding of employer brand and explaining the process of employer brand on social media in the most understandable approach; to analyse the case study; and to construct a development plan based on the case's analysis.

The main research question is formulated as follow:

How does a small and medium enterprises (SME) engage employees to social media in order to communicate employer brand?

In order to guide the literature review and research methods and to answer the main research question, the following sub-questions are formed:

- What are the roles of employer brand?
- How do employers satisfy the psychological contract on social media?
- How does an SME apply social media in communicating employer brand?
- How does an SME measure the effectiveness of using social media at work?
- What are benefits of using social media in employer brand communication?
- What are challenges that employers are facing in managing employer brand in social media?

1.3 Scope and limitations

In comparison with corporate brand and product brand, employer brand is a very new concept, which, however, is getting more popular in the modern business environment. In order to successfully communicate employer brand, organizations need to put an investment into brand marketing. For that reason, it becomes much easier for large companies, due to financial issue. However, in this thesis, the

author pays the main attention to the possibility of applying social media into employer brand management process by considerably inexpensive yet effective tools for communicating. Consequently, adopting social media in communication process possibly helps small and medium enterprises (SMEs) establish their employer brands. Besides, there is a limited number of studies on employer brand management in Finland. For all of those reasons above, the scope of this research was defined to include only SMEs in Finland that have less than 250 employees. These companies can be headquartered either in Finland or outside Finland.

This thesis inevitably has certain limitations. In fact, knowing the research limitation is an opportunity to develop strategies and to provide suggestion for further research in the future. In this thesis, the biggest limitation is the ability to generalize the research topic. As mentioned above, only SMEs in Finland are included in the research scope and only one case company is examined in the empirical part. As such, the findings may not be applied to many cases, especially to the larger companies in other countries. There are other limitations that need to be taken into account. Firstly, employer brand communication is relatively a new topic, even though many studies are in progress. There is, however, still a shortage of prior practices and research regarding the same topic. Consequently, the conduction of theoretical framework has become more difficult. On the other hand, technologies in social media are innovated constantly and demographic of workforce has been changed in the past few years. As a result, previous research will soon be antiquated in the current context. The constant change in many aspects of business environment also increases the risk that by the time this thesis is published, the findings and confirmation will be no more accurate.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This thesis aims at describing the application of social media in employer brand process. In the theoretical chapter, it is necessary to demonstrate the concept of employer brand and the concept of social media in the world of mass-marketing nowadays. For more specific, in the first part of this chapter, there is a comparison between corporate brand and employer brand. After that, the framework of employer brand is introduced. In this part, to indicate the importance of

establishing a right employer brand image within the organization, the brand engagement model is explained. Moreover, the theory of promises made between the employer brand and organizational internal stakeholders is provided.

In the second part, social media concept is comprehensively explained by defining social media and by describing the main social media tools used nowadays in brand management. Furthermore, to clarify the implications of functionality on each of the dominating social media tools, honeycomb of social media theory is employed.

Besides, application of social media in employer brand process is examined. Gamification, as a representative strategy used in enhancing employee engagement on social media, is demonstrated. Employer brand communication process is adapted in social media context and measurement of employer brand management on social media is explained.

Last but not least, at the end of this chapter, an interpretation of social media insights and suggestions for measurement will be provided.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is consisely illustrated in figure 3:

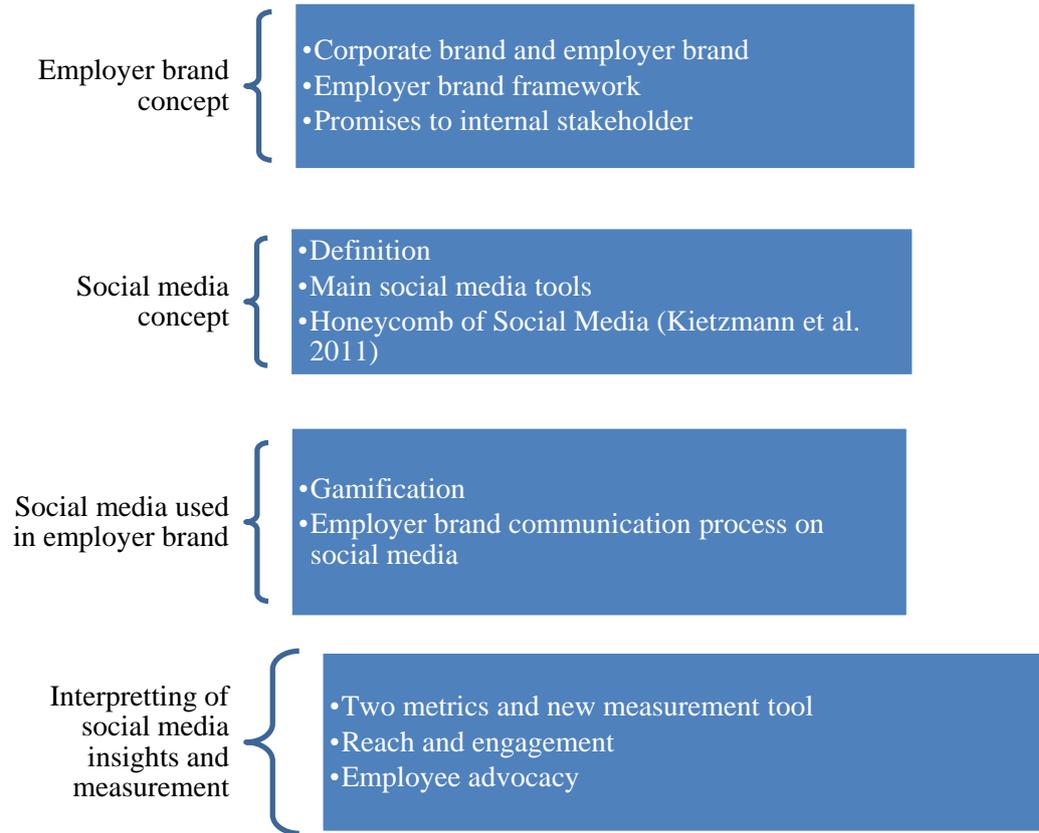


FIGURE 3. Theoretical framework of the thesis

1.5 Thesis structure

The thesis structure consists of seven chapters with the following outline:

1. Introduction

In this very first chapter, the employer brand and a new era of web 2.0 are presented as a background for the thesis topic. Research questions are discussed and objectives of the thesis are defined. At the end of this chapter, the limitation of the research and thesis's structure will be explained.

2. Literature review

The literature review provides an understanding of the concepts and existing theories concerning employer brand and social media used in employer brand.

Theoretical background is given as a basis for empirical data analysis part presented later on.

3. Research method

This chapter introduces the research approach and goes into detail the methodological reasoning of the research. The research methods and research design are described, explanations of data sources and data analysis are given.

4. Case study

With regards to employer brand, this chapter aims at achieving an insight into the case company. A brief overview of the case company will be provided and its processes of using social media in employer brand is studied later on at the end of this chapter.

5. Results

Based on theoretical background given in chapter two, this part of the thesis categorizes and analyses the primary and secondary data provided by the case company. Result of the data analysis and case company's evaluation are provided and the obstacles of using applying social media in employer brand communication is discussed later on.

6. Conclusion

This chapter includes the discussion of the outcomes of the research and theoretical implication, followed by the research's limitations and suggestions for future research. Lastly the summary of the case study is provided.

The thesis structure is concisely illustrated in the figure below, with letter C stands for Chapter (figure 4):



FIGURE 4. Thesis structure

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, theories regarding employer brand and social media are included. Later on, the theories supporting the application of social media in employer brand communication are explained. Lastly, several measurement methods are provided in the last section of this chapter.

2.1 Employer brand

The section of employer brand will cover the theories of differences between corporate brand and employer brand. Employer brand framework will be explained and psychological contract in the employment context will be described at the end of this section.

2.1.1 From corporate brand to employer brand

Due to the constant change in the nature of business, both corporate brand and employer brand in today's world are much more developed and sophisticated than they were in the last century. According to a study made by Swystun (2007, 14), brand nowadays includes both intangible and tangible attributes and generates both value and influences. Based on that new definition of brand, Edwards (2009, 6), stated that employer brand is a process of applying the "science of brand" into human resources management in order to retain the current employees and attract potential candidates to apply for an opening position.

Every organization or corporation in the modern life manages two types of brands (Figure 5). Whereas product brand and company brand are used for audiences in product market, who can be regarded as external audiences; employer brand targets both internal and external audiences in the labour market. A well-designed and well-managed product brand can fortify the employer brand and can effect on potential employees' desire to work in an organization. In turn, employer brand plays an important role at attracting and retaining employees who, in facts, can add value to an organization and its products, hence sustain the business (Corporate Leadership Council 1999).

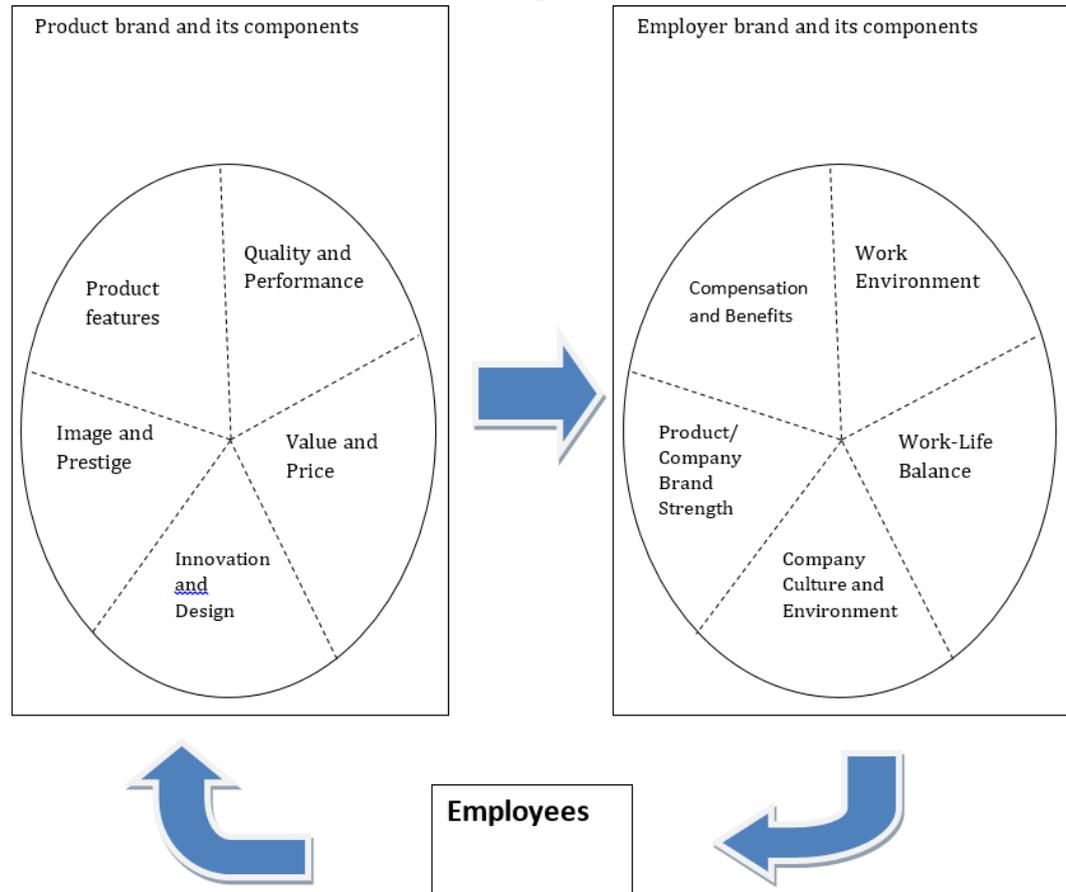


FIGURE 5. Connection between product brand and employer brand (reprinted from Corporate Leadership Council 1999)

In general, employer brand is similar to brand but defined in an employment context, in which employees are considered as internal stakeholders (Edwards 2009). Corporate branding and employer branding are both about the “promises made between the organization and the stakeholder groups”, which can be tangible or intangible (Foster et al. 2010). Rosethorn (2002) also found that every brand has four groups of stakeholders, which are suppliers, customers, employees and shareholders (figure 6). She also advocates that stakeholders can response to the brand either cognitively or emotionally. The model also demonstrates the continuous interaction between the brand and each of it’s stakeholders.

This model illustrates the role of employer brand in corporate brand. Employer brand, in fact, is a promise from an organization to its internal stakeholder, hereby mentioned as “employees”. According to Olins (2005), the promise between the

brand and its internal stakeholders are indicated in psychological contract between the employer and employees, which will be explained in part 3 of this section. Even though the psychological contract is not included in the formal employment contract, if the brand fails at delivering the promises to their internal stakeholders, it is more likely that the performance of employees will reduce and staff turnover will increase. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004.)

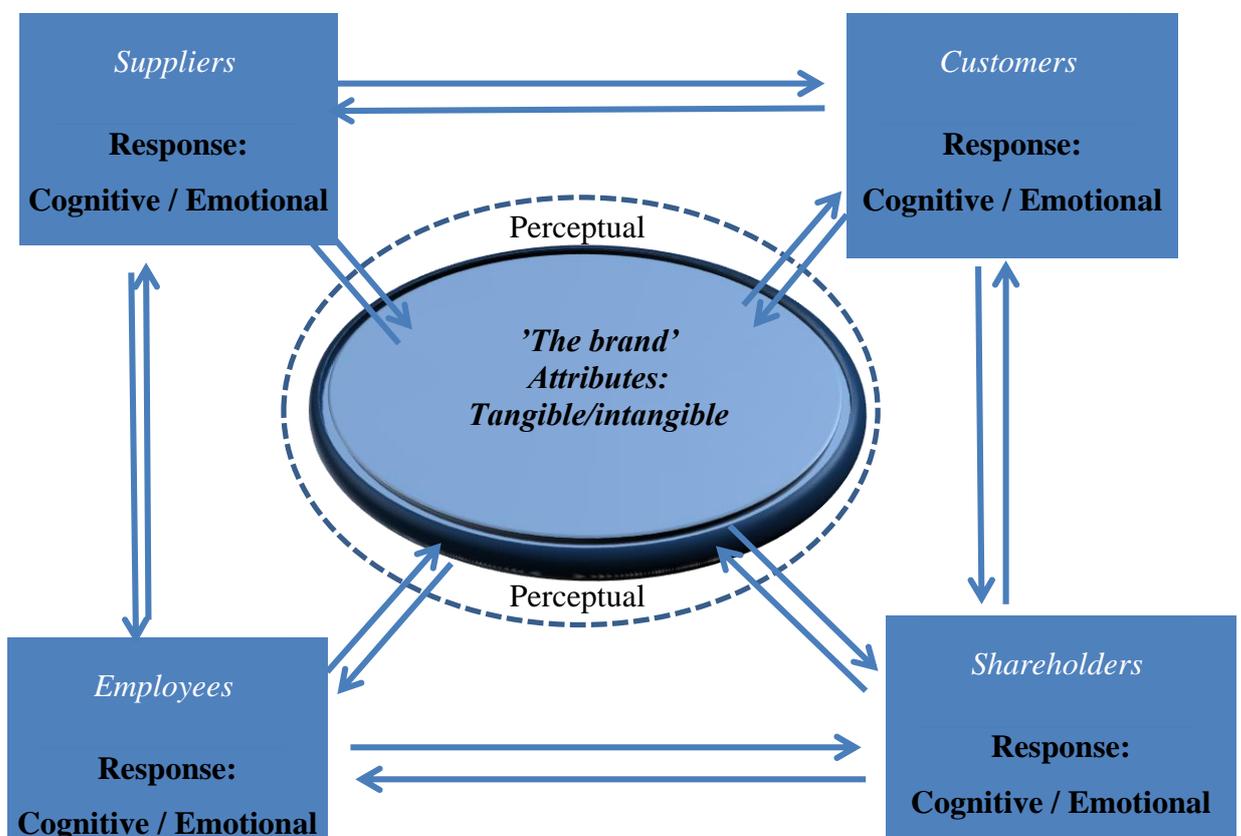


FIGURE 6. The brand and its stakeholders (Rosethorn 2002)

2.1.2 Employer brand framework

In the recent time, retaining and attracting the best people has become a new concern of any organization of all kinds. Anixter (2003) indicates that employees'

presence can make a vast impact on the external stakeholders' perception of the brand image. Amber and Barrow (1996, 187) are the first well-known people who defined employer brand. According to one of their studies, employer brand is “a package of functional, economic and psychological benefits” offered in an employment context. Later on, Barrow and Mosley (2005, 149), to support the prior work made by Barrow and Amber, redefined employer brand as a reputation of an organization as a place to work. Seeing the importance of employer brand in the “war of talents”, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, 504) provided an employer brand framework (figure 7). That framework nowadays is utilized world-wide to simplify personnel management. It can be seen in the framework that employer brand indeed influences the perception of both internal and external stakeholders. Employer branding process generates employer brand associations and employer brand loyalty, which actually effect on employer's attraction and employees' productivity. As a result, employer brand process, if manage properly, can help leaders boost productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.)

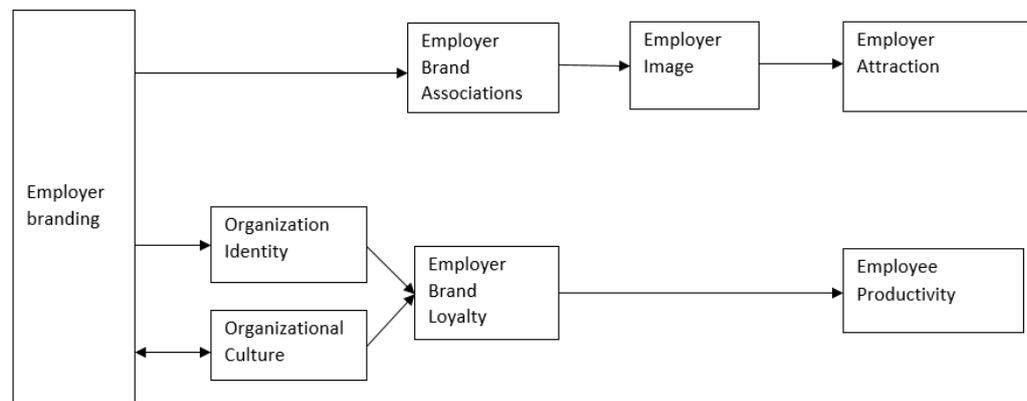


FIGURE 7. Employer brand framework (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 504)

Like managing corporate brand, employer brand management needs certain plans and strategies. Berry (1981) considers employees as organizational internal customers. By applying “science of brand” into employment context, people can

choose either buying or quitting the job, which is similar to what happens between customers and products. Job, according to Erickson and Gratton (2007) is “employer brand experience”, including working environment and all what happens within the organization. As a result, in order to encourage buying and preventing talents from quitting their jobs, employer brand needs to be launched internally, employee’s brand engagement is crucial to improve people’s perceptions of what the organization has to offer (Erickson & Gratton 2007). With regards to roles of employer brand in improving employer’s attraction and employee productivity, Barrow and Mosley (2005) provide a brand management model, which are utilized for employer brand internal launch (figure 8).

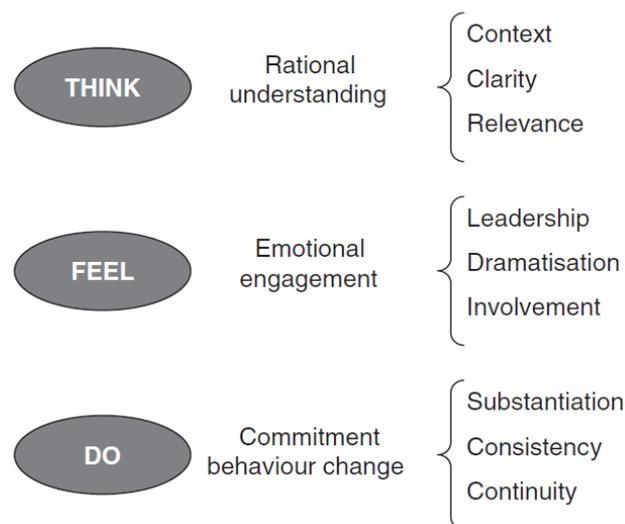


FIGURE 8. The brand engagement model (Barrow & Mosley 2005, 131)

The model indicates that brand management consists of three components: Think, Feel, and Do. (Barrow & Mosley 2005.)

Think

In the very first stage of employer brand internal launch, people need to understand the context in which employer brand is launched. There is a variety of situations that require an internal launch, for example: products rebranding,

change in organizational restructuring or new corporate identity. The keys of rational thinking are the clarity and relevance in communication. In order to describe employer brand within the company, the employer's message needs to be simple and direct. To "live the brand" from the inside out means to give employees an understanding of the brand image and to make sure that there is a connection between the products brand and the employer brand. (Barrow & Mosley 2005.)

Feel

After describing the brand and brand's culture in an approachable way, it is essential to get employees engaged to the brand. Barrow and Mosley (2005) indicate that leadership, dramatization and involvement are the three drivers to employee's emotional engagement. Firstly, personal contact with one of fully engaged leader can deliver a positive employer experience which, in fact, can improve the commitment of employees. Moreover, by dramatizing the employees' experience, leaders actually bring the employer brand experience on the big screen and get attention from both internal and external stakeholders. This internal event indeed touches the employees and gets them more committed. To conclude, in order to enhance employee engagement and to get more attention, involvement from leaders and fully engaged employees are required (Barrow & Mosley 2005).

Do

Getting short term engagement from employees can be made by giving promises. However, to reach longer term commitment and behavior change from employees, those promises need to be substantiated. In addition to substantiation, it is crucial to keep it consistent. This consistency is required not only in internal communication but also in external communication in order to deliver the brand image to current and potential employees. Last but not least, to keep the best people working for the company, substantiating promises and consistent communication need to be maintained. (Barrow & Mosley 2005).

2.1.3 Psychological contract – Employer brand as a promise to stakeholders

As mentioned above, if product brand is a promise between the organization and external stakeholders, employer brand is regarded as promises between the employer and employees in an employment context. This promise is indicated in the psychological contract, which, in fact, is not included in the formal contract. The term of “psychological contract” has been criticized since 1960s, however, it is still uncertain who originated the phrase. According to Kotter (1973), who is acknowledged as the first one tried to describe and explain the term, a psychological contract is “an implicit exchange between an individual and his organization which specifies what each expects to give and receive from each other in their relationship”. Kotter’s definition is, in fact, based on daily life context, thus, it can be utilized in any relationship.

Later on, along with the constant development of technology and the economic downturn in 1990s, psychological contract between employer and employees has been investigated and become more popular (The Psychological Contract 2014). Moreover, due to the competitive “war of talents” during the last 20 years, employer brand has become a new concern of organization of all kinds. Consequently, improvement of psychological contract is essential in order to create a reputation of the brand as a place to work. (Rosethorn 2009.)

Furthermore, the constant change of the nature of business environment has considerably innovated the definition of “psychological contract”. Based on the definition of Kotter, Herriot and Pemberton (1995) specifies the psychological contract which can be applied in employment context. They indicate that the term of psychological contract is an awareness of employers and employees to the employment relationships. At the same time, Rousseau (1995) argues that the psychological contract is actually a consciousness regarding to the promises which are made and accepted informally by all parties involved.

In 2000, to support Herriot, Pemberton and Rousseau, Guest and Conway (2004) demonstrated the psychological contract as the “reciprocal promises” signified in the relationship. Martin (2010), after examining the psychological contract for

many years, redefines it as an extensive range of belief regarded to “rights, obligations, privileges, and duties”. Moreover, he also expresses that even though all of those conditions are created and accepted informally, they can generate vast impacts on the attitude of both leaders and employees.

Psychological contract, after years of development, now is referred to the reciprocal promises between the organization and its internal stakeholders. In terms of branding and marketing, the promises are made between the organization and its target customers. On the other hand, in terms of employer brand, psychological contract indicates the promises and obligation utilized within the organization in order to satisfy the internal stakeholders, hereby mentioned as employees. Keeping these promises indeed is essential to any organization of all kinds because dissatisfaction of internal stakeholders can influence on the delivery of the brand messages to external stakeholders, especially to target customers. More importantly, if an organization fails at keeping these promises, the quality of working life will decline significantly, which, in fact, leads to a decrease in employees’ productivity. (Martin 2010.)

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943), everybody has five basic needs, which are physiological, safety, love or belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Based on that theory, Stum (2001) built up a performance pyramid, which illustrates the five basic needs of every employee in the context of employment (figure 9).

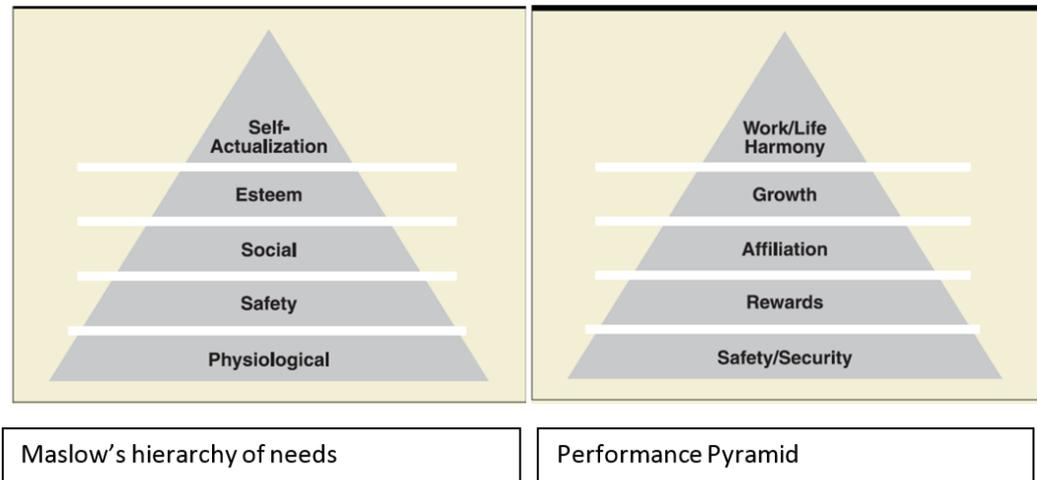


FIGURE 9. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Stum's Performance Pyramid (Stum 2001, 6)

According to Stum (2001), the five basic needs of employees demonstrated in the Performance Pyramid are:

- *The need of safety or security.* In any context, safety is always a priority. Especially in employment context, employees must, at first, feel safe at work to be able to engage in their job. This means the working place must be constructed to minimize all the negative effects on employees' physical, mental and emotional states.
- *The need of rewards.* At this level, rewards regards to compensation and benefits or by the other words, a recognition of employees' achievement. The impacts of rewards have been studied in the recent time and many research have shown that recognition not only influences on why people want to commit to their job but also boosts employees' productivity.
- *The need of affiliation.* This basic need indicates the sense of being part of the team. Each employee must be able to make contribution to the growth of the organization in order to be more committed to work. At this level of need, communication within the organization become more essential and every leader of the team need to strengthen the team cultures and encourage team member for affiliation to be met.

- *The need of growth.* Along to the growth of the organization, the employees also need to see their both personal and professional growth while doing any certain job. At this level, opportunities for training or improvement are necessary for the need of growth to be met.
- *The need of work/life harmony.* In the fast-paced life, people look for an opportunity to not only get professional growth at work, but also satisfy other aspects of their lives, especially home, family and personal interests. Each employee needs personal support from the team and needs to be seen as a person, not just a worker. At this level, it is crucial that leaders adjust the workload if needed, communicate with the others and listen to their team members.

2.2 Concept of social media

In this section, theories of social media will be explained. Honeycomb of various social media channels will be described to clarify the differences in functionalities of social media platforms.

2.2.1 What is social media?

In today's world, social media improves our abilities to communicate and interact with the others. In the last decade, when social media was not as popular as it is now, our main communication infrastructure was telephone, information mainly came from newspaper, magazine or television. Nowadays, along with the continuous innovation of technology, social media enables us to globally communicate, share and exchange ideas. In other words, it creates a nonborder virtual social world in which web citizens are allowed to freely choose the way they behave and to live a virtual life which share significant and common aspects with their real life. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010.)

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that were established based on the technology of web 2.0, which allow users to generate and exchange contents. To construct social media, there

are three main components: Content or user-generated content, community and web 2.0 (figure 10).

The user-generated contents embrace various means of communication, chiefly, text, photos or videos. Moreover, social media is all about the participation and involvement between users in the online community created in social media. And last but not least, web 2.0 technology has been constantly developed.

Consequently, social media nowadays provides us various platforms which can be used for different purposes. Each platform has its own functionalities and target groups, and utilize one certain kind of social technology called web 2.0. (Jue et al. 2010.)

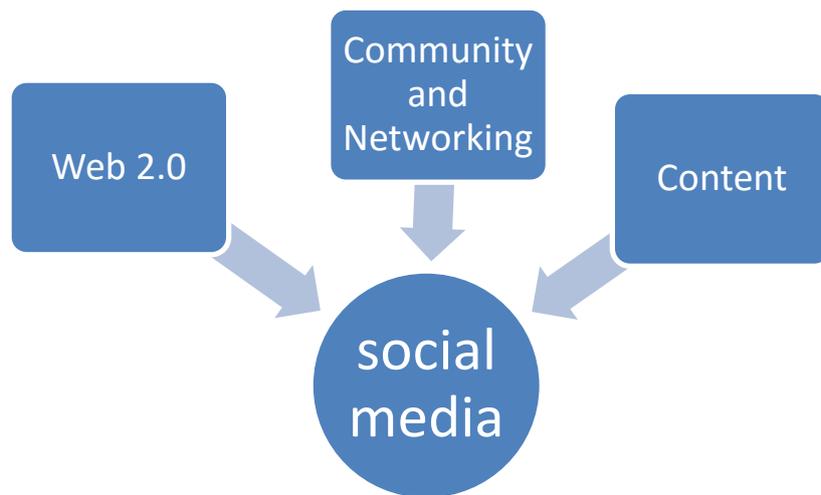


FIGURE 10. Social media's components (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

In different context, however, social media is described differently. In terms of enhancing employee engagement at work, social media provides various platforms to help “accelerate and improve our ability to connect, communicate and collaborate” (Jue et al. 2010, 44). In human resource management, different from web 1.0, which only pays attention to one-way publication of online contents, web 2.0 and social media are considered as social electronic tools to encourage employees' participation and contribution. It provides an opportunity to organization to increase internal learning, sharing and discussion. In other words,

social media mainly focuses on users and communities, which encompass all core elements of personnel management: Conversations, creating networking, personalization, authentic voice and individualism.(Martin et al. 2009.)

2.2.2 Blog and social networking sites

In today's world, social media technologies are presenting a variety of electronic tools to connect people all over the world, they embrace the participation and interaction between people, from individuals to groups. However, to manage social media used within an organization, it is essential to understand each of social media tools (Jue et al. 2010). This research is focusing on blogs and social networking sites, which are regarded as the most used of the various social media technologies existing nowadays. On the other hand, given that along with the constant development of technology, these two social media tools will soon be replaced by the others (Jue et al. 2010).

- ***Blogs***

Blogs are defined as an individual's journal (Jue et al. 2010) or a form of personal online publishing (Martin et al. 2009), which are made for all public to create attention for effective marketing and communication. Eley and Tiller (2009) states that the word 'blog' is derived from "web blog".

Mainly, blogs are created for the authors to share his or her view on specific topics, which he or she is interested in. Currently, blogger.com and WordPress are the most used blog tools. In the world of mass-marketing, blogs are created to be part of successful communication. Blog can be use either internally or externally. In terms of corporate branding, using blogs can give organization an opportunity to publish opinion and information, which can also create discussion in readers' comments. On the other hand, blogs are used differently within an organization. Jue, Marr, and Kassotakis (2010) advocate that blog are useful for sharing opinions of leaders, influencers, experts or some groups of representative. Moreover, blogs can act as a helpful learning tool, which can help leaders to share information of current problems happening in the industry internally. (Jue et al. 2010.)

- ***Social networking sites***

Nowadays, participating to communities on social networking sites has become part of our daily communication. Jue, Marr and Kassotaki (2010, 50) define social networking site as a website that allows users to exchange the contents in order to give and receive information from other users or to form a beneficial relationship. Especially among the young internet citizen, everybody is likely to have used at least one of the existing social networking sites, for example Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter (Jue et al. 2010).

According to one research made by Statistics Finland, 34% of enterprise in Finland are adopting social media for daily communication within organization. 83% of those companies states that the purpose of using social media is to improve enterprise's image or market products. Moreover, another research made by Dingle and Haaga-Helia indicates that that the three most commonly used social networking sites in Finland are Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter (figure 11). According to these enterprises, social networking sites not only improve recruitment, but also boost brand awareness and facilitate internal communication. However, less than 20% of these companies state that other networking sites are used within the organization, such as Forum, Foursquare and Pinterest (Infographic: How Finnish Companies Are Using Social Media for Marketing 2013). For that reasons, a further explanation of the four most commonly used social networking sites is provided in the next part.

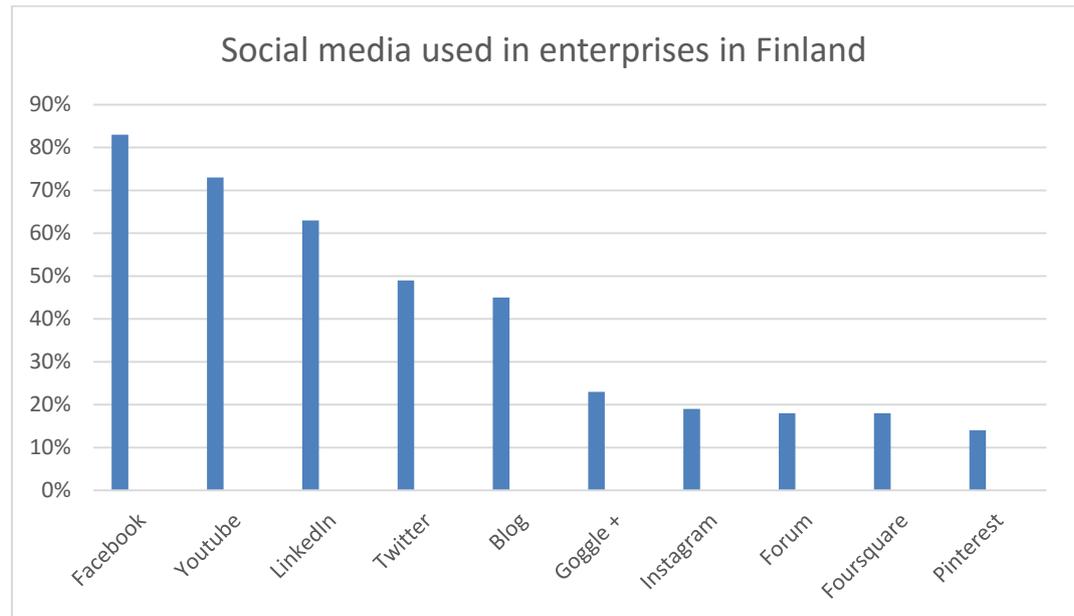


FIGURE 11. How Finnish companies are using social media for marketing (adapted from Infographic: How Finnish Companies are Using Social Media for Marketing 2013)

2.2.3 Honeycomb of social media

Even though it is clear that social media has facilitated our daily communication, successful application of social media in branding requires a comprehensive understanding of each social media channel used at work (Kaplan & Haenlein 2007). To assist users on social media, Kietzmann (2011) provides and describes the honeycomb framework, which includes seven social media building blocks or, by the other words, social media's seven functionalities: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups (figure 12).

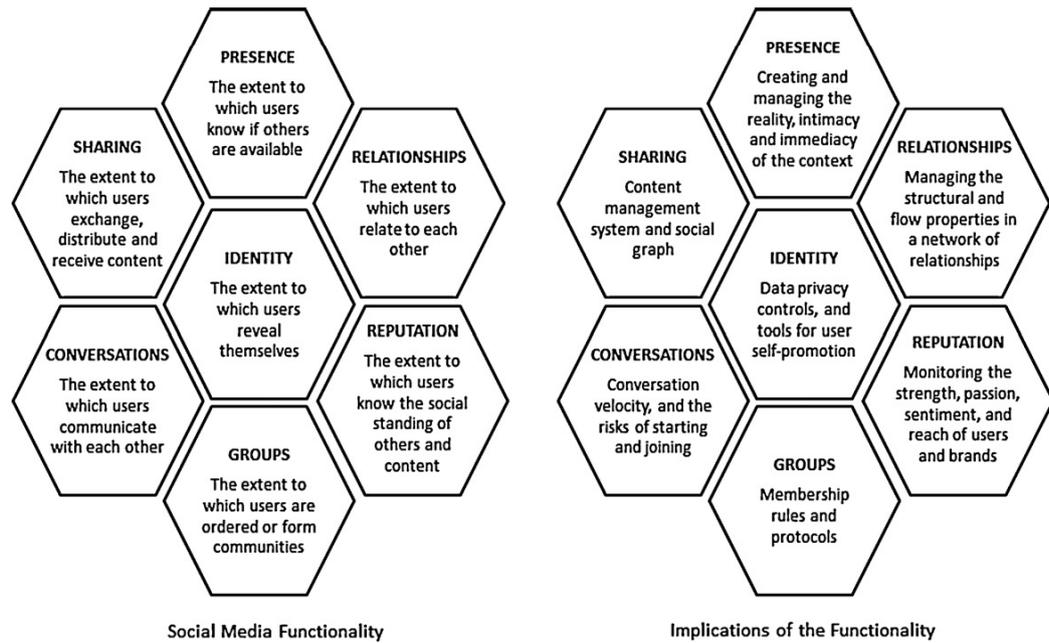


FIGURE 12. The honeycomb of social media (Kietzmann et al. 2011)

According to Kietzmann (2011), every social media tool has specific powerful functionalities or blocks that every organization of all kinds needs to pay attention to be successful in participating and getting interaction in social media world. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of the dominant blocks of each social media platform is useful to make right decision of which social media platforms are used within the organization. (Kietzmann 2011)

The identity block illustrates the extent that users reveal their identities on social media. This can contain personal information such as name, age, gender or profession. The identity block is considered as the core of every social media platform, such as Facebook and Twitter. However, a large amount of users are willing to share their personal information without concern of what would happens to their information. Therefore, privacy is known as the most considerable implication of this functionality. Conversations block indicates the extent to which users communicate with each other on social media. Knowing the topics of the conversations can help the company to make the right decision of either joining the conversation or not. In some cases, when the topic is not related

to what is happening at work, there is a risk of joining the conversation with the employees. (Kietzmann 2011.)

Sharing block represents the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive the content. A management system is recommended for internal communication on social media in order to ensure that the content is legally shared according to copyright laws. The presence block shows the extent to which users know if others are available. By having this functionality, social media platform allows users to interact with the other easily. Moreover, it enables two-way communication on social media. (Kietzmann 2011.)

The relationship block indicates the extent to which users relate to each other. Based on the social network theory, there are two types of properties in relationship block: structural and flow properties. Whereas, the structural property of relationship regards to how many connections users have and their position in the network, the flow property focuses on the power of the relationship (Borgatti & Foster 2003). For the reason that there are various types of relationship built in social media, an implication of this block is the management of these relationship in social network with the purpose of guiding the users to approach the target people (Kietzmann 2011).

The reputation block illustrates the extent to which users know the social standing of others and themselves. Reputation management requires an understanding of which values provided by users. In terms of organizational reputation management, analyzing the existing reputation is needed, which includes strengths, passion, sentiment, and reach of users and brands. Last but not least, the groups block indicates the extent to which users can form communities and sub-communities. With the purpose of widening the network by joining the groups, it is essential for each organization or user to know what are the suitable contents for the group and the main ideas of the group. (Kietzmann 2011.)

As mentioned before, currently in Finland, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter are the most commonly used social media platforms. Hence, by applying honeycomb model of Kietzmann et al. (2011) to all four platforms, an explanation of the dominant functionalities of each platform is provided (figure 13, 14, 15, 16). Facebook has been famous of allowing people to establish online relationships between users with secondary focus on presence, identity, reputation

and conversation. For that reason, by utilizing Facebook, organization can approach the target individuals and to improve brand engagement, loyalty and especially can take advantages from eWOM. Different from Facebook, YouTube is mainly used for sharing video with the secondary concerns of improving reputation, joining groups and starting conversation related to the video uploaded. (Kietzmann 2011.)

LinkedIn is mainly used for promoting professional skills. Users on LinkedIn pay much more attention to building profile and identity with the secondary focuses on relationships and reputation. In this social media platform, all kind of organizations are able to approach the key individuals, or by the other word, key top talents. Lastly, Twitter is vastly used with the purpose of building conversation between users, with the secondary focuses on sharing, identity and reputation. Moreover, by using twitter, each organization can build up a strategic plan to approach targeting key individuals. (Kietzmann 2011.)

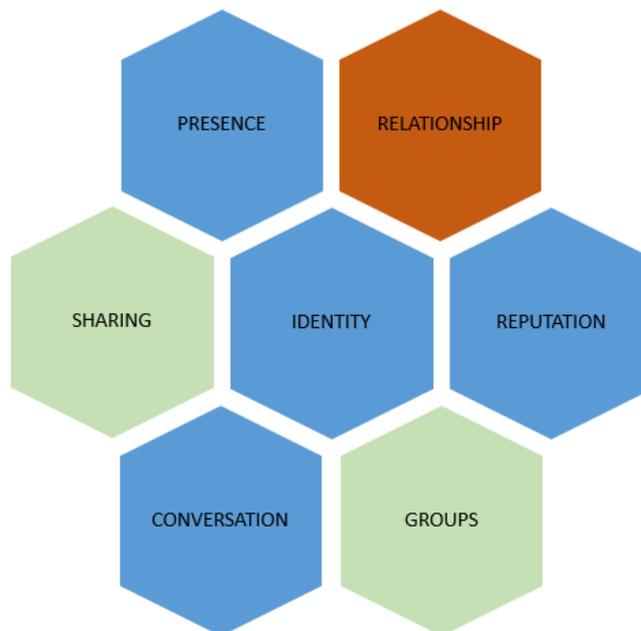


FIGURE 13. Honeycomb applied on Facebook (Kietzmann et al. 2011)

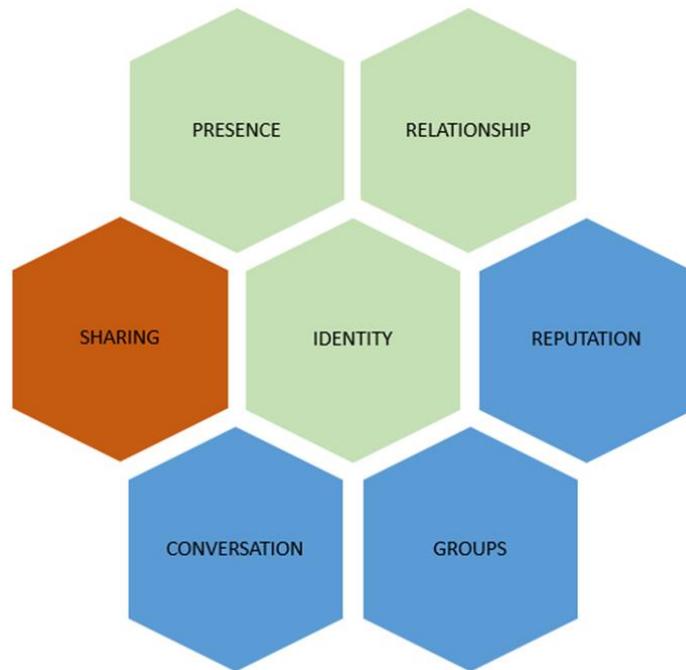


FIGURE 14. Honeycomb applied on YouTube (Kietzmann et al. 2011)

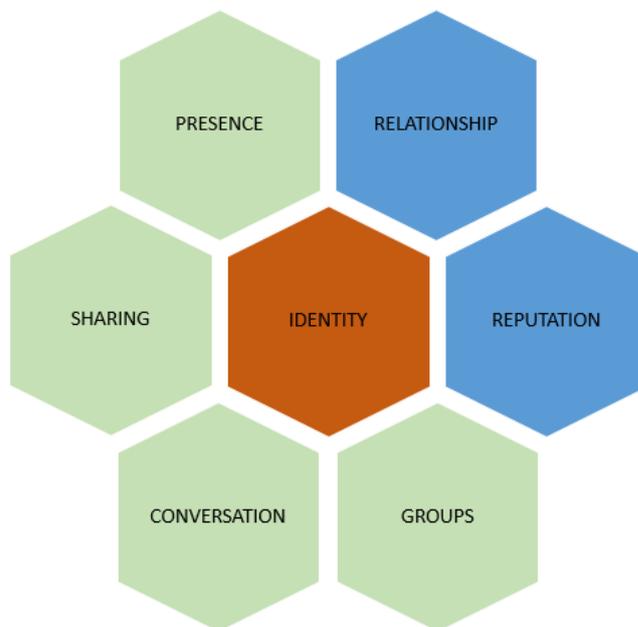


FIGURE 15. Honeycomb applied on LinkedIn (Kietzmann et al. 2011)

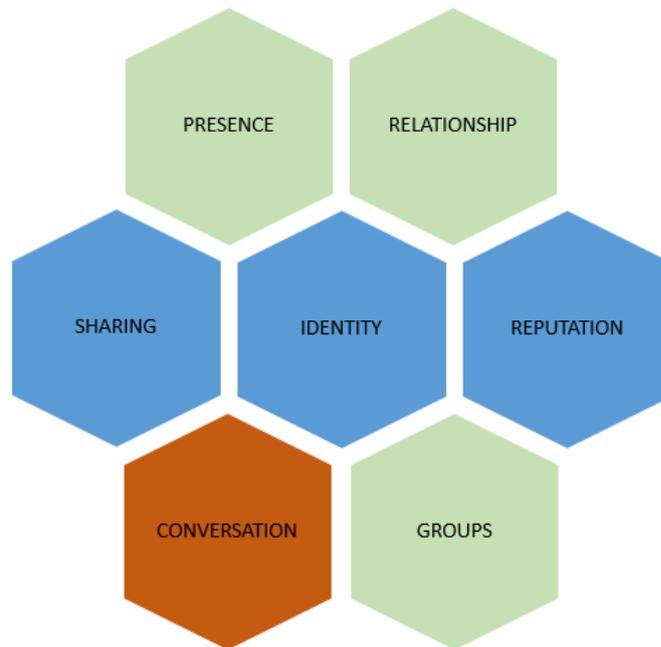


FIGURE 16. Honeycomb applied on Twitter (Kietzmann et al. 2011)

2.3 Social media used in employer brand communication

In this section, employer brand communication process in social media is described. Theories about gamification are reviewed as strategies utilized in employer brand communication.

2.3.1 Employer brand communication process on social media

It is undeniable that social media is getting into day-by-day business operation and becoming a new internal communication medium. Moreover, social media is also becoming a new search engine, especially in recruitment and human resource management area. For that reason, applying social media in employer brand communication process is a new concern in many business nowadays.

Employer brand communication on social media includes three main steps, which are illustrated in the figure 17. It is noticeable that this process will be repeated as

long as the organization still wants to build brand loyalty on social media. The first step is internal inputs. At this step, by internal communication, contents are suggested by internal stakeholders. The content can include text, picture, video or any interesting information. Internal communication can occur on many different media, such as discussion board, intranet, meeting or training and can be considered as either of words-of mouth (WOM) or electronic words-of-mouth (eWOM). The second step in this process is choosing certain social media platforms to share the contents related to work. There are various social media technologies can be used in employer brand, such as blogs, social network, microblogging. The last step of this process is the employment outputs. This is what employers achieve out of internal efforts on social media. Social media at this stage can give out many benefits, such as a new search engine for recruitment or a new form of learning and sharing inside the organization. The employment output also includes feedback from audience, which assists employers to make decision on development in social media. (Martin et al. 2009.)

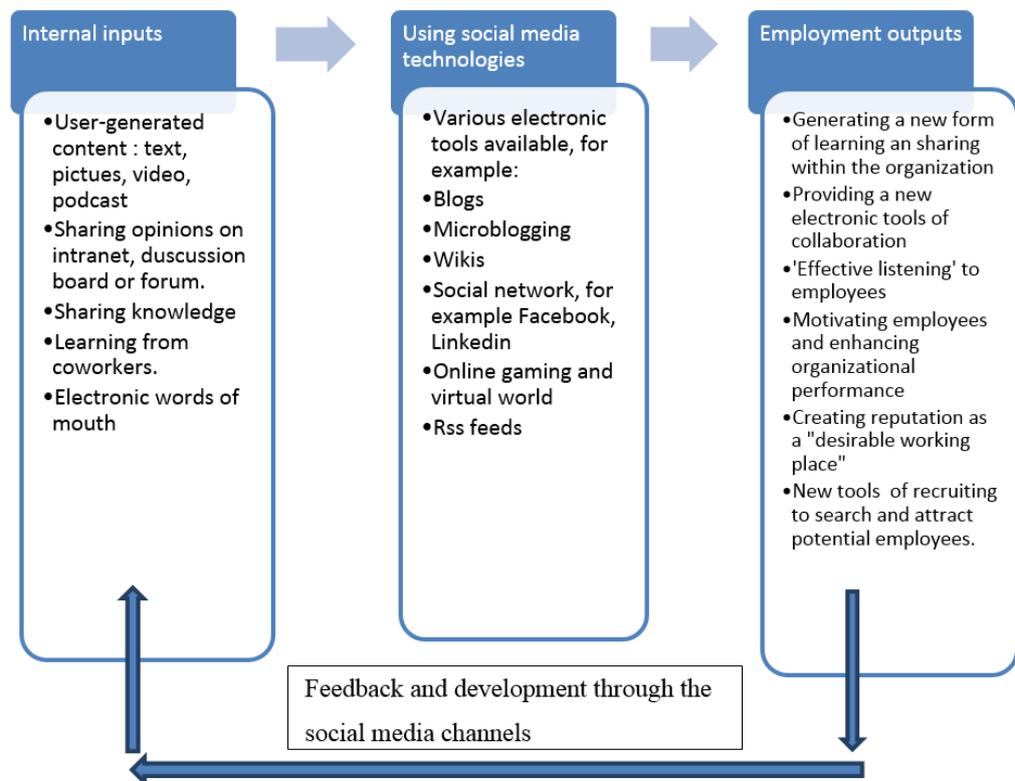


FIGURE 17. Employer branding process on social media (Martin et al. 2009)

Additionally, Taskinen (2009), after studying carefully the best practices for social media engagement at Starbucks, Toyota, SAP and Dell, concludes that in order to utilize social media in employer brand communication, there are five categories that need to be focused, which are briefly described in the figure 18. (Taskinen 2009, 43.)

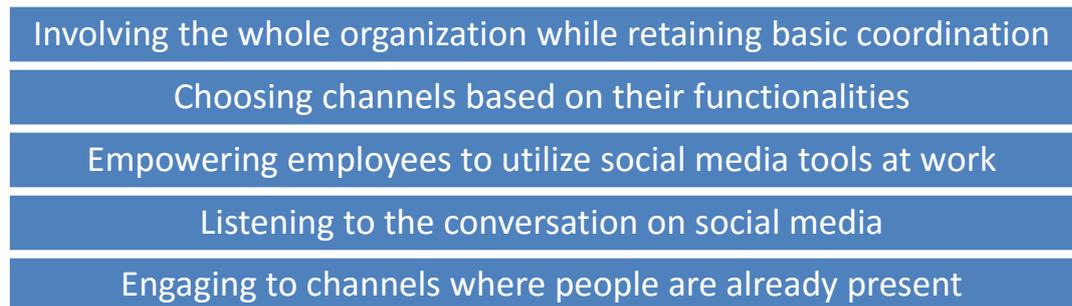


FIGURE 18. Five categories of using social media in employer brand communication (Taskinen 2009)

2.3.2 Gamification – The intersection of psychology and technology

Even though it is clear that social media brings lots of benefits to organizations in building an employer brand image, only a few employers get successful in utilizing social media in employer brand. The question is how motivate employees to share their positive employment experience in social media world. To answer this question, gamification is one of the most popular tactics that employers can use to get employees engaged to social media at work. Duggan and Shoup (2013) defines gamification as an implementation of game mechanics and rewards in a non-game situation in order to enhance the user's engagement and to drive desired user behavior. In the business world, gamification allows leaders to drive and reward the most active and successful user behaviours. In terms of psychology, employees, like anyone, want attentions and rewards, thus they are willing to work harder to achieve “the best behaviour” status. Consequently, employees' productivity is improved. (Duggen & Shoup 2013)

Gamification nowadays is used widely in many areas. In terms of social media used to communicate employer brand, the goal is to build a community. Thus, in this case, gamification is used to drive the desired behaviour that build community. The idea of creating a community on social media is about to make the communication in social media as real and easy as possible. Therefore, the key actions to drive community-building behaviours are leaving comments, writing reviews, asking and answering questions, and sharing idea. (Duggan & Shoup 2013.)

To apply gamification into employer brand process, making a right decision on gamification framework is essential. According to Duggan and Shoup (2013), there are six frameworks which are used vastly in business world, which are briefly illustrated in the figure below (figure 19).

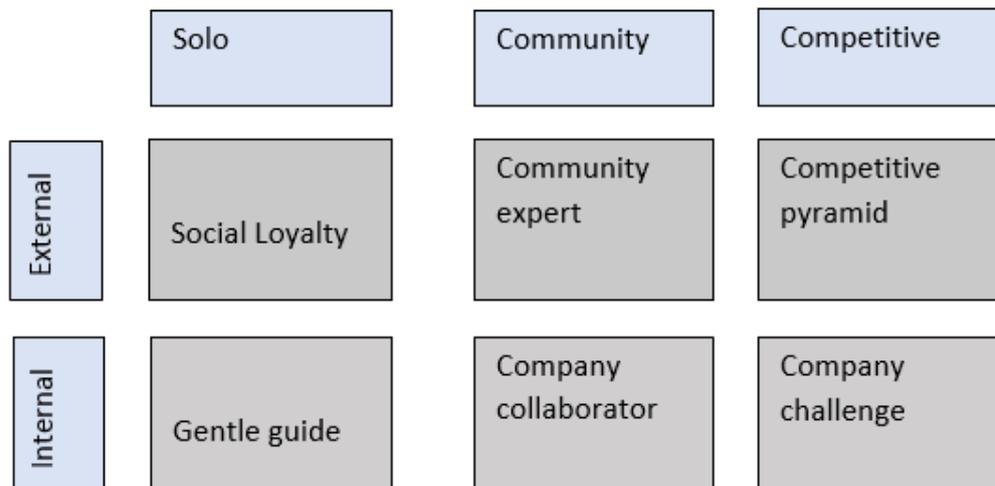


FIGURE 19. Gamification frameworks (Duggan & Shoup 2013, 117)

Among these six gamification frameworks, only gentle guide, company collaborator and company challenge, are used as an internal or employee-facing strategy. The other three gamification frameworks are used as an external or customer-facing needs. (Duggan & Shoup 2013.)

- Social loyalty framework is used to increase adoption. It is applied in non social environment, for example conference events or live experiences. This framework pay more attention to reward.
- Community expert framework is adopted to manage reputation and improve the involvement in a certain communication. The most important activities of applying this framework are publishing media, crowdsourcing and discussion communities and forums.
- Competitive pyramid framework is utilized to increase competition, consists of test, prediction communities or games and social gaming. Significantly, giving status and rewarding scores are the main activities of this framework process.
- Gentle guide framework is used to improve low-level employee engagement. It requires performance management and is usually used to keep users doing fitness. This framework focuses on completion.
- Company collaborator framework is used to increase high-level employee engagement. It is vastly utilized to build internal corporate communities or to develop the communities in the purpose of effective communication.
- Company challenge framework is used to increase company-wide goal setting. Thus, this framework is utilized to improve sales productivity, to support center operations or to manage team performance. By the other word, this framework is implemented to encourage to do high-value behaviours.

2.4 Interpreting social media insights and measurement

This section will describe the two metrics and a new tool used in social measurement, which is called employee advocacy. An explanation of measurement method on employee advocacy platforms will be provided.

2.4.1 Two metrics and new measurement tool

Two metrics

On one hand, building a strategic plan on utilizing social media in employer brand promotion is obviously needed to guide the internal stakeholders to the right

direction on social media. On the other hand, measurement and tracking down the result of using social media is necessary to know if the current tactics used are working, or what needs to be improve (Garst 2014). However, comparing with building the right plan for using social media inside, measuring company's social efforts is much harder, due to the large amount of users, complex technology and heavy traffic on each social media platform nowadays. There are many metrics which have been used in social media measurement. The decision of what metrics are tracked to measure social efforts depends on what types of social media platforms the company is using and what is company's goal on social media. (Shively 2012.)

This research only focuses on four common social media platforms, which are LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and Blogs. These social media platforms are used in purpose of promoting employer branding, enhancing engagement of employees on social media and attracting attention from external audiences. Thus only the most two important metrics, which need to be tracked in order to reach the purposes, will be mentioned here. First, number of reach is the metric for users who want to get more fans. Second, engagement rate is definitely worth an attention if the company is using social media with the purpose of building either good relationships with stakeholders or brand loyalty. (Bendror 2013.)

Employee advocacy platform

It is obvious that there are many measurement tools provided by software services. However, employer branding in social media is still a new area for information technology industry. It is much easier to measure social media effectiveness in general, but to measure how the current social media is used within the company is a whole different story. In the world of software as a service (SaaS), programmers are talking about employee advocacy, and predictably, this new social media measurement tool will soon be a trend. Based on the nature of this thesis, only employee advocacy measuring platform will be described.

Definition of reach and total reach on social media

As mentioned above, the number of reach is one important metric used in order to measure how large your network is. To be more specific, whereas post reach refers to the number of fan who have seen a certain post on company's page, the total reach regards to the number of people who actually saw any activity from user's page which includes posts, page liking, commenting, check-in and posts on user's page made by other people (Guglielmelli 2013). The question is how to enlarge the total reach of each social media page. According to Bendror (2013), it is crucial to make some investment in order to sustain the growth of total reach. This investment can be one of the compensation methods, such as social pay per click, pay per impression, or pay per engagement (Bendror 2013).

Bendror also indicates that the number of reach is a good metric for the new business to first expand the network and get attention to start building brand loyalty. However, reach and total reach are not enough for the marketers who want to build up strong brand loyalty and to have real interact with page's fan on social media. The reason explains that when the post appears on stakeholders' social media dashboard, the content of the post is what makes audiences decide to click, to comment or to have real interaction with social media page's admin. Therefore, the fact that people see a certain post on social media does not mean that they are interested in that post or that brand. (Bendror 2013.) This fact leads to the next question, how to get stakeholders engaged on brand's social media. In this case, engagement rate is the next metric which needs to be focused.

Engagement rate on social media

Different from reach and total reach, engagement rate is a metric for measuring brand loyalty, which is employed when the company is trying to build a strong relationship with both internal and external stakeholders (Bendror 2013). Whereas total reach only shows how large brand's social network is, engagement rate indicates how much social media users interact with the brand in social media and how interesting the created content is (Smitha 2013; Jennita 2014). It is essential to understand that having a high number of post reach or total reach does not mean that brand has a high engagement rate on social media. Social engagement

is much more than just the number of people who have seen the created contents. The more interaction between the brand and people on social media, the bigger chance that the created content on social media will be reached. That is counted as being engaged on social media when audience is willing to spend time reading the content, giving comment or feedback on that content, or share the content to get people in their network to see the post. For that reason, content's quality is the most important component, which can decide the engagement rate on one post. (Bendror 2013; Smitha 2013; Jennita 2014.)

To define engagement rate on social media, the main factors are social media users' likes, shares, clicks and comments (equation 1). These factors' names might vary in different platforms, but in general, engagement counts every time social media user interacts with the created content (Defining "Engagement Rate" 2015).

Total Engagement

$$= \text{likes}(\text{favorite}) + \text{shares}(\text{repost}) \\ + \text{comment}(\text{response or reply}) + \text{click}$$

EQUATION 1. Calculation of total engagement (Defining "Engagement Rate" 2015)

The engagement rate on every post can be calculated by using the below formula (equation 2):

$$\text{Engagement rate} \\ = \frac{\text{People who liked, shared, commented or clicked on your posts}}{\text{People who saw your post (Post reach)}} \\ = \frac{\text{Total engagement}}{\text{People who saw your post (Post reach)}}$$

EQUATION 2. Calculation of engagement rate (Defining "Engagement Rate" 2015)

Obviously, high engagement rate on social media is a goal of every social media marketing strategist. As explained before, engagement rate reflects the quality of created content. Therefore, to get people engaged on brand's social media pages, firstly, creating interesting content is the most essential. It is noticed that created contents are not only about the business, but also about the audiences. Hence, listening to what target audiences want to know and share is needed (Defining "Engagement Rate" 2015). Moreover, Bendror (2013) also recommended to pay attention on audience's feedback, to give reward for participant on social media and to not advertise vastly on social media.

2.4.2 Employee advocacy program as a new trend

What is employee advocacy?

As mentioned at first, employee advocacy is becoming a new trend on social media and it is growing quickly in the business world. Every organization realizes the value of employees' support in social media. Moreover, employees' voice is now a new concern. Recently, employees are considered as actual brand ambassadors, who can send organizational messages and help increase awareness of the brand. All of that facts can be seen clearly also in social media used at work. However, creating interesting contents and sustaining the growth of social media require specific strategies and investment, in order to make sure that the right message is sent to the target groups. As a solution, employee advocacy platform is a new option for organizations to facilitate the process of applying social media in employer brand communication. Moreover, most of employee advocacy programs provided in the market today also put the measurement of employee engagement on social media at ease.

Due to the fact that employee advocacy is a new area in information technology world, there is not an official definition of the phrase. Margaret (2014), a writer of WhatIs.com, defines employee advocacy simply as the "promotion of an organization by its staff members". Then, trying to put it in the context of branding online, Donkor (2015), known as a social media analyst at Link Humans, refers employee advocacy as an act that employer encourages employees

to utilize their own “online assets” to support the brands (Boudreaux 2015; Employee Advocacy 2015). Even though ‘online assets’ mentioned in this definition include email marketing, chat forum, discussion boards, Donkor points out that social media is the primary asset used in most cases.

Based on the definition of employee advocacy, employee advocacy platforms or employee advocacy tools were invented and have been innovated during the last 3three years. According to Heinilä, CEO of the first start-up provided employee advocacy platform in Finland, there are five reasons to launch an employee advocacy platform in each company. First, to improve engagement rate on social media, the created content must be interesting and high-quality. Second, every active employee needs recognition for what he or she have contributes to the growth of the brand on social media. Third, employees are important asset of the brand, yet time is an asset of employees. Thus, making employee advocacy easy and intuitive is crucial to get employees engaged on social media. Fourth, employees does not have time for finding interesting content themselves. Thus, a platform run internally is needed for internal content suggestion. Last but not least, because employee advocacy is a new subject, an internal promotion is necessary to guide employees to do the right thing in order to meet the goals of the brand on social media. (Heinilä 2014.) Using an employee advocacy platform assists the employer to distribute the content and to get employees engaged on social media. They save a considerable amount of time in sharing and publishing, and also facilitate the measurement of employee’s social efforts. (Donkor 2015.)

Social Pay per click (social PPC) or social cost per click (social CPC)

In the world of online marketing nowadays, there are many advertising methods used to broadcast the messages to consumers. Online marketing refers to email marketing, search engine marketing (SEM), social media marketing and various kinds of displayed advertising and mobile advertising. Consequently, there are many compensation methods which would be good options for organizations of all kinds who want to broadcast their messages on the internet world. Some of the most popular used methods are: cost per view, which are used for video advertising; pay per click, which is utilized for strategic search engine

marketing; and other performance-based compensations. For the reason that this research only mentions measurement methods adopted in employee advocacy programs, only pay per click used in social media marketing, hereby mentioned as social pay per click (social PPC), is explained.

Simply put, in the world of mass-marketing, original PPC as we know is a method in which organizations pay a certain amount of money every time their ad is clicked on a specific website. By other words, this marketing method refers to an act of “buying visits” for company’s website in order to improve the rank of the website on the search engines (What Is PPC? Learn the Basics of Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Marketing 2015). Lately, for the reason that social media has become an actual part of today’s business operation, social media platforms are not only used for the purpose of communication but also for branding. There are various methods that companies can adopt to get their ads displayed on certain social media platforms. However, the most common method is social pay-per-click (social PPC), which is innovated based on the original PPC mentioned before.

Being used on social media networking, social PPC is the act of paying a social media platform to get the ads seen on social media network. By this method, company can decide which group of users will see the ads, then it is easier to approach the target group in social media world. The main difference between the original PPC and social PPC is that with the original PPC, the payment is made based on how the engine displays the ads when internet user enters a specific keyword. On the other hand, social PPC is made without any concern of either the website’s rank or what people are seeing at the time (Define: Social PPC 2014).

Calculate the earned media value (EMV) of employee advocacy program

According to Heinilä (2014), defining ROI for any social media activity is a concern of any brand strategist. To simplify the measurement of employee engagement in social media at work, payment calculation method is utilized to put a monetary value on employees’ effort on social media. This monetary value, said by Heinilä, social media pay per click (social PPC) or cost per click on each social media platform is utilized as the most important factor. The other two factors which are used in this measurement are the number of employees participating or

the number of active users in the company and number of shares per employee. The multiple of these two factors actually equal to the number of total shares made by employees participating in social media. The last important factor used in this measurement is the number of clicks generated per employee share. (Heinilä 2014.)

After defining all needed factors, we can calculate the earned media value (EMV) of employee advocacy program by using the below formulas (equation 3 & 4):

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \textit{EMV of employee advocacy program} \\
 & = (\textit{Number of total employees participating}) \\
 & \times (\textit{Number of shares per employee}) \\
 & \times (\textit{Number of clicks generated per employee share}) \\
 & \times (\textit{social Cost per click})
 \end{aligned}$$

EQUATION 3. Calculation of EMV 1 (Heinilä 2014)

or:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \textit{EMV of employee advocacy program} = \\
 & (\textit{number of total employees share}) \times \\
 & (\textit{number of clicks generated per employee's share}) \times \\
 & (\textit{social Cost per click})
 \end{aligned}$$

EQUATION 4. Calculation of EMV 2 (Heinilä 2014)

As an example, LinkedIn, which is the most used professional social media platform, charges 3 Dollars for every single click on a sponsored post. If an organization has 1500 employee participating on social media, and every employee has four shares. Each share generates three clicks, the EMV on LinkedIn is calculated as below:

$$EMV = 1500 (\text{Employees participating}) \times 4(\text{shares per employee}) \\ \times 3(\text{clicks generated per share}) \times 3\$(\text{social CPC}) = 54000\$$$

Or by the other way, if the organization has 1500 employees participating on social media, and each employee has four shares, the total shares of employees must be 6000. Then the EMV can be calculated by the second formula:

$$EMV = 6000(\text{Total shares by employees participating}) \\ \times 3(\text{Clicks generated per share}) \times 3\$(\text{social CPC}) = 54000\$$$

3 RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

The research method applied in this thesis is briefly described in the figure below (figure 20):

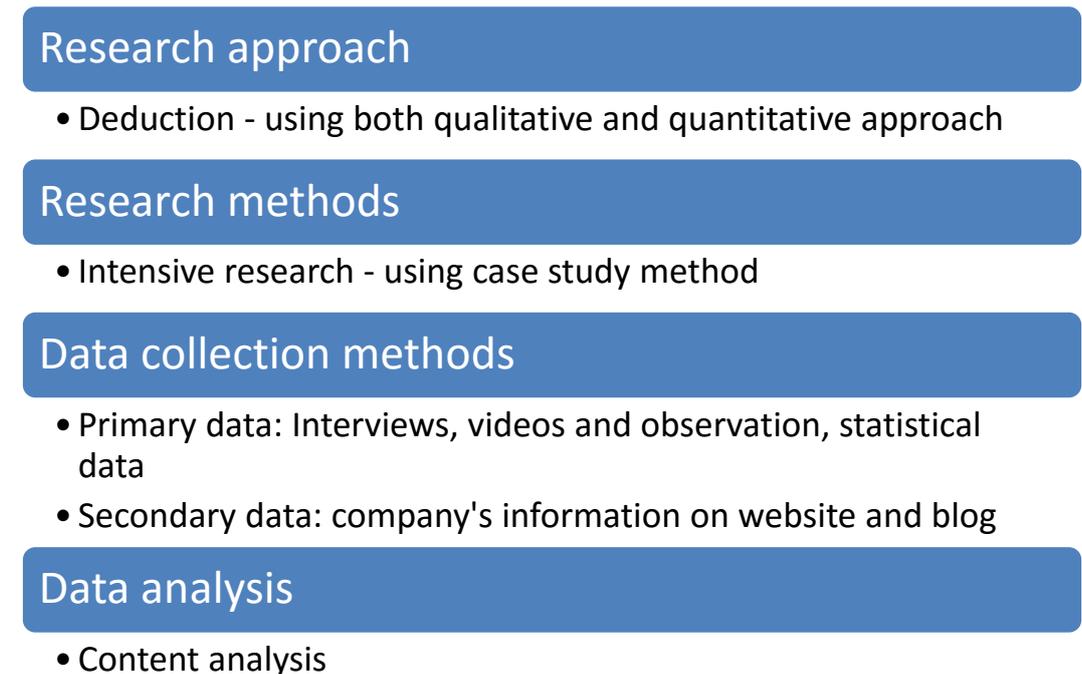


FIGURE 20. Research method

3.1 Research approach

Inductive vs. deductive

According to Blackstone (2014), in every study, there is a “relationship” between theories and empirical world, which indeed decides either inductive or deductive approach is chosen for the research process. As can be seen in figure 21, the relationships between theories and findings of these two types of research, however, are significantly different. Using an inductive approach, the research process moves from the more specific observations to the broader generalizations then establishes specific theories. In other words, in inductive research, it is

expected that “theory is the outcome of the research” (Bryman 2004, 9). On the contrary, deductive research approach is employed in order to guide the research from the more general to the more specific. That, in fact, means a confirmation of hypothesis is expected as an achievement of a certain research. Moreover, by conducting and testing theories at the same time, inductive and deductive approaches can be complementary. In all cases, making a right decision on which approach to be used, is crucial to achieve research’s objectives. (Bryman 2004.)

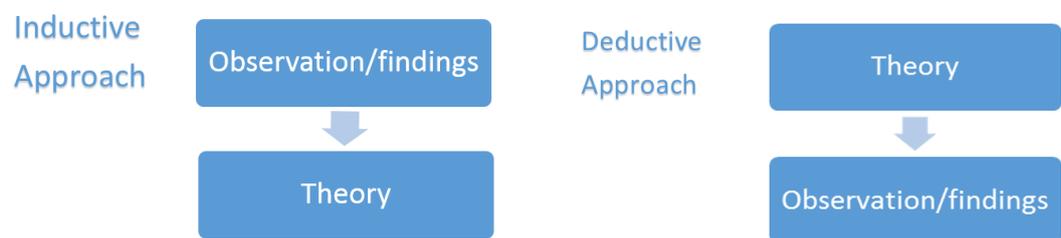


FIGURE 21. Deductive and inductive approaches (reprinted from Bryman 2004)

Based on the objective of the research, the author mainly uses empirical research to analyze case study in order to achieve a confirmation of hypothesis. Thus, deductive research approach is applied and briefly described below (figure 22):

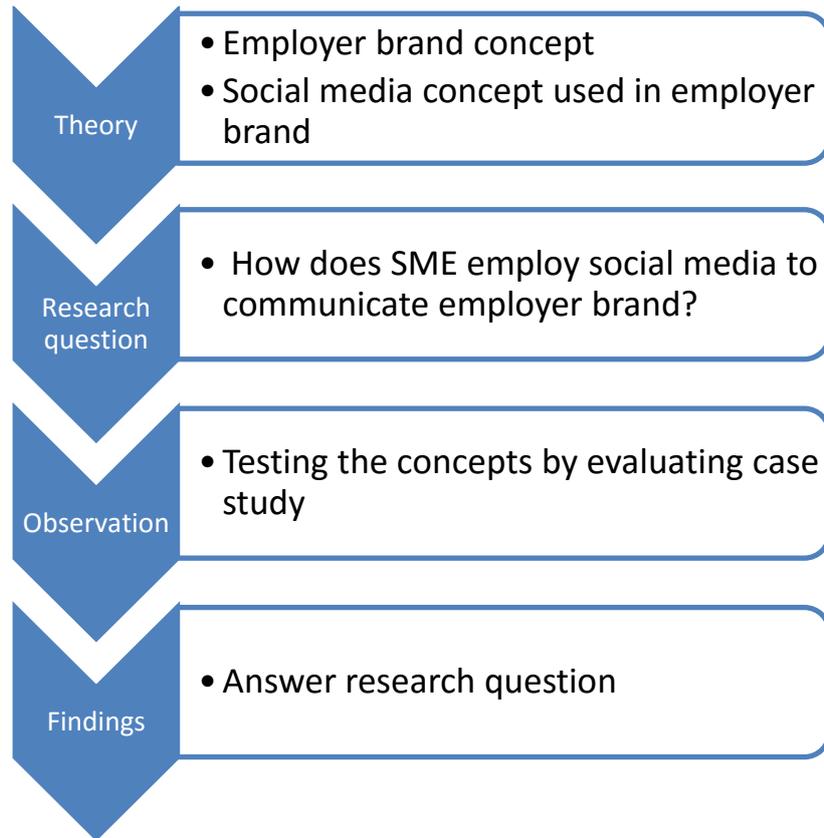


FIGURE 22. Deductive approach of this thesis

Qualitative vs. quantitative

After deciding which research approach to be used in the research, the next stage in research design is defining which research methods would be applied in the research. In scientific research, quantitative method and qualitative method are the most common directions. According to Anderson (2006), quantitative research method regards to an act of gathering scientific numerical data to construct certain statistical models in order to achieve an explanation for the research observation. On the other hand, the nature of qualitative method is very different. This method is all about collecting and analyzing accurate interpretive data which is usually words, pictures or objects (Neill 2007, 1). Moreover, qualitative research usually adopts various methods of data collection, such as personal in-depth interview or observation. Simply put, quantitative method is more objective and conversely, qualitative method is more subjective (Anderson 2006, 3). The association of both approaches, which is also known as “mix-method”, can be implemented in a

single research. However, the third method requires more complex procedure on purpose of simplifying the mixing data which are either numerical or interpretive (Creswell 2003, 208). Based on the nature of the research, the author applies qualitative approach to get an insight into the research topic. In addition to the main research method chosen, quantitative method is also adopted as a sub-method to approach the effectiveness of the employer brand communicating strategies used at the case company.

3.2 Case study

Intensive research and case study method

In order to achieve research objectives, it is crucial to make a right decision on research method. Harre (1979, 132-135) first mentioned the two concepts of research: Extensive research and intensive research, which are described briefly in the figure 23. Each concept has different characteristics and is applicable for different kinds of research topic. An extensive research is conducted by using a large amount of data to test a model of causes or consequences. In this type of research, the data is usually collected by conducting survey with regards to a large set of properties, which can be events, people or organization. In this survey, each respondent gives answers to a set of standardized questions; then an analysis of frequency distributions and relationship between properties is carried out to answer research questions. In contrast, an intensive research focuses on discovering the research topic in depth by studying specific examples of a social phenomenon. Each example is studied with concerns of its own context and given in detail as much as possible. In this research type, every studied example is referred as case study. It is significant to mention that if there are more than one case taken into account, a comparisons between the cases is required. (Swanborn 2010, 1-3.)

Extensive research	Intensive research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: Survey • Comparison made: Between units of observations • Global character: In width 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: case study • Comparisons made: within unit of observation • Global character: in depth

FIGURE 23. Extensive research vs intensive research (Swanborn 2010)

In most cases, the form of research questions settles the strategy selection. According to Swanborn (2010), when the research questions are broad and pay attention to a social process, intensive research method is employed and case study is a perfect match. Moreover, the number of cases taken into study depends on the research's level of generalization. Based on the nature of this research, case study method is adopted and the empirical part is conducted by studying only one case company with regards of its own context.

Case selection

When selecting the case company for empirical part of this research, it is noticeable that more than one case can be used for empirical analysis (Swanborn 2010). However, the adaptation of social media in employer brand varies in different contexts. Analyzing many cases all at once may lead to invalid result. Thus, based on the nature of this research, only one single case is taken to build up data source and data analysis. There are three criteria that are used in case selection. First, the case company must be a service SME based in Finland, which means employees are their main assets. Second, the case company is working in a sector where there is a shortage of workforce. Third, the case company is already using social media in employer brand communication. For all of those reasons, the case company identified is Smarp.

- Smarp is a service start-up, which means that employees are considered as main assets. Thus, retaining and attracting the best people are crucial concerns in daily operation.

- Smarp is working in technology information industry, where there is a shortage of highly skilled candidates. For that reason, improving employer brand to be an employer of choice is essential to attract talents, in order to survive the war of talents in this field.
- Smarp is now active on three main social media channels and working on blog as well. Moreover, due to the fact that the company is offering service of consulting employee advocacy, which has a lot to do with employer branding, employees of Smarp are motivated to share contents related to their business at work.

3.3 Data collection

In a nutshell, data collection describes a process of gathering data for a certain area of research (Kadam et al. 2013). This process is established to access information for certain parts of the research and in this research, to observe the case study. Based on the nature of the research, data collection process can combine primary data and secondary data. Simply put, primary data category contains data that gathered by author of the research for the first time in order to approach some specific fields of the research. This type of data can be, chiefly, personal interview, surveys, experiments or observations. Conversely, secondary data is data that is already available. This type of data is initially collected by other researchers for the prior research and it can include all kinds of existing data, such as scientific journal, books, or reports (Boykin 2015.) Even though using secondary data is less complicated and can simplify the analyzing procedure, it is crucial to mention that secondary data may lead to an inaccurate finding due to irrelevant data used in the research (Zikmund et al. 2010).

In this research, case study methodology is utilized, which requires the most relevant and specific information. Hence, primary data is mainly utilized and secondary data is employed to assist the primary data. On the other hand, in order to avoid collecting irrelevant data and to achieve a precise result for this research topic, secondary data is used sparingly and collected selectively.

3.3.1 Primary data

Semi-structured interviews

In this thesis, there are 3 types of primary data that were gathered by the author. Firstly, 3 interviews with the management of case company were conducted. Even though conducting interviews to collect data for a research is time-consuming and requires comprehensive construction, interviews indeed provide considerable benefits. The most noticeable advantage of collecting data from interviews is that this method supports the author to get rich data in detail. Moreover, it allows author to explore the topic in depth. In any qualitative research, either of structured interviews, semi-structured interviews or unstructured interviews is employed. (Minter 2003.)

Structured interviews, in fact, are utilized to gather significant data which is partly countable, thus, it is also known as “quantitative research interview” (Sanders et al. 2007, 320). On the other hand, unstructured interviews are non-standardized and much more informal. During an unstructured interview, the interviewee is allowed to share openly about all aspects in relation with the interview topic. In comparison with the two interview methods above, semi-structured interviews are conducted based on a layout that consists of the themes and questions which need to be covered. However, unlike structured interviews, in semi-structured interviews, additional questions can be asked so as to explore the topic in-depth. (Sanders et. al 2007.)

Based on the nature of this thesis, 3 face-to-face semi-structure interviews were conducted between the author and the top management of the case company. Each interview lasted for 30 minutes approximately. All of these interviews were taken place at the case company’s office in Helsinki, on the third of December 2014. Due to the fact that specific information of the products and services provided by Smarp are necessary, there are additional questions made for the interview with the head of technology of the company. List of interviewees are provided in the table below (table 1) and secific semi-structured interviews’ questions are listed in the appendice at the end of this thesis (appendix 1 & 2).

TABLE 1. List of interviewees

Interviewees	Job title
Mr. S	Head of Technology of Smarp
Mr. R	CEO and Co-founder of Smarp
Mr. M	COO and Co-founder of Smarp

Video

It is noticeable that social media and employer brand communication both are becoming new trends and getting more attention from organizations day by day. For that reason, BBC in April 2014 conducted a small talk with CEO of the case company, which was mainly about social media used at work. In this video, the CEO of case company shared his opinions on how to apply social media in internal communication, included benefits and challenges in social media management. This seven-minute video is considered as part of primary data of this research and analyzed by using content analysis method, which will be explained in the next section.

Statistical data

Beside the interviews with the top management of case company, an analytics of posts and users on social media within the organization is produced to get a deeper insight of the case company's current situation as well as to measure the effectiveness of the social media use within the company.

Observation

Observation is an important element of case study research (Swanborn, 2010). Thus, beside the mentioned primary data, author's observation is carried out during the research procedure and observation used in this research focuses on human behavior on social media used within the case company to give the readers an overview of case company's situation on social media and to draw out the best

practice and suggestion for improvement. All observations made are written into a protocol, which also includes transcription of other qualitative data.

3.3.2 Secondary data

Based on the nature of this research, the use of secondary data is limited to avoid inaccurate conclusion. Secondary data employed in this research includes information of case company provided on company's website and blog entries composed by its own staffs. This type of data is utilized to support primary data in answering research questions. It is essential to mention that while collecting secondary data, only the most relevant and specific information is taken into account.

3.4 Data analysis

As mentioned before, the main data used in this research is the interviews with top management of case company. The interviews were managed to be on 3rd December 2014 and were recorded to avoid data missing. Later on, to start the analysis, the interview records are written down into protocol. Moreover, the CEO of the company had shared his opinions on using social media at work to enhance employee engagement on BBC, which is helpful in answering research questions. Hence, a video transcript was created as part of data collection. Also, main points of observations are added into the protocols. In total, the protocol is 10 pages long, includes transcripts of three face-to-face semi-structure interviews, transcripts of a video on BBC and author's observations. Furthermore, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of social media used in employer branding within case company, blog entries and information of case company provided on company's website were taken into account as part of the qualitative data.

Last but not least, analysis of social media used within the case company were received from head of technology of case company. This quantitative data is used in measurement section, which indicates the effectiveness of social media used at case company in order to improve employer brand communication. It is essential to mention that this data is given by the case company. Though this is quantitative

data, only the content of the given data is analysed by using content analysis method.

Given that in case study method, primary data is qualitative data, including interviews, articles, blog entries, observations and so on. A disadvantage of this method is a shortage of computer software which can assist on the analyzing process. Moreover, the data collected is not recorded in numbers, thus, it is much more fragile and time-consuming to analyze whole data. In order to simplify the process and to achieve a comprehensive understanding of research topic by using case study method, data collected is analyzed by using content analysis method. It is essential to mention that in this method, every single piece of data collected is distributed into sections, and each of these section is assigned one or more than one code. These codes can be labels or main ideas which can be found in a certain section. (Swanborn 2010.)

The analyzing process is illustrated briefly in the figure below (figure 24):

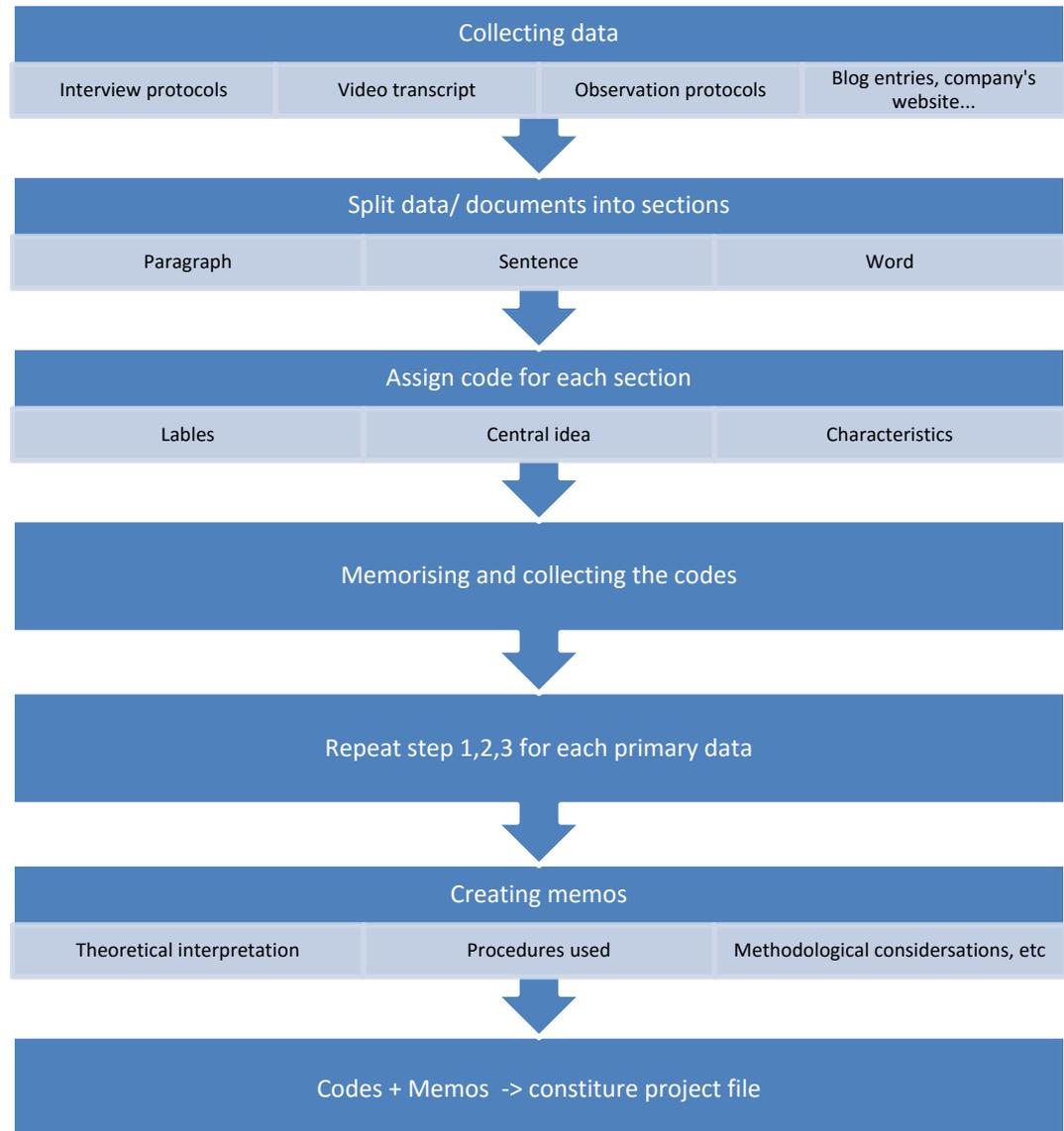


FIGURE 24. Analysis procedure (adapted from Swanborn 2010, 120)

In this process, every interview is recorded. Then the interview and video are written into a protocol. The observation protocols is created based on author's observation of case company's situation. Moreover, other information provided on company's website and company's blog is collected for analyzing. It is essential to mention that the statistical data provided by the case company will be put in this content analysis. Then the collected data is split into sections. These sections can be paragraph, sentence or word, usually written as quotations. Then each of these sections is assigned one or more than one codes. The assigned codes can be recorded as labels, central idea or characteristics of the relevant section. Then the

codes are collected and listed. These steps are repeated for all collected data and during each repetition, memos are created. These memos include insights of case company, interpretation of theory based on case study, considerations of method used during the research and so on. Last but not least, combination of codes and memos conducts a project file, which leads author to the answers for research questions. (Swanborn 2010, 120.)

4 CASE COMPANY

This chapter will start the empirical part with an introduction of the case company Smarp Oy, followed by a review of their main products and service.

4.1 SMARP Oy introduction

Smarp is a technical consulting start-up based in Helsinki, which was founded in 2011. At this moment, Smarp team in Helsinki has 17 members, including the top management of the company. Even though this start-up is still young in the world of SaaS, Smarp has got lots of achievements in 2014 and the company is planning for a great expansion in 2015. Recently, the case company has been expanded by recruiting new talents in sales, marketing and product development. Moreover, the start-up has got an investment from Vision+Fund in March, 2015. It is expected that during 2015, Smarp will keep growing fast and expanding their market to many other countries. At this moment, though reach and development section is still based in Helsinki, Smarp now is operating in a larger market comparing with the starting point. Offices in England, Netherland and in Norway were open and they also have sales representatives in Singapore and Dubai. (Smarp 2015; Haaramo 2014.)

Smarp's goal

Predictably, employee advocacy will soon become a new trend on social media at work and growing up fast in the next five years. Therefore, the needs of a platform to managing contents and to measure the efforts put on social media at work will definitely increase. The CEO of Smarp indicates that Smarp's goal is to keep growing and to become one of the "global leaders" on the market. (Haaramo 2014.)

4.2 SmarpShare SaaS-service

What is SmarpShare?

SmarpShare is an employee advocacy platform and this is the main product provided by Smarp team. As explained in chapter two, employee advocacy is all about encouraging employees to support the brand's goal by utilizing their own online assets, such as social media network. Based on that idea, SmarpShare was invented for internal communication in order to enhance employee engagement on social media at work. By using SmarpShare, organizations are able to gather all of interesting and sharable content in one internal platform, then notice their employees about the suggested content. Moreover, SmarpShare can measure the effectiveness of social media used within the organization (Eave 2014). An expected result is that the created content on SmarpShare can be spread around and reach as many external audiences as possible. Types of contents shared on social media through SmarpShare are various. They can include articles, case studies, blog entries, industry news, open positions and many others. (Smarp 2015.)

How does SmarpShare work?

Firstly, admin has to look for content which is related to the industry where the company is active, then upload the content on SmarpShare platform as suggestion. Admin can easily add the content directly to SmarpShare or import it from RSS feeds, by that SmarpShare actually simplifies the procedure of looking for relevant content (Employee Advocacy 2015). After that, all internal stakeholders of the company can read and share the suggested content on their social media without the need of accessing into their own social media pages, Mr. S, head of technology at Smarp explained.

Three key features on SmarpShare

SmarpShare has three key features which facilitate the usage of social media within the organization. First of all, by using SmarpShare, employees do not need to look up for the content, which actually saves much more time and requires less efforts. Moreover, they are able to share their comments and opinions on the created contents if they want to. Second of all, SmarpShare was invented to encourage employees to participate in social media at work. This means employees get rewarded with points for any activities they make on social media

related to work. Lastly, SmarpShare gives out result immediately and makes measurement of effectiveness much easier. (Employee Advocacy 2015.)

Gamification makes difference

According to head of technology at Smarp, Mr. S, gamification is what makes difference between employee advocacy and other internal platforms. Employees can earn certain points for every activity they make on social media at work. Every click, like, share and comment is counted in this internal competition. The type of reward is various in different company, however, the value of reward does not really matter. Gamifying employee advocacy is merely an act of showing employees that employer appreciates their efforts in supporting the brand on social media, Mr. S explained.

5 RESULTS

In this chapter, thanks to theoretical guideline in chapter two and analysis procedure, the results are provided. Firstly, roles of employer brand in today business are explained, followed by the description of psychological contract shown on social media. Also, the processes of applying social media in employer branding communication are illustrated in this chapter and an example of measurement method is mentioned. Last but not least, the main benefits of utilizing social media internally and challenges of managing social media at work are defined.

5.1 Roles of employer brand

Employer brand is an important factor that makes impact on many aspects of day-to-day business operation, which is illustrated in figure 26. Firstly, employer brand helps every organization to survive the ‘war of talents’. A positive employer brand motivates employees to be more committed to work and attracts the most suitable candidates for open positions. Secondly, internal employer brand is one of the most significant factors which decides level of productivity at work. A positive internal brand can actually motivate employees to work harder to make more contribution to the growth of business. And lastly, listening to what employees talk about their working life is a lot different from listening to the stories which product brands want to spread out. Thus employer brand can change the way stakeholders perceive company’s culture.

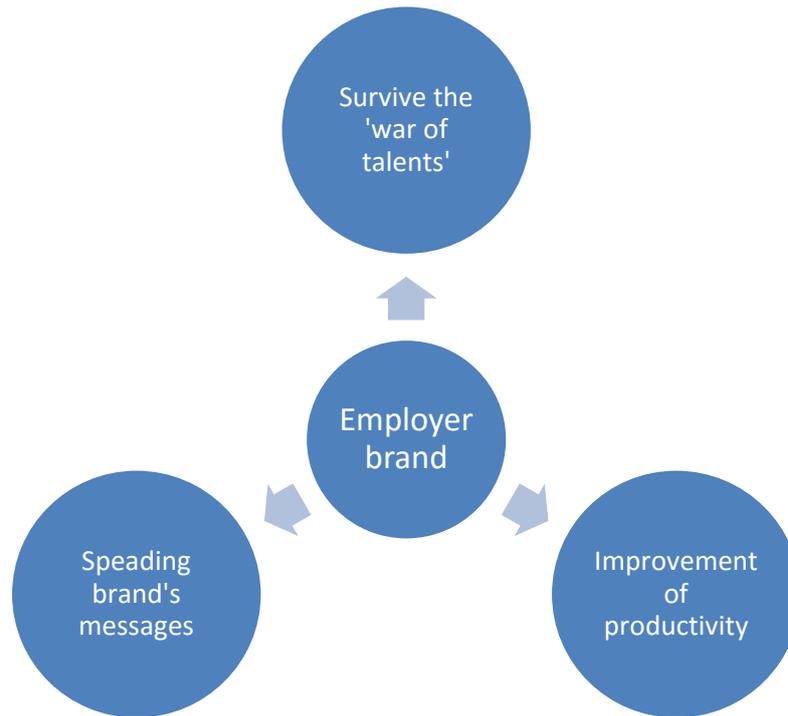


FIGURE 25. Employer brand impacts on business

Surviving the 'war of talents'

Surviving the 'war of talents' means both attracting talents and retaining the best people at work. Firstly, building a positive brand image increases employees commitment. As a result, organization which has good reputation as an employer of choice has lower employee turnover than the others. Especially in recruitment, it is noticed that employees' networks are usually those that recruiter wants to reach. Chances are people in those networks will be more suitable for the opening position. Moreover, it is crucial to mention that in recruiting process, recruiter may want to reach passive candidates who might be open to new opportunities but they are not actually looking for a new job. Hence, by accessing into employees' networks, it is much easier to find the right candidates for opening position. To explain further, Mr. R and Mr. S point out that if every employee shares information about opening position, job advertisement can reach much further. Moreover, the attitude of interviewers toward their working place also effects on decision made by candidates. Therefore, to send a right message of the brand to

external audiences, first and foremost, employer needs to raise awareness of the brand internally.

Improvement of productivity

Enhancing employee engagement is part of employer brand communication. By improving employee engagement, employer is able to create a comfortable working environment and convince their employees to really work for them. One important point of Smarp culture is that everybody takes ownership of his or her own work. This style of management actually motivates employees to decide how to do the assigned tasks themselves and gives them a freedom to design their own work. Moreover, it is believed that to improve productivity at work, employer needs to make employees feel positive. Hence, at Smarp, the working atmosphere is created to be flexible, fun and positive. Moreover, Smarp's employees are allowed to work at home if needed and company events are held to give employees opportunities to get to know each other better, said Mr. S.

Spreading brand's messages

In employer brand communication, employees play the most important role as brand ambassadors. Thus, employees should be conceived as the most trustworthy source of any company, especially in information technology industry where highly skilled candidates are always needed. Every employer can announce itself as an "employer of choice", however, employees are the only people who have comprehensive understanding of working environment within the organization. As an example for the comments made on this part, Mr. R indicates that from the view of audience, listening to the stories of employees is much more trustable than listening to the brands talking about what they offer.

5.2 Psychological contract seen on social media used in employer brand communication

The opinions about how psychological contract can be reflected on social media are various between interviewees. However, all interviewees agree that in social media the first two basic needs of employees, which are safety and reward, are

seen clearly. A short summary of how psychological contract is reflected in social media is provided in the figure at the end of this section (figure 27).

Needs of safety:

Recently, the question of whether unblock social media at work or not is still a concern of many companies. However, it is highly recommended to give employees freedom of using social media at work. First, the act of letting employees do what they want in social media raises the sense of initiative. Second, employees can design how their work looks like, which can be seen as a motivation for more commitment to work. Last but not least, given that social media is forming up a new knowledge-share method, by using social media at work, internal stakeholders can reach more useful information of the industry and all of these information can be shared easily within an organization.

Take Smarp as an example, the top management of case company has never prevented their employees from using social media at work. However, to facilitate employer brand process on social media, SmarpShare, which is well-known as an employee advocacy platform, is used internally. An admin will suggest some contents on this platform, and other employees can easily access to SmarpShare to see all useful information and they can decide what to share on their own social media channels. Moreover, Mr.R shares that it is essential to let employees know that they are safe to share, they are allowed to share the suggested contents and they know the shared contents are the right things to share on social media.

Needs of reward:

Surprisingly, though giving reward is crucial to enhance employee's engagement on social media at work, value of that reward does not matter. Internal stakeholders participate in social media because they feel comfortable and safe while doing that. There is only one thing important in gamifying employee engagement on social media, which is the recognition from the management of the organization. Even though the value of reward can be small, it shows how much attention the organization pays on employees' effort in social media.

Psychologically, that is a good way to encourage employees to support the goals of employer brand on social media.

There are many kinds of reward that every organization can grant to their employees. Mr. R shares his opinion on one possible type of reward which is called charity reward. According to Mr.R, this is one of the best practice that he and Smarp team has been studied and they are planning to utilise this strategy in the near future. In charity reward, every time when an employee participates on social media by using SmarpShare platform, that person is granted a certain amount of points. The idea is that employees can use the points they have gained to make contribution to any community or organization that employer is supporting. This type of reward can make a significant impact on employee engagement. To explain further, Mr. R expresses that being able to use the reward for a good cause, employees not only perceive the brand image in a positive way but also make contribution to the community themselves. This will be a great encouragement for employees to share positive facts of their working place in social media.

Needs of affiliation:

Needs of affiliation cannot be seen clearly in social media world. However, in some cases, the act of sharing the created content, liking posts of other employees can make a huge contribution to building up employer brand image in social media. However, it will take time for employees to really see their contribution.

Needs of growth:

Like the needs of affiliation, it is time-consuming to see the personal growth and professional growth of employees on social media. However, contents suggested by the employer are mostly information of the industry. Thus, by being an ambassador of employer in social media, employees actually add value into their professional brand while sharing these contents on their social media network. Another action that should be taken into account is doing workshops regarding to social media used at work in order to improve employees' skills. As an example for this action, Smarp offers consulting service and making workshops about

using social media in employer branding, though these workshops are hold in Finnish. Finnish speaking employees can attend these workshop to gain more knowledge of social media used in employee advocacy. However, the fact that workshop is only hold in Finnish does give some difficulties to non-Finnish speakers, who also want to participate in the lessons.

Needs of life balance:

Life balance depends on how each employee uses a certain social media platform. For example, Facebook is referred to a place for personal life. There should not be a lot about working environment on this social network. Except when there is a new opening position that employees want to share in social media to let their friends know. In contrast, LinkedIn, according to Mr. R, is a place for building a professional brand, therefore, it is recommended to not upload any photo of daily life on LinkedIn and all other types of professional social media platforms.

Needs of safety

- Smarp does not force employee to share any content.
- Employees know that they are safe to share information
- Employees know that the created content is a right thing to share
- Created content should add value to employee's social profile

Needs of reward

- Value of reward does not make difference
- The most important: recognition from employer
- Gamification used to encourage employees to participate on social media
- Suggestion: charity reward

Needs of affiliation

- Cannot be seen clearly on social media
- Employee does make contribution to building a good employer brand in social media
- It takes time to self-realize the contribution

Needs of growth

- Cannot be seen clearly on social media
- Having workshop about social media and employee advocacy in Finnish
- Add value to professional brand
- Non-Finnish speakers get difficulties in understanding

Needs of life-balance

- Depends on how employees use social media platform.
- Essential to understand functionalities of each platform in order to balance the life on social media.

FIGURE 26. Psychological contract in social media

5.3 Social media applied in employer brand communication

In order to apply social media in employer brand communication, it is crucial to choose the right contents to share. To decide what to share on social media, a comprehensive understanding of each social media platform is essential. The contents between different social media platforms are usually not the same (figure 27).

For example, difference in functionalities between Facebook and LinkedIn formulates the usage of each channel in employer brand process. Facebook is created mainly for building relationship between users and for getting to know each other better in social media. Therefore, the information shared on Facebook should include positive facts of the company and about impacts of working life on employees' life. On the other hand, LinkedIn is mostly used for building a professional brand. Hence, contents created on LinkedIn should be giving information about the industry, in order to make contribution to professional community. Twitter can be a mix between personal life and professional life.

Blogs are utilised vastly in today business world. However, to create interaction on blogs is much more challenging than that in other social media networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn. An important reason for this usual lack of interaction on blogs is the amount of users on blog is much smaller than those in social network. Moreover, writing high-quality blogs with regards to industrial innovation and development is time consuming and it required a thorough study of the topic to avoid inaccurate contents. Hence, to remain company's influence on the industry and contribution to the community, it is recommended to update blog in every second week or at least monthly basis.

Adding to the social media channels utilised within the case company, Mr. S indicates that the company itself also has an account on Weibo. Given that Weibo is a social media network site which are used vastly in China, it is explained that Smarp is using this social media channel for the purpose of product development, since the company has clients who want to get into Chinese market.

The usage of YouTube in employer brand communication at SMEs is limited. The main reason is that to create interesting contents on YouTube, there is a need of considerable investment on recording and editing videos. Moreover, taking Smarp as an example, the main customers of Smarp are businesses in all industries, and the customers will have direct consultation from Smarp's staffs. Thus, in the concept of business-to-business company, creating interaction on YouTube is not essential.

Giving a comment on how to apply social media in employer branding communicating process, Mr. R said that its is recommended to create the most interesting content and only ask employees to share the content which actually adds value to their network. At Smarp, the suggested content includes case studies, articles and reports, which are relevant to employee advocacy. It is noticed that these contents can be searched by using these keywords: employee advocacy, employer brand, social media, employee engagement.

LinkedIn

- For professional brand
- Content includes: Information of the industry

Facebook

- For personal life
- Positive facts about the company and positive impact of working life toward employee's life

Twitter

- Mix between personal life and professional brand
- Latest breaking news of company and information of industry

Blog

- Update monthly basis
- Information of the industry and good news of company's growth

Weibo

- Used for product development

Youtube

- Used for uploading video when needed

FIGURE 27. Social media used in employer branding at Smarp

To improve employees' engagement in social media, every organization needs to make efforts to eliminate employees' fear of talking about working life and to build trust within the organization. Though social media provides a simple medium of communication, while adopting social media in employer brand promotion, it is necessary to understand that the way social media used in employer brand is different from the way people communicate with each other in daily life. Firstly, a good cultureship can enhance employees' engagement in social media. Everybody should be encouraged to tell opinions and able to learn from other people at work. Chances are employees do not have time looking for the suitable contents. To convince employees to participate in social media at work, making it easy for employees to find positive things and to share the contents is required. Thus, brand marketers must think of how to facilitate the process. In addition, making a decision of which social media channels are used at work requires a specific plan for employer brand's growth. By appropriate training, employers help employees to understand differences between social media channels used at work. It is crucial to let employees decide which content is shared and where to share the content. Some of the most significant and expected results of applying social media in employer brand communication are enhancing employees' engagement and building a reputation as an employer of choice (figure 28).

For example, in the process of using social media in employer branding at Smarp, Mr.S indicates that by using Smarpshare, the process of employer brand in social media has been simplified and improved a lot during last year. Moreover, trust is built up among team members. Every employee is allowed to design their own work and is motivated to share their opinions on every project that they are taking part of. As a conclusion, Mr.R indicates that to be successful in adopting social media to employer brand communication, building a strategic plan and making investment are the main keys.

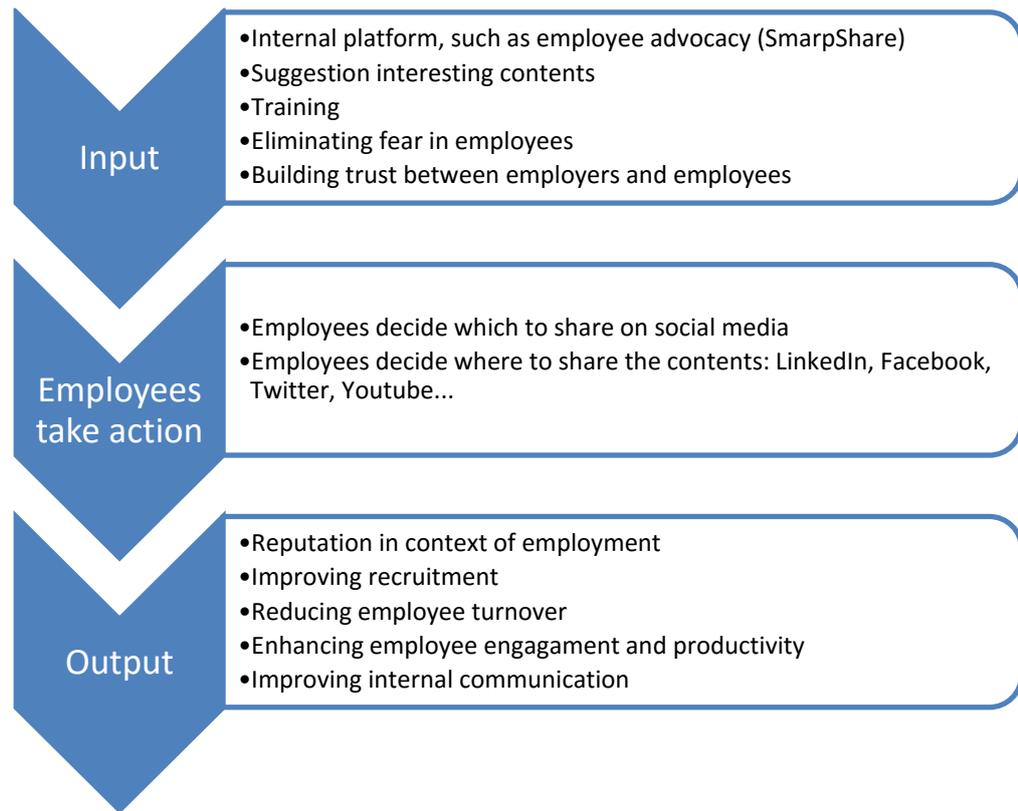


FIGURE 28. Process of applying social media in employer brand communication

5.4 Measurement

As mentioned before, one of the main functions of Smarpshare is to track down the social media growth by giving statistical data. To be specific, the main metrics used in analyzing data on social media at Smarp are engagement rate and number of reach.

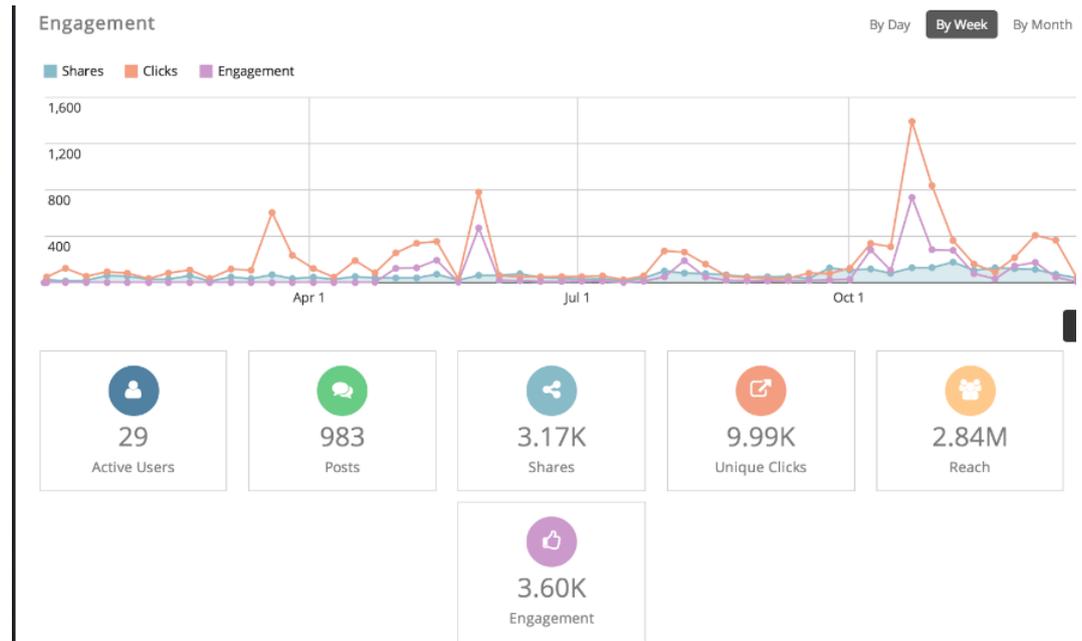


FIGURE 29. Analytics of social media used within Smarp Oy in 2014 (by week)

It can be seen in this figure that the engagement rate in social media at Smarp is not stable. There are some times when the rates are much higher than those of the others. Explained for this situation, Mr.S points out that the contents shared on social media at work is what make the difference between engagement rates. For example, he said, there was a peak of engagement rate on social media channels of Smarp at the end of October 2014. At this point, Smarp was expanding its business, therefore, information of open vacancies were shared and re-shared by Smarp's staffs. Moreover, the fact that CEO of Smarp was invited to be a guest speaker on BBC was a big motivation for employees to share information about their working place. In this video, CEO of Smarp clarified the idea of using employee advocacy platform at work, and all benefits and challenges of running an employee advocacy platform.

Another instance is an increase in engagement at the end of the first quarter of 2014, which can be seen clearly on the chart. At the end of March 2014, Smarp was selected to be in Red Herring Europe 100 finalist 2014, given that this list contains the most innovative companies across Europe. This positive fact of the business growth was a motivation for employees to be more active in social media

to promote their employer brand. Moreover, engagement rate kept growing till the middle of April because a video of SmarpShare was created and it attracted lots of attention from both internal and external stakeholders. It is noticed that when there is an open position, engagement rate increases significantly.

In 2014, total engagement is 3600, and total click is 9900. Given that the most engagement and reach comes from Facebook, LinkedIn is the channel which got the second largest amount of engagement and reach. However, Weibo did not get any engagement during 2014, and this channel got less than a thousand reach. The reason for 'no engagement' on Weibo is the fact that Weibo is utilized at Smarp only for product development. This channel is not the main focus of social media used within the company.

During 2014, there were 29 employees of Smarp used SmarpShare to share contents on their own social media channels, there were 983 posts shared on Smarp's social media. A statistical analysis was created to measure the effectiveness of employees' effort on social media. Based on the analysis, engagement rate in 2014 is 0,13%. However, to measure the effectiveness of each social media channel used at Smarp, engagement rate for each channel needs to be calculated. Though Smarp adopted Weibo into communication process, the main purpose is for product development. Thus, effectiveness of Weibo used at Smarp will not be measured. It is essential to mention that evaluation of engagement rate is made in relation with the amount of fan on each channel. And it is noticed that engagement rate on Facebook is much higher than those on LinkedIn and Twitter (Seiter, 2015).

Engagement rate on Facebook during 2014 is 0.92%, given that the number of followers on Smarp Facebook page is less than 1000. According to a survey made by Socialbakers in 2014, the average engagement rate by pages which have less than 10000 followers on Facebook is 0,94% and the average Facebook engagement rate in electronics industry is 0,24% (Finding The Right Engagement Rate for your Facebook Page 2014). Thus, even though Smarp is very active on Facebook and get much more attention from audience in comparison with other

organizations in electronics industry, it still needs to put more effort to push the engagement rate on Facebook to the average rate.

Unlike Facebook engagement rate, engagement rates on LinkedIn and Twitter are usually smaller. Forrester in 2014, after studying interaction across variety of social networks, indicated that the average engagement rate on LinkedIn is 0.054%, and this rate on Twitter is only 0.03%. During 2014, engagement rate of LinkedIn used within Smarp is 0.063% and on Twitter is 0.047%. In general, Smarp are doing well on these two channels. Each of these channels is updated on daily basics and shared contents are re-shared by employees more regularly on LinkedIn and Twitter than those on Facebook. Especially, with regards to the context of Finnish business environment, Twitter has not been used vastly for communication. Therefore, an engagement rate on Twitter which is significantly larger than the average rate can be considered as an achievement of social media strategies used within Smarp.

Facebook	LinkedIn	Twitter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement rate: 0.92% • Doing good in electronics industry • In general, need more efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement rate: 0.063% • Good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement rate: 0.047% • Very effective

FIGURE 30. Effectiveness of social media efforts at Smarp during 2014

5.5 Benefits and challenges

In terms of benefits and challenges of using social media in employer brand communication, interviewees express different opinions. The main benefits and challenges of adopting social media in employer brand communication are described briefly in the chart below.



FIGURE 31. Benefits and challenges of using social media in employer brand communication

Firstly, it is obvious that adopting social media in employer brand process gives out lots of benefits. First, social media is a new trend in the world of branding, and predictably, this trend will keep growing in the next five to ten years.

Employees are free brand ambassadors who understand clearly the message of the brand. Thus, the foremost benefit of getting employees engaged to social media is that this is a cost-effective way to promote employer brand. Moreover, it is more likely that everybody of us has used at least one social media tool already, the chance is that there are much more possibility for the brand's information to be reached in social media.

Additionally, social media or web 2.0 technology is different from the old technology web 1.0. The main difference is that social media tools offer two-way communication, whereas on web 1.0, there is only one-way communication. This fact means that there is real interaction counted in social media. One of the biggest advantages is that social media provides a new way of communication between human and human but not between brand and customer. Given that users can really interact with the post, hence, the contents people can see in social media is considerably more trust-worthy than those on commercial advertisement. It is noticed that very company can refer itself as the best employer brand, however, it

is more believable while employees of the company are sending the brand's message to support the goals of employer brand in social media.

Social media used in employer brand sometimes plays a role of listening tool. Being able to know what employees are talking about their jobs is an advantage, even though in most cases, work-related contents shared are positive. To give an example for this benefit, Mr. M points out that by listening to what people are talking about the brand, organization can choose a way to react or to make development based on the feedbacks of their employees. Moreover, in the market nowadays, many softwares and applications are provided to facilitate the process of collecting the contents related to work shared by employees. The main functionalities of these tools are gathering all information related to the brand shared by social media users and analyzing what stakeholders like and dislike. Though adopting these tools in employer brand communication in social media maybe beneficial, it is recommended to only keep an eye on what is shared in public. Trying to access to private message is considered as a sign of over-controlling. Consequently, trust between employer and employees is reduced.

Though employing social media in employer brand communication has many advantages, creating the contents on social media and managing social media in employer brand communication also pose some noticeable challenges. Firstly, to start using social media in employer brand communication, it may be time-consuming and complicated to unblock social media at the company where social media has been blocked. Moreover, chances are employees may over-use social media at work and are not able to keep balance between personal life and professional life in social media. One solution for this issue is utilizing an employee advocacy platform to manage the content on social media and employees can save much more time to decide what content should be shared on their own social network. In addition, while gamifying employee advocacy within the company, there is possibility that unsound competition happens when extremely competitive users want to be in the top active users list.

In different countries, the mindset of people are not the same. Consequently, there are different attitudes toward every type of social media. That fact poses a

difficulty for the companies who want to manage the most popular social media platforms all over the world. For example, in Germany, Xing is the most used social media platform in building professional brand. Thus, many German companies are challenged by managing LinkedIn when they decide to internationalize their business.

Moreover, to control to collaborate with employees is one of the most considerable issue. Encouraging employees to use social media to support employer brand requires a good controller. However, when the employer does too much control, it will show less trust from employers toward employees. Mr. R illustrates the most typical result of losing trust between employers and employees is that employees may feel unsafe while sharing facts about their working life.

6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, research question and sub-questions, which are mentioned in chapter one, are answered consisely based on the associasion between empirical research and theoretical material. Then credibility, validity and ethical evaluation of this research are discussed. Lastly, suggestion for further research is provided at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Answers for research questions

After studying the theories with regards to employer brand and social media used in employer brand communication, the author of this thesis is able to give the concise answers to research question and to each of sub-questions. The answers for each research question and sub-question are briefly described in the following table (table 2).

TABLE 2. Answers of research question and sub-questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What are the roles of employer brand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To surviving the ‘war of talents’. - To improve employees’ productivity. - To build brand image in stakeholders.
How does employer satisfy the psychological contract on social media?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees should know what is safe to share and every shared content should add value to employee’s social profile. - Gamification can be used to encourage employees to participat on social media. Reward plays a role of recognition of internal efforts put on social media.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is time-consuming to recognize employee's contribution and growth. - Essential to understand each social media platform in order to keep balance between personal life and working life on social media world.
How does SME apply social media in communicating employer brand?	It is essential to build a strategic plan and make investment in social media used to communicate employer brand. However, employees are the ones who decide which to share and where to share the contents regarding to work. Noticeably, to enhance employee's engagement on social media, it is necessary to eliminate fear and build trust within the organization.
How does SME measure the effectiveness of using social media at work?	There are many metrics used in measuring effectiveness of using social media at work. The most popular metrics are engagement rate and total click. In many cases, social pay-per-click (social PPC) is used to indicate the value earned by employee advocacy.
What are the benefits of applying employer brand on social media?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost effectiveness. - Able to reach more audience. - Create two way communication between human and human. - Spreading trustable messages from employees. - Provide new listening tools.
What are the challenges of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unblocking social media is complicated. - Unsound competitive might happen.

<p>employer brand on social media?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties in managing social medias in different countries. - Concerns in eliminating fear and building trust internally.
<p>How does SME engage employees to social media in order to communicate employer brand?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate contents sharing process on social media by making investment and offering appropriate training. 2. Build good cultureship to eliminate employee's fears of using social media at work and to increase trust between employer and employees. 3. Encourage employees to share opinion by gamification. 4. Conduct strategic plan for each social media channel applied in employer brand communication. 5. Measure the efforts put internally on social media to develop communication plan.

6.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability

In the nature of this research, both employer brand and social media are relatively new topics in the world of branding and communication. It is noticed that along with the constant development in social media technology, employer brand strategies will be changed significantly in the next few year in order to adapt to new branding environment. Therefore, this study could only be considered as reliable if other research would like to study the same topic at the same time. However, if this study is repeated a year from now, the result might be not be the

same, due to the possible changes in employer brand communication process in social media utilized at Smarp.

Validity

Given that the main data source is from semi-structured interviews, the author was able to clarify the questions and to reconfirm any unclear point indicated by interviewees. As mentioned before, secondary data used in this research is chosen carefully, and while collecting data, only the most relevant information from case company's website and blog is taken into account in order to avoid inaccurate results. The statistical data is utilized only to illustrate the measurement method, which was mentioned in the literature review. It is important to indicate that all data collected were relatively easy to analyze. Therefore, the author is confident in her comprehensive understanding of the research problem and firmly believes that all of the theories utilized in this thesis are trustable and the empirical results are valid and applicable for further research.

6.3 Ethical evaluation

In this research, some ethical issues need to be mentioned and evaluated. First of all, based on the nature of the research, most of the author's observations are made based on studying social media platforms currently used at case company. Thus, the right to access into these social media pages needs to be investigated as part of privacy issue. However, the author believes that these contents shared on these social network sites are public information. It is noticed that on social media, every user is able to choose who can see the contents. Thus, it is considered public information when every member of that social network is able to see it. Though all information taken into this research is public, the author also asked for permission to use them in this research and the proposal was accepted on the same day of the semi-structured interviews.

Moreover, it is crucial to inform the readers that the thesis process was explained thoroughly to the contact person of the case company. By doing that, the author made sure the case company would always be able to give comments on the research and be able to response to any change in the process. Also, chances are

the author may not be objective while analyzing data, which may lead to inaccurate results. To avoid this issue, all data collected, which includes the protocol of qualitative data and statistical data, must be conserved and they can always be shown, if necessary, as proof of data analysis process. Last but not least, anonymity is essential in any research, thus, there is no last name used in this thesis.

6.4 Suggestion for further research

As mentioned in chapter three, this thesis is an intensive study, uses only one case study and pay attention mainly to SMEs in Finland. Hence, the first suggestion for further research is studying this topic in a larger range of organizations in Finland to compare the employer branding process in social media at different organizational levels. It is also recommended to study employer brand processes utilized in 'employer of choice' organizations in order to point out the best practices in their processes. Moreover, the usage of social media varies from one context to another, therefore, another suggestion for further research is to compare the process of social media used in employer branding in different industries, or in business-to-business companies versus business-to-consumer companies.

Additionally, this research was completed based on the analysis of current situation of the case company in social media. Given that the top management of the company had been planning for a long-term development of employer brand in social media, it would be a valuable contribution to this area if the case study is taken into longer study. A development plan for utilizing social media in employer brand communication is suggested for further research as well.

This research has paid specific attention to employer branding communication in social media. However, it is essential to mention that the original employer brand process is a lot different from employer brand communication in social media. For that reason, the last suggestion for further research is to describe and explain the main difference between these two processes, and it would be interesting to compare how psychological contract can be seen in these two concepts of employer brand.

Lastly, and interestingly, a new technology has been studied and developed since 2004. After the invention and successful application of web 2.0 technology in daily communication, web 3.0 was invented in 2006 and mentioned as ‘the third generation of the web’ or ‘the intelligent web’. There is not official definition for this technology, however, it is said that web 3.0 is a vast improvement over web 2.0 and it will be able to solve problems which are out of the scope of web 2.0. Moreover, web 4.0 is already mentioned as a future technology (Spivack 2015). These new technologies are predicted to new trends in marketing and branding in the next several years (Nations 2015). Hence, the last suggestion for further research is about these new technologies. Studying and making predictions of the new technologies used in employer branding communication are interesting topics and obviously, it would be a great contribution in the area of employer branding.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Semi-structured interviews' questions:

Interviews with top management of case company, include interview with CEO, COO and Head of Technology

1. Roles of employer branding

- Why it is important to have a good employer brand nowadays?
- What are the roles of employees in employer brand communication?
- How employer brand impacts on employee's productivity at work?
- Does employer brand helps to improve recruitment or raise ccommitment to work?
- Is there anything differences between messages sent by the company brand and those sent by employees?
- If yes, what are the main differences?

2. Psychological contract shown on social media

- How can the 5 basic needs of employees can be seen on social media? (Needs of safety, needs of reward, needs of affiliation, needs of growth and needs of balance)

3. Applying social media in employer brand communication

- What are the main social media channels used within the company?
- What are the difference among the contents of those channels?
- How do you measure the efforts employees put on social media to support the brand's goal?
- Do you use social media as a listening tools to get to know what employees are thinking?
- If yes, how would you like to 'listen' to them on social media?
- What is important when utilizing social media in employer brand?

4. What are benefits of applying social media in employer brand communication?

5. What are challenges of managing social media used in employer brand communication?

APPENDIX 2: Additional questions for Head of Technology of case company:

Company history

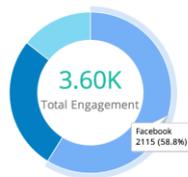
- When the the company was established?
- What is the difference in the industry at the beginning and at this moment?

Products and service provided by the case company

- What are the main products that Smarp is provided?
- Beside the main products, do you offer any other products or service?
- How to use Smarp in internal communication?
- How SmarpShare gamifies employee engagement on social media?
- Can you used SmarpShare to measure effectiveness of social media used in communication?
- If yes, how can you measure?

APPENDIX 3: Social Network Breakdown at Smarp during 2014

Engagement & Reach



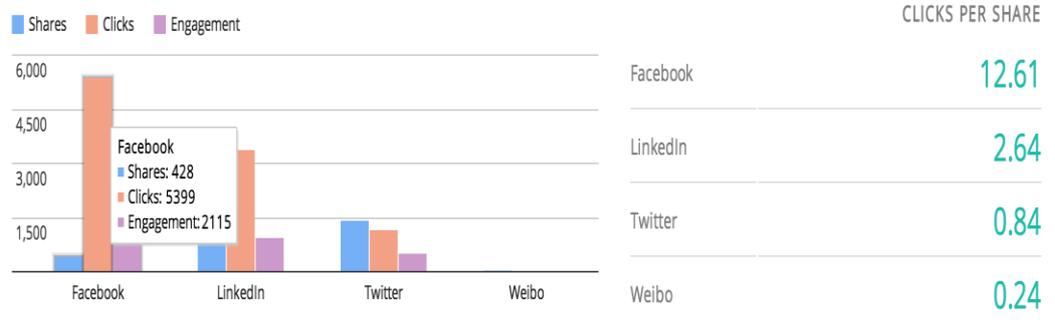
	TOTAL ENGAGEMENT	TOTAL REACH
Facebook	2.12K	229.56K
LinkedIn	963	1.52M
Twitter	517	1.10M
Weibo	0	850

Social Networks Breakdown



	TOTAL SHARES	TOTAL CLICKS
Facebook	428	5.40K
LinkedIn	1.29K	3.40K
Twitter	1.41K	1.18K
Weibo	37	9

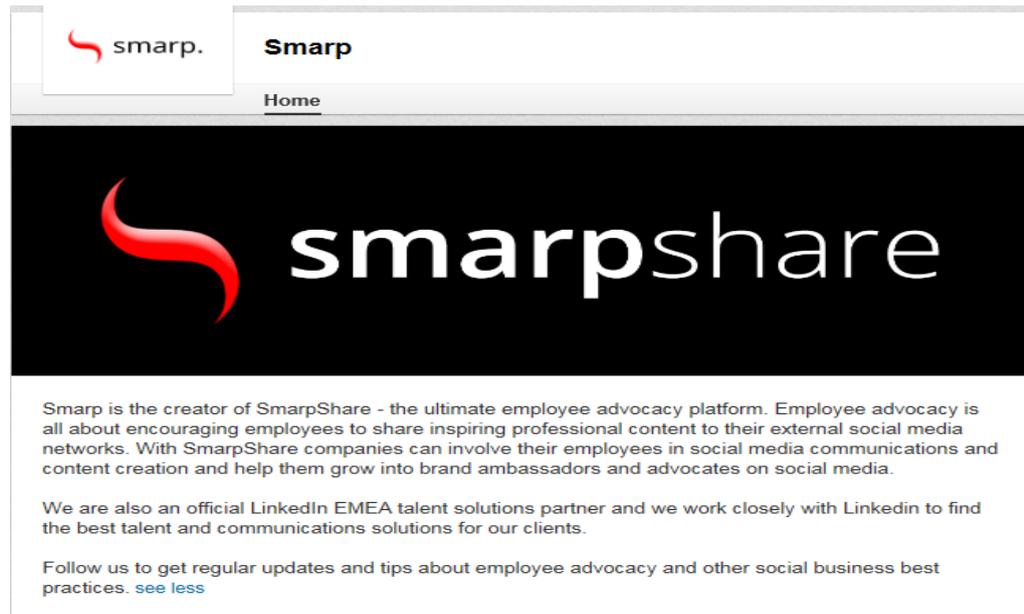
APPENDIX 4: Shares, clicks and engagement of social media used within Smarp during 2014



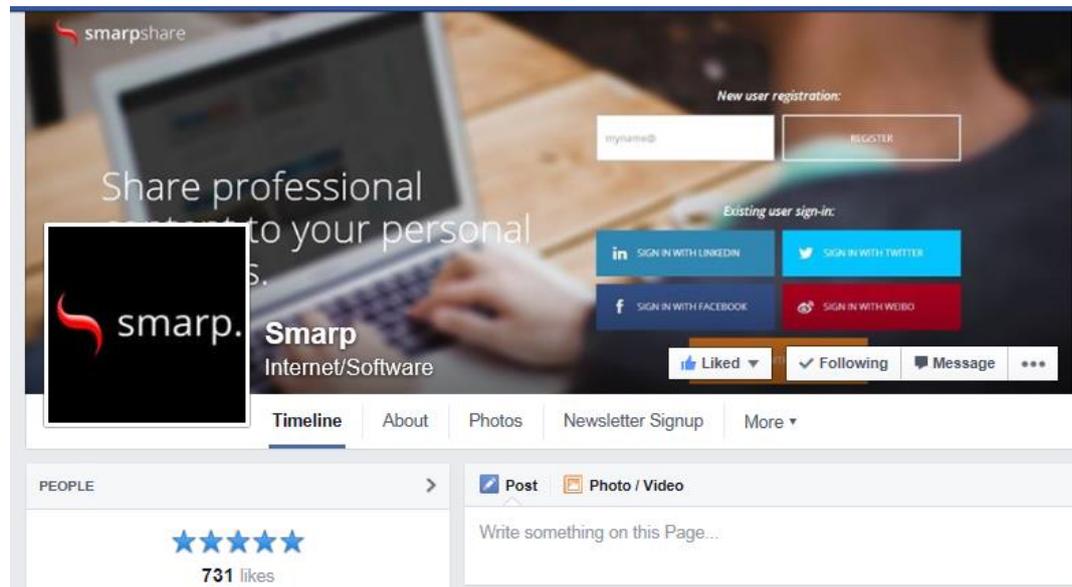
APPENDIX 5. Gamification shown on SmarpShare

Name	Total Shares	Total Clicks	Reach	Engagement
Mr. A	10	6	7.13K	0
Mr. B	10	14	80.57K	1
Mr. C	8	29	2.24K	4

APPENDIX 6. Smarp on LinkedIn



APPENDIX 7. Smarp on Facebook



APPENDIX 8. Smarp on Twitter

APPENDIX 9. Smarp on YouTube

APPENDIX 10. Smarp does blogging

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