Employer Brand Management: 
Concepts & Practices

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AFFIDAVIT

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ABSTRACT
Due to a high number of challenges for recruiting during the last few years, employer branding still remains a popular topic for scientific research. Many sources follow a top-down approach, discussing it as a manageable process and focusing on the creation and communication of an employer brand aimed to successfully attract applicants. For this reason this thesis focuses on the management of the employer brand as a process, analysing its creation, organization and integration in the company. Thereby it draws attention to the complex, versatile character of employer brand management. On the basis of insights from traditional literature a more critical analysis is carried out, highlighting intra-organizational effects and occurring unintended consequences. By also drawing connections to theoretical models the concept is brought into context with Neo Institutionalism and the theory of Enactment. It adds to existing literature by offering a substantiated analysis of employer brand management in current literature and offering different perspectives on the popular concept.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The success of a company is significantly influenced by the quality of its employees (e.g. Sponheuer, 2010; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). The recognition that human resources represent an important striving factor for competitive advantage contributes to the rising interest employer branding gains (Baum, Gsell & Kabst, 2012). Organizations also see themselves confronted with numerous challenges like technological developments, severe changes in the business environment and in demographics and the resulting "War for Talents" (e.g. Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe & Lievens, 2016). This leads to significant challenges for recruitment and increases the importance of employee retention. For this reason a favourable presentation as employer remains an important instrument of human resource management (e.g. Kirschten, 2010; Theurer et al., 2016).

Current theoretical and practice literature offers a well-grounded understanding of the idea and concepts of employer branding and why it is necessary and helpful. Especially the effects of employer branding on potential applicants and on recruiting in general are subject to numerous studies and articles (Theurer et al., 2016).

Because of its multidisciplinary character, there is a broad field of different understandings and interpretations in the discourse about it. The employer brand and the process of employer brand management are often not differentiated thoroughly. (Theurer et al., 2016). As an intersection between different departments like human resource management, communication and marketing, it is often not quite clear at whose responsibility employer branding is in the end.

The understanding of employer brand management as strategic activity is often based on a functional interpretation of the topic. Following a top-down approach, employer branding is perceived as a manageable process. Current literature therefore mainly aims to offer advice and insights on how the employer brand can be created and communicated to successfully attract potential employees (Mölk & Auer, 2017).
With a few exceptions (Mölk & Auer, 2017; Edlinger, 2015; Martin, Gollan & Grigg, 2011; Russell & Brannan, 2016) literature seems to be lacking detailed insights into the processes of employer brand management, its creation and organisation. A more critical view on the topic, its intra-organizational effects and emerging unintended results are also rarely taken into account.

1.2 Purpose Statement

To contribute to this research this thesis assembles a substantiated understanding of what employer branding is concerned with and how it is integrated into the organization following classical top-down conceptions. On the other hand it aims to address the topic in a more differentiated way and thereby tries to contribute to existing literature in various areas.

A holistic approach to the constitution and management of an employer brand and associated intra-organizational processes is currently only available in limited scientific sources. Therefore the underlying aim is to frame the mainly technical and functional understanding of Employer Brand management in a different, more relational context. Since literature in this field is very limited, the thesis will mainly rely on four key sources for this part: Mölk & Auer, 2017; Edlinger, 2015, Martin, Gollan & Grigg, 2011 & Russell & Brannan, 2016. The thesis will therefore provide a detailed, structured overview about the current state of theoretical and empirical literature. It will also link the findings with different theoretical models and thereby examine it from a different point of view.

The aim is to give insights into the process of managing employer brands and their creation and integration into the organization. It extends the employer branding discourse of existing functional literature with insights into intra-organizational practices and processes and from different theoretical viewpoints. Thus it contributes to a broader, more differentiated and critical understanding of the concept of employer brand management. Through this examination from different perspectives it wants to add to a more analytical discussion of the topic.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The first section of this thesis gives an overview of the most important theoretical basics that are necessary for the understanding of the following chapters. The terms employer
branding and employer brand management will be defined and distinguished. Also the
term branding in general will be explained and the employer value proposition will be
defined. An overview about the emergence and the state of employer branding today
will be given in order to introduce the topic and show the areas that are lacking detailed
research.

The subsequent section will be dealing with the analysis of employer brand manage-
ment from different perspectives in literature. The first segment of this chapter will col-
lect insights from existing, functional literature. Whereas the second segment focuses
on literature concerned with different, more critical and comprehensive approaches to
employer brand management, according to the analysis of four key articles.

In the end both of the approaches are analysed in contrast and insights are drawn. Fur-
thermore the findings are complemented and expanded by different theoretical models
in order to give a profound analysis of current employer branding literature, point out
gaps in literature and offer suggestions for further research.

Finally there is a summary and discussion and implications for modern employer brand
management are drawn from the analysis. Also limitations and ideas for future research
will be offered in the last part of the thesis.
2 Basics of Employer Branding

As a starting point the first chapter offers an overview about existing employer branding literature. Some constitutional definitions are given in the beginning followed by the history and development of the employer branding concept and the point it has reached today. The explained, interrelated theories serve as a framework for examining the research question. Also fields lacking research and structure will be mentioned to underline the necessity for further research in this area.

Mentioned for the first time in 1996, employer branding gained increasingly more interest during the past two decades. Despite being a relatively new concept, it has been picked up by different scientific fields such as marketing, human resources or organization studies. Thus many different perceptions and definitions can be found in existing literature. This chapter therefore provides an overview of the most significant definitions for this thesis.

2.1 Theoretical Background and Definitions

Brand and branding

According to the traditional definition of Domizlaff (1939), the brand assigns a product or service to a specific provider and guarantees a constant or improved quality as well as a constant availability (Sponheuer, 2010). This definition however is not used any longer for the diversity and versatile nature of modern products and services (Sponheuer, 2010). The focus rather lies on the impact the brand has on the behaviour of the brand recipient, not the product per se as it offers an added emotional value. Therefore the brand is defined as name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination used to mark products or services of a provider. Branding holds the potential to emphasize the difference of one product or service to its competitors to achieve a lasting impression in the mind of the customer or reference group (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders, 2011).

Reference groups of the brand are very versatile (consumers, banks, partners, media, employees..) and are defined as stakeholders of the organization. Stakeholders are “[... those groups who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s...]”
purposes” (Freeman, 1984, p. 49). The amount of different stakeholders and their differing requirements towards the organisation leads to a very complex network of reference groups that might even follow contrary interests.

Branding refers to the process of establishing, preserving, altering or strengthening the brand. For branding and consequently also employer branding, this demands balancing competing interests and holds potential for problems to emerge (Sponheuer, 2010).

After this introductory definition of branding by itself the overall basic concept of employer branding shall be explained in the next paragraph.

**Employer Branding**

The term „Employer Branding“ was first mentioned by Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow in the Journal of Brand Management in 1996. They defined it as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment that identifies with the employing company“(Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187).

Accordingly, a specific marking is provided for the employer that defines how potential and current employees should see the company (Reichert, Ruf & Frick, 2015). Branding, marketing, communication and human resource techniques are applied to achieve the employer brand (Martin et al., 2011). The power of an Employer Brand is defined by the congruence of its self-perception and the perception others have about the employer. The aim thereby is to appear as employer of choice for potential employees and has to be achieved by all employer-related communication activities (Latzel, Düring, Peters & Weers, 2015).

Apart from that the term employer branding was strongly influenced by the consulting company McKinsey when their work “War for Talents” was published in 1997 which discusses the difficulty of gaining suitable candidates (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

The designation “War for Talents” was brought up by Ed Michael, director of McKinsey USA in 1998 and refers to conditions for recruiting and retaining suitable, skilled employees getting more difficult. It indicates a mind-set that highlights the significance of talent to the success of organizations (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001).

The term employer branding can also be explained by its components. “Employer” thereby in a legal way stands for the natural or legal person or public corporation that employs at least one person under monetary compensation (Bröckermann, 2012).
Whereas in the context of branding the employer is determined by the criteria that influences attractiveness and decisions of employees for one particular company. This criteria could be for example a company’s products or its location (Petkovic, 2008).

The term “brand” as second part of employer branding has already been explained above as name, term, symbol, sign, special design or any combination of those that is used to brand products or services of one or a group of providers (Kotler et al., 2011).

Table 1 shows that the term „brand“, which is traditionally utilized in the area of product branding, can also be applied for employers. This can however lead to changes in methods as well as for measures in the branding process as shown in the table below (Petkovic, 2008). While product brands mainly attract one specific target group, the employer brand addresses many different stakeholders (Hermann, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Product branding</th>
<th>Employer branding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Object</strong></td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Workplace, different working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adressee</strong></td>
<td>Existing customers, New costumers</td>
<td>Existing employees, potential applicants and new employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Sales-Market research, Image-campaigns, Product Marketing-Mix, After-Sales-Service</td>
<td>Labour-Market research, Personnel-Marketing-Mix, Employee appraisals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measures</strong></td>
<td>Product related Positioning, market strategy</td>
<td>Positioning on the labour market, HR-Image strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Product branding & employer branding comparison, Source: Own representation based on Petkovic, 2008, p. 49.

The aim of employer branding is the representation of those characteristics of an employer that are not identifiable for external parties. A preferably attractive representation of the company not only addresses possible candidates but also existing employees (Stotz & Wendel-Klein, 2013).

In the following a definition of employer brand management is provided in order to clarify the difference to the employer brand per se. As the employer brand management
process is the central subject of this thesis it is important to get a profound basic understanding about it in the beginning.

**Employer Brand Management**

Employer brand management indicates the managing process of the employer brand. As part of human resource management employer branding should guarantee a unique selling proposition. This positioning as attractive employer can only be achieved through distinct internal and external communication (Stotz & Wendel-Klein, 2013). While establishing the employer brand per se means setting up what it is and how it needs to be, employer brand management describes the process of managing, introducing and organizing it in the organization. It augments branding activities by including the whole employment experience, management methods and processes. Employer brand management thereby forms the understanding of internal and prospective employees (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

The management of the employer brand contains all activities regarding the development, communication and implementation of a specific, positive employer image that helps to achieve a strong positioning in the labour market (i.e. Backhaus & Tikoo 2004; M.R. Edwards, 2009). This makes employer brand management a more complex concept than pure personnel management or the creation of a positive employer image (Grumbach-Palme, Leeb & Zirkler, 2010).

Employer branding can therefore be seen as one element of the wider employer brand management concept. Mosley (2014) even states the common confusion of employer branding and employer brand management might hinder its progress in many organizations. Since employer branding is often only brought in context with recruitment advertising, creating attention and establishing a positive image the scopes of application are confined. Employer brand management however ensures the long term success and consistency of the employer brand (Mosley, 2014).

**Employer Value Proposition**

Another concept closely linked to employer brand management is the employer value proposition. In order for the employer brand to be positioned successfully, the unique
features that represent the additional value and that can only be provided by one specific employer have to be emphasized (Martin, 2007). In product marketing the equivalent term “Unique Selling Proposition (USP)” is used. The employer value proposition marks the strategic core of the employer brand and combines all competitively relevant employer attributes as shown in Figure 1 below. The employer value proposition considers preferences of the target group and contains the strengths of the employer, different to strengths of competitors (Mosley, 2014).

![Figure 1: Employer value proposition (EVP), Source: Own representation based on Reichert et al., 2015, p. 5.](image)

The creation of the employer value proposition traditionally forms the first element in the development of an employer brand. The value proposition offers the brand’s core information and is designed to be an authentic portrayal of a company’s offerings for its employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). A successful employer value proposition needs to be clear, simple and focused (Mosley, 2014).

The value proposition is displayed to potential candidates, recruiting firms and similar external parties. The aim is to address promising applicants on the one hand, but also to support and improve other organizational brands. Thereby the consistency of all organizational brands is crucial (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Martin, 2007).

One important element of the value proposition concerns internal employer branding. The relevance lies in the incorporation of the employer brand promise into the company
and the organizational culture. The establishment of a labour pool dedicated to the organizational culture and values forms the long-term aim (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer brand management thereby represents the techniques and instruments in order to assure the main characteristics of the employer value proposition are noticed, experienced and believed in (Mosley, 2014).

Following the goal to achieve a positive employer image, another central concept in the context of employer branding is the employer brand image.

**Employer Brand Image**

The employer brand image represents one of many different images a company has to manage. In order to accomplish clarity among similar constructs of organizational image the employer brand image is differentiated from others such as the organizational image or reputation.

As part of the wider organizational image construct, the employer brand image represents only one aspect of the overall image different groups have of the organization. This broad image can vary tremendously as those different groups hold different conceptions of the company (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). The employer image can be described as consolidation of various representations of the organization as employer, conceived by different individuals. The image might undergo vacillations, targets particular features and is of a subjective nature (Highhouse, Brooks & Gregarus, 2009).

The general employer reputation also has to be differentiated from the employer brand image as it contains primarily affective elements. It represents a collective conception of the general public about the organization. Accordingly the general reputation of a company might be very positive but a singular applicant might still hold a negative image according to individual experiences (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Another concept that might be confused with the employer brand image is the employer identity. While the employer brand image concerns an outsider perception of the company as employer, the identity represents the internal understanding of the core characteristics (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Table 2 offers a good overview and summarises the differences between the employer image and related concepts by different categories.
The definitions given in this chapter mostly result from traditional sources. However they create a basic understanding about the topic and work as a basis for further investigations and the extensive, critical analysis in the following chapters.

### 2.2 Relevance of Employer Branding Today

In his book “The Employer Brand” Simon Barrow describes the idea of the employer brand first appearing to him during his employment at Charles Barker Human Resources. As a former consumer goods brand manager he wondered about the absence of an agency or strategy to organise employment actions, similar to consumer brands (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). He also describes his struggles with resistance to the idea in the beginning. Especially concerning the introduction of the marketing language to the field of human resources. Accordingly, many respondents expressed their concerns about employer branding having negative connotations since marketing was seen as artificial and manipulative (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). The struggles of the concept settled between different oppositional disciplines will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3.

When the McKinsey paper “War for Talent” first mentioned employer branding (Michaels et al., 2001) and many similar texts in the early 2000s followed, it gained a lot more interest (Radermacher, 2013).

Pluralistic reasons and influences lead to a growing interest in the topic during the past years. One of them was the globalization of labour markets, offering more alternatives

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**Table 2: Employer image and related concepts, Source: Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p. 410.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarity/ awareness</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Level of abstraction</th>
<th>Type of constituent</th>
<th>Marketing term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer image</td>
<td>Cognitive (elementalist) and/or affective (holistic)</td>
<td>Transient</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
<td>External brand (specific beliefs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Collective (general public)</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Primarily outsiders</td>
<td>External brand (global evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Enduring</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Insider</td>
<td>Internal brand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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15
for employees which lead to a growing shortage of so-called High-Potentials\(^1\). The free and easy access to knowledge and information increases the employee’s maturity and sovereignty and classical incentives like hierarchy and status loose attractiveness (Schuhmacher & Geschwill, 2014).

Also, the power of media and publishing image-affecting content fast and with little effort leads to a stronger call for strategic employ branding. Changes in age-composition caused by demographic alterations also play a significant role in the growing interest for employer branding. Furthermore shorter innovation circles, new technologies and different attitudes of new generations can be named as influencing factors. (Rademacher, 2013; Baum et al., 2012; Petkovic, 2008).

While the popularity of employer branding kept rising during the last decade, its focus, responsibility and means changed fundamentally. Initially mainly focused on external groups of potential employees it is now seen as aimed at a much broader target group. Accordingly every stakeholder inside and outside of the company like clients, suppliers, media and current employees count as audience as they are affected by the organizations reputation (Radermacher, 2013).

Being mentioned and discussed in detail firstly in the mid 1990ies, Employer Branding however still remains a fairly new concept in practice as well as in science. Ambler and Barrow combined the until then separated disciplines of human resources and marketing for the first time in the conceptual setting of the employer brand. Still today most of the published literature is popular science and a more intense, deeper debate and empirical foundation has only started in the recent years (Sponheuer, 2010; Lievens, Van Hoye & Anseel, 2007). In practice however many companies started working on and engaging in employer branding. Petkovic (2008) however mentions that many companies engaged in employer branding without basing their actions on a scientific fundament. However until today neither the literature nor practice offers a commonly shared, universally accepted approach to the topic (Sponheuer, 2010). On the one hand this can be

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\(^1\) The term High Potential primarily describes specific groups of workers with high qualifications. It is measured by the disposability of employees and therefore contains all groups that face a high demand on the part of organizations when there is a small amount of employees available on the labour market (Schuhmacher & Geschwill, 2014, p. 17).
traced back to the fact of employer branding being a relatively young discipline. On the other hand the interface character between human resources and marketing results in scientists as well as practitioners engaging in the topic with very different perspectives (Sponheuer, 2010).

Scientifically proven models and instruments for employer branding are therefore still rare, and the topic is mostly discussed in the context of corporate branding. Labour market specific studies are often limited to the analysis of graduate requirements or the evaluation of the attractiveness of an organization (i.e.: Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Davies, 2008, Baum & Kabst, 2012).

During the years of the world-wide recession employer branding has been questioned and doubted in its contribution and necessity for the organization (Martin et al., 2011). For this reason also the measurement of the success of employer branding will be subject of this thesis.

2.3 Employer Branding as a Multidisciplinary Concept

Like mentioned in the previous chapters, employer branding lies between the fields of different competences and therefore represents a multidisciplinary concept. It has to be understood not as a functional process of representation and determination but as an interactive, complex and ambivalent construction and communication process concerning the employer image (Auer, Edlinger & Mölk, 2014).

The multiple nature of employer branding might be founded in its unclear affiliation as it contains elements of marketing as well as human resources. Being first discussed in a marketing context, it was also examined by human resources academics a little bit later (Edwards, 2009). Edwards (2009) explains this hesitant approach by the human resources field with the differing assumptions between human resources and Marketing about what lies in their field of expertise.

Multiple other fields such as organizational psychology, management, organizational communications or economics offer content to the topic of employer branding and thereby contribute to the pluralistic nature of the concept (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

When reviewing the literature associated with employer branding, it seems obvious that the concept contains a mix or coming together of the fields of marketing and human resources. As part of corporate branding in a marketing context, an integrative approach
has to be deducted since employer branding activities have to comply with eventually conflicting requirements (Sponheuer, 2010; Tomczak & Kernstock, 2014):

- On the one hand employer branding has to be oriented systematically towards target groups on the labour market, in order to maximise its effectivity and efficiency
- On the other hand it has to align with the superordinate corporate brand and in particular with the market oriented branding. This guarantees a consistent brand image by all externally and internally oriented corporate claims

This results in a potential area of conflict and the lack of a holistic, strategic approach to the design and management of employer branding (Sponheuer, 2010). According to the reasons and explanations above for the multidisciplinary character of employer branding and the arisen conceptual and empirical approaches there seems to be a need for structure and analysis of the essential points.
3 Two Approaches to Employer Brand Management

This part of the thesis will give insights into the mostly functional approaches to employer brand management and its activities in current literature and practice reviews. This works as a fundament for more analytical insights in later chapters, where findings from traditional literature are questioned, confirmed or extended.

3.1 Employer Brand Management in Traditional Literature

The scholarly discourse about employer branding and employer brand management mainly consists of functional literature. Many technical and practical literature sources, professional journals and practice reports provide information about how the employer brand should be or is implemented and managed in the organization (Edlinger, 2015; Auer et al., 2014; Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011). This can mainly be ascribed to the dominating strategic marketing perspective of this field of research (Auer et al., 2014).

This perspective according to employer branding research is characterized by the subsequent assumptions:

- The employer brand is understood as a real, objective phenomenon with a specific content (moral concepts, strategies and instruments), a unique form (i.e. websites, advertising material) and distinguishable characteristics (i.e. innovative, modern) (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

- The artefact “employer brand” is constructed and communicated through the organization and noticed by the receivers (Backhaus & Tickoo, 2004). The effect it has on the attractiveness (i.e. Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010), identity (i.e. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) and image (i.e. Knox & Freeman, 2006) of the employer can be identified by empirical research objectively (Auer et al., 2014).

- The relation between cause and effect of the employer brand and its addressees can be regulated through management activities since receivers are perceived to be static and passive. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

This part of the thesis offers an extensive analysis of literature following the assumptions above. Insights about internal employer branding activities, external employer branding
activities as well as about the management and evaluation of the employer brand are presented.

3.1.1 Internal Employer Branding Activities

Internal employer branding activities are targeted on the positive employer positioning inside the company. Not to be confused with internal branding, internally directed employer branding activities aim for a favourable positioning on the employment market. Internal branding however strives for a favourable position in all markets it addresses, especially the consumer market (Grumbach-Palme et al., 2010; Theurer et al., 2016). By convincing and enthusing employees about the brand, internal branding tries to transmute employees into brand ambassadors. Internal employer branding though aims for the development of personnel dedicated to the values and objectives of the organization in order to get promoted as an employer (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

It also has to be mentioned that employer branding, at least during its early days, has widely been reduced to “personnel marketing”, which refers more to the external employer brand orientation (Baum et. al, 2012). However, there is a common understanding today that the employer brand has to grow from within and needs a strong fundament inside the organization (Kriegler, 2015).

Strategy for internal employer branding

According to most traditional literature the implementation of the employer branding strategy starts with internal measures at the management and employees in the company and subsequently evolves parallel to external branding (Kriegler, 2015). During the implementation phase the main values of the employer brand are communicated and participants are instructed about what they can contribute (Schlüter, 2011). In 2008 the German Employer Branding Academy designed a model for internal employer branding (Figure 2). This model distinguishes four main spheres of activity: Leadership, Personnel Management, Internal Communication and the Design of the working environment. Developing those four fields of action in accordance with the employer positioning ensures the enduring anchorage of the employer brand in the organization. Employees need to feel a homogenous and serious engagement with the employer brand just like the applicant should be reminded at all contact points about the employer brand. The
clear aim is for employees and management to exemplify the values and live up to them (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). When implementing the employer several different components are mentioned: onboarding, personal development, evaluation, design of the working environment, compensation and incentives, human-resource allocation, emulation planning, reporting systems (Schuhmacher & Geschwill, 2014).

The model for internal employer branding by the German Employer Branding Academy offers an overview about the most common internal employer branding elements mentioned in the literature. It shows four different fields of action for anchoring the employer brand within the organization in accordance with the employer value proposition (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Internal employer branding process, Source: Own representation based on Kriegler, 2015, p. 211.](image)

1. Leadership

In order to anchor the employer brand and make it credible and authentic, the attitude and performance of the management plays an important role (Schlüter, 2011). Kriegler (2015) states that it is especially important for lower executives to act according to the employer brand. This is because employees particularly need their direct superiors as role models for integrating new practices and requirements (Schlüter, 2011). Mosley (2014) however states that it is the top management in particular that needs to drive the employer brand since it is more enthusing for employees to see the CEO involved than just their colleges and supervisors.
Literature offers specific advice for the different levels of management about employer branding practices. Directors should therefore clearly state their support and lead and act according to the employer brand (Kriegler, 2015). Mosely states that top management needs to “light the fire and fan the flames” by spreading the enthusiasm in the organization (Mosley, 2014). The middle management is advised to also be available for employees, if the lower management does not act according to the employer brand. Lower authorities shall lead perceptible according to the employer brand, evaluate employee’s behaviour according to it and give impulse and feedback for managing the employer brand (Kriegler, 2015).

The identity and values of the employer not only get reflected in the conduct of the leadership but also in the management culture as a whole. This can be exemplified by the feedback culture, trainee programs, appraisal interviews, management, guidelines, performance evaluations or management development (Schlüter, 2011).

2. Human Resource Management

Also in the area of personnel management the aim is to align processes and instruments with the employer brand (Schlüter, 2011). It is important to involve employees and make them participate actively (Latzel et al., 2015).

Accordingly the fields of action are (Kriegler, 2015):

- Personnel development: trainings, promotion opportunities etc.
- Remuneration- and participation models, incentives, social and fringe benefits
- Personnel policies regarding work life balance, aligning family and business (home office, sabbaticals, parental leave) or fairness (diversity, age management, equality)
- Performance management
- Integrating and onboarding programmms
- Outplacement processes
- Knowledge management and idea management
- Internal job markets

Employees with direct contact to applicants should internalize the contents of the employer brand especially well since they represent it externally. Literature therefore suggests to train those members of the organization carefully and also to install an exchange
system for experiences. Rather than extensive rules this system enables a lively, learning system of exchange (Schlüter, 2011).

Kriegler (2015) offers a practical example for the implementation of the employer brand within personnel management:

A leading technical manufacturer’s employer brand positioning statement says: “Our strength is based upon prudence, dependability and profoundness and every voice has its importance.” The involved parties were clear about the statement representing the corporate culture but there were no actions taken to actively encourage and expand the positioned aspects. A very clear, strongly focused positioning of the employer brand comes along with the workforce paying particular attention to the stated aspects of the profile. Hence those issues get questioned more critically and the organization needs to adjust in order to gain acceptance. A possible implication for internal employer brand management in this case could therefore be to reduce supervising bodies (dependability), making important decisions in the team, not isolated (every voice has its importance) or making career- and development paths clear and transparent (prudence, profoundness).

3. Internal communication

Alongside human resource management also internal communication also marks an important part of the internal employer brand management actions since it ensures the possibility for participation. It mostly concerns communication via media channels like the intranet, newsletters or magazines, events, social media or conversations (Mast & Simition, 2016; Petkovic, 2008).

In the context of internal communication classical practice literature even points to the relevance of dialogue (i.e.: Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Kriegler, 2015; Mosley, 2014). The focus here lies on the creation of bilateral internal communication and support interaction between the sender and receiver of messages. Sole information and announcement of the employer brand achieves knowledge, basic understanding or even information overload (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). Dialogue and reflection are recommended for internalizing the employer branding content. The employer brand needs to be perceptible in order to get integrated, experienced and exemplified. The superordinate goal of the im-
plementation concept thereby is to create familiarity with the employer brand, acceptance for eventual necessary changes, clearness about the role of the employer brand in daily routines, distinct expectations from management and employees and the clear commitment of all parties. (Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014).

Internal employer branding actions are not about the presentation of a new image- or recruiting campaign, but rather about a change of awareness and actions. Therefore employer brand managers need to demonstrate sensitivity with the internal rollout (Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014).

Technological opportunities like skype or blogs support those forms of direct, double-sided interactions (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Discussions about the different employer branding elements and their consequences for management activities are seen as important actions to really implement it in the organization (Kriegler, 2015).

Especially motivated employees should be identified as “employer brand ambassadors”. Giving them an active role as commentator on social media, experts on fairs and speaker on high schools or universities can turn out as extremely advantageous both for external and internal employer branding (Mosely, 2014). The overall guideline that is suggested for communication actions is to have the smallest possible amount of complexity (Kriegler, 2015).

The most effective form of internal communication however often occurs informally and concerns the culture of meetings or the interior design. The aim for the employer brand management should therefore be to count on informal ways of communication and interaction parallel to formal, less classical ones (Schlüter, 2011). Therefore the fourth element for internal employer brand management actions is the design of the working environment.

4. Design of the working environment
The fourth step for anchoring the employer brand inside the organization concerns the question of how the positioning affects the daily work routine.

The employer brand needs to be incorporated in organizational structures and be sustained by concrete measures. This helps to establish the employer brand as a long lasting concept and being constantly perceptible for employees (Mosley, 2014).

Exemplary application areas are (Kriegler, 2015):
- Work autonomy and self-responsibility
- Flexible timetables
- Organizational structures (hierarchies, structures, competences..)
- Social Media policies
- Control and reporting routines

Organizations promoting employer values such as freedom and trust have to take care of the areas mentioned above especially in order not to create contradictory content. Employer brand management therefore needs to be aware that employer branding has far-reaching consequences and needs to become more than a hollow advertising slogan (Mosley, 2014).

**Example: Orthomol (Kriegler, 2015)**

The company Orthomol acts as example for successful internal employer brand management. In an interview Eva-Maria Jungmann, the personal manager of Orthomol explains the approach the company takes to implementing the employer brand (Kriegler, 2015). With people being the central focus of the company, they believe only employees that feel comfortable in their working environment are able to represent the company in a positive way. To achieve an ideal implementation of the employer brand, they make sure for new employees to get familiar with the employer brand from the very beginning as part of the onboarding process. Newcomers are equipped with a calendar containing all the guidelines, values and definitions for becoming a so called “Orthomolist”. Jungmann also mentions the appreciative, open communication and the employee mentoring program as central internal employer branding measures (Kriegler, 2015).

In terms of internal employer brand communication the company chose very creative ways of displaying them. Signs and pictures on various places in the company are used to internalize the employer brand in an innovative, often funny way. The personal manager also points out the importance of making it comprehensible for every employee, making it touchable and bringing it to live by creating t-shirts or cups. When asked about the introduction of employer branding, she emphasizes the role of bringing in both management as well as employees from the very beginning. By attending voluntary in-house workshops they get involve instantly. She names this practice of involvement as primary reason for the high degree of acceptance and identification with the employer brand.
Concerning direct consequences of the employer branding practices Jungmann names an increasing number of unsolicited applications and a drop in the labour turnover rate and sickness-related absenteeism (Kriegler, 2015).

When asked about things she would do differently and learnings from their previous experience with employer branding she mentions integrating every employee from the very beginning, especially into the definition of the employer brand. Also making them really feel and experience the culture and the employer brand is important for it to become authentic and real (Kriegler, 2015).

Figure 3: Internal Employer Brand Communication Orthomol, Source: Kriegler, 2015, p. 394.
3.1.2 External Employer Branding Activities

External employer branding and its perception by (potential) employees has been the focus of most employer branding activities in the past years (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2009). Along with the growing popularity of employer branding an increasing demand for professional, creative actions can be found in many organizations. Companies therefore acknowledge the relevance of employer branding by providing higher budgets and collaborating with external personnel marketing agents (Lievens & Slaugther, 2016).

This even lead to the emergence of “Pitches”2, which include participants from personnel marketing providers and professional marketing agencies (Kriegler, 2015). Especially middle and small sized companies still seem to struggle in the field of external employer branding measures. Also many bigger companies don`t have detailed structures in order to plan their appearance consistently (Kriegler, 2015). This chapter therefore gives insights into popular external employer branding activities and recommendations for external employer brand management in classical literature.

Promotional implementation of the strategy

After becoming clear about the desired employer branding values, messages and positioning and the realization of the internal implementation, the external communication succeeds. The successful implementation of internal employer branding measures offers the framework for external employer branding actions (Schlüter, 2011).

The first step is to work out a creative concept in order to translate the employer value proposition into communication and set the foundation for the promotional implementation. A consequently implemented creative concept is aimed to achieve a concrete image about the company in the head of the target groups. The creative concept should include the following components: a creative guideline and unique employment proposition, a series of motives suitable for various target groups, design standards (colours, logo..), images and graphics, tonality, wording (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

2 The term „Pitch“ describes a competitive announcement of marketing campaigns where the announcing organization selects the agency only after the presentation of different creative concepts from various marketing agencies (Kriegler, 2015).
The development of this creative concept can be conducted autonomously within the organization or by commissioning an external agency. Those different options of course require different monetary and time resources. Practitioner literature offers substantial advice for budgeting and scheduling the concept, for choosing the most suitable agency and for a successful cooperation with the external partner (Schuhmacher & Geschwill, 2014; Breuss & Forneck, 2015).

Concerning the promotional implementation of the strategy, different media for the internal and external communication have to be considered. The following table (Table 3) shows a selection of media for the communication of the employer brand (Kriegler, 2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classical</strong></td>
<td>Job Advertisements</td>
<td>Employee magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image Ads</td>
<td>Internal guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business media</td>
<td>Feedback media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posters, blow-ups</td>
<td>Employee videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image movies</td>
<td>Give-aways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsoring</td>
<td>Internal job market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outdoor/ public transport ads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital</strong></td>
<td>Career websites</td>
<td>Intranet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online job exchange</td>
<td>Online employee surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viral marketing</td>
<td>Employee blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banner ads</td>
<td>Employee newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>Online feedback channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employer blogs</td>
<td>Info screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forums, portals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Search engine optimization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td>Appraisal interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talent Relation Management</td>
<td>Internal forums and chats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alumni Programs</td>
<td>Internal social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches at universities, schools</td>
<td>Social Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Live</strong></td>
<td>Congresses, conferences</td>
<td>Employee events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruiting fairs</td>
<td>Participation in public events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PR</strong></td>
<td>Press releases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Selection of media, Source: Own representation based on Kriegler, 2015, p. 261.*
Planning media and actions

Subsequently, the external employer branding strategy also has to be planned systematically for all relevant channels and media groups. The task lies in enhancing the effect of the applied communication means as well as optimizing the budget compliance (Kremmel, Hofer-Fischer & Von Walter, 2016). The clear goal here is to achieve efficiency, budget synergies and cost savings. At this point it is also important to align the employer brand with other organizational brands in order for a consistent brand identity (Mosely, 2014).

Another aspect considering the external communication of the employer brand is the different phases of communication. Practical literature differentiates between four phases (Kriegler, 2015):

1. First contact with passive job searchers: This phase focuses on getting in contact with people like students that do not face an urgent need for a job right now. The aim is to build publicity and attention for later dates when they actively look for an employer.
2. First contact with active job searchers: In this phase organizations try to gain the attention of people actively looking for a job which requires being present in all those contact places that are relevant for this target group.
3. Secondary contact: Once the general interest is drawn, instruments for more extensive information are applied. In this phase especially the homepage is consulted for further information as a centrepiece of the employer branding communication. The aim is to create greater curiosity in suitable candidates, as both the applicant and the company proceed further in the selection process. This requires a clear formulation of the requirements for suitable candidates to create a very succinct profile.
4. Dialogue: The most crucial phase of the communication process serves the positive support of the personal dialogue. In this phase organizations have to keep in mind to stick to the values and content of the employer brand for creating a coherent image overall.

Various parameters have to be taken into account when designing the employer branding process. The preferences and behaviour patterns of different generations, professional category or other target groups have to be considered. Internal and external
deadlines and milestones as well as regional conditions such as strong competition in an area can influence the requirements for employer branding communication (Latzel et al., 2015). The following examples show cross-media communication that include all of those parameters (Schlüter, 2011):

Due to the very specific requirements of competences for their applicants, Opitz Consulting puts its focus on recruiting university graduates of the relevant special fields by using a mix of different channels. In order to strengthen their employer brand they use existing employees as testimonials on their website, brochures, and engage in online and mobile campaigns. For their recruiting events semester timelines are taken into account and personnel managers guide through the event alongside working students and young professionals (Schlüter, 2011).

Following the trend for creative recruiting events, the German University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt for example hosts an annual “Summer challenge”. Partner companies, potential applicants or other interested parties are invited to join in sports, tournaments or simply networking (Schlüter, 2011).

**Consistent image**

The employer brand does not only live from well-planned strategies and methods but furthermore needs a consistent image and a red thread running throughout the whole organization (Schlüter, 2011; Latzel et al., 2015; Mosley, 2014). The example of a German Dax-listed company that positioned itself as prestigious employer, demonstrates this problem: Promising image and reputation via slogans like “Are you ready to take the lead?” or stating to be presumed as leaders in their professional circle. On the website or even in parallelly posted job advertisements however, internationality, innovation and performance were the predominant attributes. A reference to the career sites was not noticeable (Kriegler, 2015). The task for employer brand management here would be to examine all employer media for consistency.

Literature distinguishes different areas in order to achieve full consistency. One aim is to achieve a cognitive intensity of the message in order to create a unique employment proposition. Asking applicants or new members of the organization for their knowledge and perception about the employer brand could be a concrete task for the employer brand manager (Kriegler, 2015).
Another aspect is the general consistence of the message and the consistency and dramaturgy of the communication concept (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). Also the creative consistency of images, tonality and language of the employer brand is an important aspect to achieve an overall coherent appearance. This can be especially challenging for international companies as the central message should be the same while leaving space for country-specific topics (Christiaans, 2012). As part of the overall branding concept, the employer brand usually has to follow corporate branding parameters. The last area concerns creative conciseness, i.e. creative quality and uniqueness (Christiaans, 2012; Esch, 2015).

After enforcing the consistent appearance of the employer brand the next task is to communicate it externally (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

**External communication**

As the subject of planning and arranging the external communication has already been discussed, this paragraph regards additional information concerning the different fields of action.

The first field of action mentioned by literature is personnel marketing. The handling of labour markets with instruments of personnel marketing plays a prominent role especially in the context of external employer branding. Employer brand managers in this context have to think about media planning and the choice of media that can reach the target group as directly as possible without divergence loss (Esch, 2015; Trost, 2013).

The next aspect to consider is networking, an often under estimated area. Concrete fields of action for employer brand managers could be networking actions like alumni programs, specialist events and programs of recommendation, promotion of clubs or student organizations, networking via XING, Linkedin or in Social media, Talent Relationship Management or sponsoring (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015).

Related to networking, working with testimonials, brand ambassadors or recommendation programs also has to be mentioned as part of external employer brand management (Becker, 2013). It has to be considered however that employer brand ambassadors cannot be made, they have to be intrinsically motivated and convinced by their employer. Studies show that employees still count as most credible source for information about the employer (Kriegler, 2015). This makes the term “brand ambassador” per se
seem unsuitable, as an ambassador does not inevitably represent their own opinion. In the context of employer branding, where authenticity is one of the fundamental elements, advocate would be a more appropriate term (Kriegler, 2015).

The third and most obvious element of external brand communication is recruiting and candidate management. Employer brand managers need to ensure that everybody in contact with applicants is very well informed about the employer brand since they embody it. For example, those could be recruiters, hiring managers, experts, colleagues with telephone contacts, staff at fairs, internal headhunters, employees operating a blog or managers giving talks at universities. Exchange of experience and regular talks with those stakeholders are important to make sure they are well briefed (Becker, 2013).

Another aspect is candidate management, which is often disregarded but offers numerous intensive points of contact with applicants that can be used beneficially: information about the application process, confirmation of receipt, invitations, preparatory phone conversations, assessment centers, online tests, letters of refusal or commitment or job interviews (Kriegler, 2015).

Social media employer branding has also gained a lot of interest for recruiting during the past years. Not being strategically especially sound, it dominated the discourse and many companies engaged in it (Radermacher, 2013). Literature however recommends a more reflected, critical and strategically underpinned approach and offers a social media employer branding model by the German professor Martin Grothe. Employer brand managers should therefore aim for a well-planned approach considering five phases (Kriegler 2015).

Firstly a social media analysis is needed to explore relevant channels, the target group and generate starting points and relevant topics. The second step is to elaborate the strategy, best practices and goals. Furthermore it is important to think about whom to include and enable for social media employer branding, how to select and train them. Since the communication via social media should act as dialogue, it is important to establish a conversation on the channels and not only to be the host. (Radermacher, 2013)

Employer brand management also needs to take into account the effects of employees communicating about the employer outside the organization (Böttger, 2012). Also previous employees and rejected applicants need to be taken into consideration for this area of the employer brand, as the stakeholders have to be seen in a much more holistic...
way (Böttger, 2012). For this reason companies and their employer brand managers need to bear in mind the holistic impact of recruitment strategies beyond the design and branding campaigns.

In addition the corporate reputation remains an influencing factor that is much harder to control than others. Literature still offers several criteria that might affect it (Kriegler, 2015):

- Management behaviour: scandals, public statements or attitudes
- Corporate Governance: corruption, sustainable management, ethical codes, fair treatment and handling of employees and work council
- Corporate Responsibility: social behaviour, environmental protection,
- Crisis management: Communication and handling of personnel in times of crisis
- Success of the company: Success story, size and development, future orientation
- Product and service quality: success and reliability of products and services, handling of reclamations, standards, innovation strength

**Example: Techniker Krankenkasse (Kriegler, 2015)**

A practical example for successful external employer brand management offered by the literature is the case of “Techniker Krankenkasse”, a public health insurance. Kriegler (2015) provides an interview with Nils Becker, project manager for employer branding at the Techniker Krankenkasse.

He explains that the aim was to surprise and differentiate themselves from other appearances while keeping the prerequisite of authenticity. Concerning the involvement into the organization, he stresses early integration of the whole team and not creating secrets about it, rather seeing it as collaborative project characterized by transparency and employee involvement. According to their slogan “Employer branding grows from within”, applying a detailed analysis including discussions, interviews and focal groups with employees, trainees, externals and management, a company-wide accepted strategy was developed.

This basis offered space for a new creative concept, one of the most difficult tasks according to Becker as at this point the results become visible for the first time. He also
mentions precisely overthinking the choice of agency at this step, when working with external help and looking for references and differences in quality.

As “Techniker Krankenkasse” contains numerous different independent business branches, the consistent implementation of the central employer branding guidelines turned out to be very challenging. Becker again mentions the company wide transparency and involvement from the beginning as well as biannual meetings, dialogue and feedback channels to achieve acceptance in all branches. This worked out very well for the external communication so far but also requires a structured employer brand management process. He demonstrates this by pre-defined “Education Marketing” activities that are interrelated (Kriegler, 2015):

- Market research and analysis (market, trend and competition analysis)
- Strategies and guidelines (positioning as employer, communication strategy, visual and textual guidelines)
- Action plan and implementation control (communication plan and implementation, development of measures and distribution, control of the agencies)
- Training and sparring (information and training of internal instructors)
- Evaluation and Control (measurement of success)

Also testing the creative concept beforehand as “Techniker Krankenkasse” did on a graduate congress can provide significant reactions and input.

Concerning noticeable effects of their employer brand management, Becker explains that the company is still at the very beginning of developing a system of indicators. The aim is to create learnings, a more effective management and the efficient use of a budget by introducing an indicator system. Nevertheless some effects have been felt including occupation rates of apprenticeship positions or more unsolicited applications. Also the rate of exceptionally good applications, matches for the motives of the brand communication and the integration of texts and images of the campaign into application documents can be observed. Internally a high rate of sympathy and identification for the employer brand can be noticed.
Finally Nils Becker emphasizes the importance of the corporate brand for the development of an authentic employer brand, since the employer brand should accompany the already existing value range.

3.1.3 Managing and Measuring the Employer Brand

After describing the strategic, communicative and creative fundamentals of the employer brand and its operative implementation inside and outside the organization, the following chapter concerns the measuring and steering of the employer brand. While the phase of analysis and development of a strategy usually takes four to twelve months, the phase of managing the employer brand never stops (Esch, 2015). However the management of the employer brand is not notable for candidates in the first place, it sets the groundwork for all other steps (Martin, 2007).

The employer brand needs years to develop but it does not take a lot of time for it to weaken or become flawed. Though the reasons for that can be diverse, literature offers an overview (Kriegler, 2015):

- Changes in external and internal influencing factors are not integrated early enough, the employer position remains static and loses legitimation.
- The absences of responsible persons as responsibilities are not distributed clearly. Steady central management is missing and the interchange between different departments is not regular enough.
- Alternating persons in charge that are not clear about the employer brands history and principles.

This means that apart from the operative tasks employer brand management has to fulfil in their everyday activities, they also assure the consistency of appearance and content of the employer brand over the years (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Furthermore they have to observe internal and external influencing factors, rate changes according to their relevance for the employer brand and include them into the process soon enough. On a strategic level this demands the adjustment of the positioning according
to cultural integration processes after fusions, takeovers or changes in business strategy (Petkovic, 2008).

Especially for organizations that do not grow organically, operate in a dynamic environment or are exposed to high fluctuation, it is important for all employer brand actors to be integrated into long-term oriented management and controlling of the brand (Kriegler, 2015).

The aim is to efficiently establish and organize the employer brand and to maintain it systematically over the years. To measure the success of these tasks, literature recommends a system of employer brand controlling. It supports the optimization of resource management, enhances positive effects, and aims to recognize undesirable developments early and to adjust and optimize the strategy and communication concept. For these reasons the establishment of a reliable system of indicators and nomination of somebody responsible for this task is crucial for the prosperity of the employer brand (Davies, 2008).

**The employer brand manager**

The profile of the employer brand manager is not clearly defined in current literature. Compared to corporate branding employer branding is still at the very beginning. While tasks of a conventional brand manager are usually well defined, opinions seem to differentiate between the profile and duties of the employer brand manager (Davies, 2008; Edlinger, 2015; Thieme, 2013).

Responsibilities are often reduced to employer image branding and external personnel marketing (Thieme, 2013) although the previous chapters reveal a different picture and show the multidisciplinary and versatile sides of this profession. The employer brand manager has to ensure:

- The development of a positioning that complies with strategic organizational goals, is authentic and unique (Petkovic, 2008; Barrow & Mosley, 2005)
- An effective and consistent appearance towards all target groups (Edwards, 2009; Barrow & Mosley, 2005)
- A noticeable impact of the employer brand in the every-day organizational life (Thieme, 2013)
- A continuous development and management of internal and external employer branding (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010)
- The establishment of effective employer brand management strategies in order to continuously steer, evaluate and develop the employer brand (Thieme, 2013)

Literature suggests the role of the employer brand manager for generalists, and mature personalities who proceed analytically, prudentially and structured (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). They should be able to work interdisciplinary and adjust to topics of human resources as well as branding (Martin et al., 2005).

According to Barrow & Mosley the employer brand manager needs to be moderator, networker, communicator and diplomat (2005). It is important for him to be convinced and enthused by the brand to mobilize motivation and make the brand grow from within (Petkovic, 2008). Moreover he is described as figure of integration since internal stakeholder management is a continuous task. Different organizational actors across all levels like management, communication, marketing, recruiting or personnel development have to be found and included in actively (Petkovic, 2008).

He therefore needs the ability to adapt to different parties and communicate the meaning of the employer brand. On the same line, he needs to critically overthink development phases and question strategies, target groups or organizational goals (Thieme, 2013).

The employer brand manager is described as organization talent and impulse generator as they have to efficiently bring together different areas of the organization. This also requires joined-up thinking and planning ability (Petkovic, 2008).

Also a certain amount of creative competence is demanded in order to work on one level with the creative parties. He has to keep up with modern technologies and create prerequisites for a credible social media engagement. Employer brand managers are also described as trademark agents since they manage different teams of the project internally. In contrast hand they need to fulfil the role of strategy consultants and creative agents externally. This is how they ensure the uniformity and effectiveness of the employer brand in every communication channel (Kriegler, 2015).
This goes to show that although Barrow and Mosley stated that “..any good HR function with strong senior management involvement and support is perfectly capable of managing the employer brand.” (Barrow & Mosley, 2005, p. 149), requirements for employer brand managers today seem a lot more complex and demanding.

**Control systematics**

The establishment of functioning platforms and communication routines for all participants of the employer brand, a respectful atmosphere in the management team and a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities are vital for successful employer brand management (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). The stimulation of exchange of experiences (also informally) and the personal motivation of the stakeholders are also relevant in this context. The aim of the employer brand manager in designing controlling systems should therefore be the establishment of a flexible, learning system. Rules, regulations and complex control routines should however not have such important roles (Mosley, 2014).

According to the size and internationality of the company, employer brand management needs well defined structures, processes and responsibilities (Christiaans, 2012). The following list summarizes the different areas of action for employer brand management (Kriegler, 2015):

**Personnel organisation:**
- Development of an international core team
- Definition of roles and responsibilities
- Definition of decision paths and competences
- Nomination of different employer brand managers (internationally, nationally)

**Coordination and communication:**
- Definition of routines for general communication and internationally definition of rules for standard communication in the different local teams

**Dialogue and learning platforms:**
- Definition of platforms for personal exchange of experiences
- Definition of frequencies for the exchange
- Coordination of intragroup activities (phone conferences, annual meetings..)
Clearing centre:
- Definition of sector routines
- Definition of control routines

Documentation and guidelines:
- Establishment of online platforms for the documentation of employer branding activities
- Establishment of guidelines for HR-departments, hiring managers and operating agencies and personnel consultants

Trainings and education:
- Offering of programs for the education of new employees involved in the recruiting process

**Employer Brand Controlling**

A frequently mentioned concept in traditional literature in the context of measuring the employer brand is employer brand controlling (Petkovic, 2008; Christiaans, 2012; Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014).

Its aim is to create transparency about the costs and activities as well as the efficiency of employer branding measures. Furthermore it tries to show the effect of employer branding on the organizational success (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Personalführung, 2006).

Kriegler (2015) cites the Deutsche (German) Employer Branding Academy that offers four quality dimensions that have to be measured. These categories can be measured by different success factors, illustrated in the so-called “Circle of employer branding success” below (Figure 4). This model shows the four different dimensions and their respective sub-dimensions. It combines and illustrates many factors for evaluating the employer brand also mentioned in other traditional literature (i.e. Latzel et al., 2015; Petkovic, 2008).

Unfortunately it can only be found in German, this is why the four dimensions are translated here:
Operative-internal quality:
- Intensity of the experience
- Employee activation

Operative-external quality:
- Consistency of the message
- Intensity of perception

Strategic-external quality:
- Profile and rate of differentiation
- Credibility

Strategic-internal quality:
- Quality of implementation
- Degree of acceptance
- Degree of identification

Figure 4: Circle of employer branding success, Source: Deutsche Employer Branding Akademie, 2011.

The different colours and heights of the pillars illustrate the degree of differentiation and how pronounced the categories are in the organization, with the green colour showing a high, blue a medium and red showing a low intensity of one category.

In the sector of operative internal quality the intensity of the experience measures if and how strong the employer brand is experienced and gets rated by employees and new
hires. The employee activation as second aspect in this sector shows to what degree employees are prepared to advocate for the employer and would recommend it to others. Hence they are consulted for this evaluation. As the first element of operative-external quality the consistency is down to how uniform the communicated message is experienced. New hires, Hiring Managers and target groups of the labour markets rate this criterion (Kriegler, 2015).

The strategic internal factor of implementation considers if the positioning also reaches internal players and is institutionalized, which is why especially employees but also hiring managers and new hires rate this factor. The second strategic internal element is the degree of acceptance that shows if employees accept the attributes and act according to them. In this sector hiring managers and employees are the respondents. The third and most important aspect is the degree of identification, since employees can only become proponents of the employer brand when they accept and identify with the employer brand. Employees therefore have to be interviewed to get an impression of this pillar (Kriegler, 2015).

Any new insights gained from the controlling system act as a base for employer brand management and resulting actions (Petkovic, 2008).

**Contribution to the Balanced Scorecard**

Literature and practice have been looking for a central indicator for measuring the employer branding success for a long time (Foster et al., 2010; Petkovic, 2008). Especially large companies often refer to placements in rankings as key performance indicators (Christiaans, 2012). But employer image ratings like “Great Place to Work” or “Top Job” do not measure the success of employer brand management but much rather rate the general quality of structures, processes or offerings of employers such as the organizational culture. Employer image rankings often reflect the organizational or product image, not necessarily a successful employer brand (Kriegler, 2015).

Organizations often show a pragmatic approach to this issue of relying on a combination of the internal indicator of employee identification on the one hand and the external indicator of applicant fitting for the position on the other hand (Theurer et al., 2016).
However since employer branding concerns attitudes and the fit of culture and values between organization and employees it makes the creation of a reliable measuring activity very difficult (Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014).

Functionalist literature still offers several recommendations for an individual system of indicators (Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014; Kriegler, 2015):

Indicators in the area of recruitment:

- Cost-per-hire
- Time-to-fill (duration until staffing)
- Quote of miscast
- Number of irrelevant applications
- Number of terminations in the probation period
- Quote of reinstatement
- Contentment of hiring managers the different fields

Indicators in the area of employee retention:

- Personal development costs
- Desirable fluctuation/ undesirable fluctuation
- Employee satisfaction

Indicators in the area of corporate culture:

- Rating of the working atmosphere
- Trust into the management
- Willingness to integrate new colleges
- Identification with aims and values of the company
- Number of employments after internships and trainee programs
- Number of sick leaves
- Thievery and handling with office supplies and goods

Indicators in the area of performance and outcome:

- Organizational citizenship: rate of self-motivation
- Performance motivation
- Quality of work results
- Productivity and team work
- Employee loyalty
- Return-on-development
- Duration of training phases

Indicators in the area of organizational brand:
- Degree of client satisfaction
- Social-web reputation of the employer
- Press releases about the employer

The advice here is to reduce complexity and not use more than a few of those indicators in the beginning. A pragmatic approach of selecting those indicators that can be measured easily and brought into correlation with employer branding measures is suggested (Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014).

Since employer branding concerns inner attitudes and the interrelationship between organizational and human culture and values, indicators and especially the correlations with employer branding measures can’t be proven with solely quantitative measurements. For this reasons, those analysis often have to be based on qualitative assessments and estimations of employees and managers (Kriegler, 2015).
3.2 Employer Brand Management in Critical Literature

After examining the topic on the basis of traditional, more functional literature this chapter provides a more critical, analytical approach to the subject. The main sources that this part of the thesis will be based upon are the articles by Gabriela Edlinger (2015); Graeme Martin, Paul J. Gollan & Kerry Grigg (2011); Stephanie Russell & Matthew J. Brennan (2011) and Andreas Mölk & Manfred Auer (2017).

The subsequent section will then provide a comparison and discussion of both chapters and draw insights and implications from it. Similar to the previous chapter the analysis will be roughly divided into findings about external and internal EB as well as the management and measurement of the employer brand.

3.2.1 Internal Measures and the Role of the Employer Brand Manager

One important aspect concerning the employer brand and resulting internal measures is the role of the employer brand manager. While this role is not really mentioned frequently and consistently in functional literature, there are critical articles examining it. Gabriela Edlinger especially goes into detail about the organisational role of the employer brand manager and the resulting political implications.

The role of the employer brand manager

Examples from practice and empirical studies primarily cover the aim of employer branding to achieve an attractive employer image, concentrating on intended results (i.e. Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Wilden et al. 2010; Berton, Ewing & Hah, 2005). Edlinger (2015) points out inadvertent effects. She offers empirical insights to employer brand manager’s position in the organization and consequences of their actions by providing insights in 20 interviews with individuals in charge of employer branding at large international companies.

Concerning internal employer brand actions she mentions the creation of a sheltered environment by underscoring its significance as meaningful management task and constituting its introduction in the organization. Furthermore the establishment and maintenance of room and the deliberate selection of participants are named as activities. As criteria for this selection some of the interviewed employer brand managers mention the person’s relevance for the employer brand. Affecting it or belonging to the
internal or external target group makes a person relevant in the selection process (Edlinger, 2015). Moreover characteristics like the educational background or specific competences influence the choice of participants. Furthermore subjective factors such as loyalty or passion for the employer are seen as favourable whereas actors with troublesome traits are not taken into account. Also cooperation and enthusiasm for the employer brand are mentioned as core aspects for the decision about including people in the process or not (Edlinger, 2015)

Those actions of control demonstrate the aim of the employer brand manager to protect the ideal image of the employer brand from divergent perceptions. People that are not as enthusiastic therefore might be dismissed as actors that “..could not relate.” For the development of the employer brand this can result in a striving towards allegiance and similarity instead of heterogeneity and openness (Edlinger, 2015).

The power of selecting participants held by the employer brand manager hence results in structuring and defining power for the formation of the employer brand. Often feedback is only desired when directly asked for in the phase of an evaluation. Unwanted opinions however are mostly perceived as detrimental and are defended by the use of policing tactics. Those tactics contain the denial of legitimacy of undesired opinions by neglecting the annotator’s competence or by declaring statements as untrue, unfounded or outdated (Edlinger, 2015).

The interviewees also stressed the subordinate role of supporting agencies and marketing companies. They refer to external partners rather in a legitimizing context for ensuring the employer brands consistency (Edlinger, 2015). They also see themselves very much involved with the employer brand or even identify with it by really empathizing with the target groups. “I am from a different generation to the target group, yes, and I still have to understand how they work, how they think, what mentality they have, I have to love them, I need to have a passion for these target groups and have my finger on the pulse of time” (Edlinger, 2015 p. 450).

The last role of the employer brand manager, which is the promoting role, represents the focus on selecting employees as employer brand ambassadors. This is widely seen as key measure to create authenticity and sustainability.

Edlinger offers a figure that combines all five roles (Figure 5). The arrows show the tendency of employer brand managers in the interviews to strongly rely on their actions of
formal creation. This is because their role is not really questioned in this concern like it is in the informal co-creation of employer reputation (Edlinger, 2015).

Figure 5: Employer brand management activities, Source: Edlinger, 2015, p. 454.

At this point employer brand management is brought into context with boundary work by pointing out that it does not solely concern the exclusion and inclusion of information but also of meanings. The employer brand manager consequently decides about desirable contents concerning employer and employee attractiveness (Edlinger, 2015). The very subjective concept of the “best employee” for example often refers to those aligning most accurately with values and aims of the company (i.e. Drogan & Yancey, 2011). By referring to boundary work Edlinger marks the hereditary political component of employer brand management and stresses the need for diversity in this concern.

Political aspects and power relations

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3 The concept of boundary work describes the establishment and preservation of social boundaries, aimed to distinguish and expel other types of knowledge (Gieryn 1983, p. 781). Differentiations are made consciously by scientists and experts that have a particular motivation “to have their claims accepted as valid and influential, their practices esteemed and supported financially, their culture sustained as the home of objectivity, reason, truth of utility” (Gieryn 1999, p.x).
Similar to Edlinger other authors recognize the political aspects of employer brand management. Martin et al. recognize in their paper that the creation of an employer brand involves various different interest groups inside and outside the organization. Therefore the process is accompanied by strong power relations amongst the participants (Martin et al., 2011).

With those groups being driven by distinct interests, values and needs, employer brand management has to focus on coordination and communication in order to create areas of agreement (Martin et al. 2011; Mölk & Auer, 2017). Since employer brand management often lies in the responsibilities of human resource management, Edwards (2009) sees an advantage for this department. This new field of action and its popularity emphasizes their importance for the organization and its future prosperity. Furthermore they can profit from making use of the organization-wide reputation and relevance and demand more resources, authority and recognition (Edwards, 2009).

This multidimensional aspect of the operating interests also holds potential for structural and personal conflicts to emerge. For this reason, high effort is put into the selection of employer branding partners (Mölk & Auer, 2017).

Integration of employees

Concerning internal employer branding activities, Russell and Brannan (2016) go further into detail about the integration of new employees into the company.

The examined company Collina Trade names their team members as reason for their success, rather than the product, innovation or market performance. One key focus of the employer brand management is therefore seen in the integration of new employees. The organization offers a “Team Camp Guide” as part of their onboarding actions. This document mainly contains necessary information about how things are done in the company and what its culture is like (Russell & Brannan, 2016). The culture is perceived as processual, dynamic and constantly changing and illustrated as a compass. The pointers thereby represent the core values Integrity, Courage, Teamwork and Commitment, as leading employees in the desired direction. This guide with the included values is expected to provide a guideline for employees, especially in situations where they are not sure how to react and behave (Russell & Brannan, 2016).
Apart from the “Team Camp Guide”, onboarding activities in the team camp aim to convey employees the higher purpose of their work and encourage them to look beyond products and services to see the bigger picture. For this purpose abstract models and metaphors are used to communicate company values. Yet passionate, purposeful work is also implemented in a practical manner by using a so-called “Focus-Energy Matrix” (Table 4). Managers accordingly assess their work in one of four quadrants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOW FOCUS</th>
<th>HIGH FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW ENERGY</strong></td>
<td><strong>HIGH ENERGY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distraction:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purposefulness:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- low level of focus, confusion</td>
<td>- Personal responsibility for organizations future/ success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- desperate to do anything</td>
<td>- Demonstrate persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disengagement:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Procrastinators:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low level of energy</td>
<td>- Routine activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work is perceived little meaningful</td>
<td>- Low level of initiative or engage with strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Focus-Energy Matrix, Source: Own representation based on Russell & Brannan, 2016, p. 119.

Also the subject of work-life balance is emphasized in the Camp Guide, aspiring for employees to reach for authenticity and satisfaction in both areas to become a “worthwhile” individual not neglecting one of the fields (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This idea is very well perceived and implemented by the employees, as shown by the statement of one of the interviewees. One employee explains seeing her work deeply connected with how she lives her life in general, as she perceives her private life going well when she embodies the values of Collina Trade. According to the staff also team holidays underline the company’s appreciation for their work, making them return happy and with a stronger team spirit (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

Also internal employer branding measures concerning the integration of new staff are examined by Russel & Brannan. Employees are enrolled into the CollinaTrade training, officially aimed to familiarize them with the organization. The observations however showed a strong focus on encouraging participants to talk about their professional and
personal fears and weaknesses and others offering resolutions. Hence the activity was rather intended to address learner’s needs and create a personal development plan, appearing awkward and difficult for some group members (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Another internal employer branding technique at CollinaTrade is the CollinaWorld programme. Employees are asked to reward their co-workers with gifts or tokens that are displayed on the rewarded one’s desks afterwards (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

Since the company culture is one of the areas CollinaTrade most focuses on in their employer branding activities, corporate culture workshops are another important aspect of their programme. Also trust building events and team activities encouraging values like courage and solidarity. Even though most employees reflected those culture workshops and activities in a predominantly positive way, some parts have negative or uncomfortable side effects. In general new employees are expected to embrace the key values and to show their commitment during those exercises (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

The article thereby draws attention to an experiential element of recruitment and selection making non-work related, informal activities part of the employer branding methods. It shows employer branding as management tool in order to create cultural reinforcement (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

**Aligning the employer brand with other organizational brands**

Concerning the alignment of the employer brand with other organizational brands, Martin et al. argue that there is a greater need for independency of the local employer brand management. Managed in a top down approach it reinforces the logic of similarity in companies by creating a global customer facing brand, trying to meet international governance requirements, efficiency standards and confirming to human resource business requirements. Hence a greater amount of authenticity and response capacity for local employer brand management is required in bigger organizations. (Martin et al., 2011). On the other hand this call for independency does not mean to ignore corporate branding standards in individual employer branding measures. They should rather be interpreted by creating various, authentic identities and reasonable systems and thus improve the company as a whole (Martin et al, 2011). Also Edwards & Kuruvilla (2005) mention the importance of regional capabilities and emphasize the political nature of global companies imposing structure on the local branches.
Thus employer brand managers gain a more active role in creating and managing the brand, rather than acting as plain executors of corporate brand measures (Martin et al., 2011).

### 3.2.2 External Employer Branding Measures and Related Aspects

A critical viewpoint concerning external employer branding measures is provided by Stephanie Russell and Matthew Brannan (2016). In their paper, concrete external employer branding activities and the enactment of the employer brand are examined through the example of the company Collina Trade. The focus here lies on activities in the field of recruitment, selection and integration that were observed or narrated by the interviewees.

**Recruitment**

The two main areas the examined company Collina Trade uses for recruiting are general advertising and recruitment fairs. When asking participants about the study on recruitment, the company logo appeared to be the most significant reference since it sustains the memory and enthusiasm about the brand (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

The desired characteristics of applicants for Collina Trade go beyond technical skills and experience. They state they look for unusual talents with qualities going beyond the expected and trying to attract those by promoting the company's success. Special emphasis lies on the position as trusted, respected employer which has also been rated in “Best Companies to Work For”- rankings (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

In job advertisements the focus lies on core brand values and the mission statement. This is supported by a quote from the Human Resource Director of the Company naming the employees as basis for the premium quality of the brand (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

After the analysis of the organization’s recruitment activities, Russell and Brannan remark that concrete skills required for a position at Collina Trade are completely absent in job advertisements. Despite that, recruiting relies on the brand as reference point for potential applicants and thereby creates a possible self-selection process. Also the performance on recruitment fairs shows the focus on attracting people who fit the culture (Russell & Brannan, 2016).
**Selection**

Apart from common job interviews, the examined company Collina Trade works with active participation in job roles for their selection process. This offers applicants the opportunity to gain an impression about the future role in the job they applied for. Rather than participating in an assessment centre, candidates are shown an actual workday of somebody in the field they apply for (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This signals a selection mode that extends the requirement for brand dedication. Applicants can actively engage and demonstrate their commitment. In that way they can be evaluated not only according to their brand fit but also to their performance in the actual job (Pedersen, 2011). This again points to the possible effect of homogenization caused by recruiting strategies that emphasize existing representations and assure desired effect (Hurrell & Scholarios, 2014).

Employees of Collina Trade also stated that applicants would know very soon whether they were the “right person” for the company and felt comfortable (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This highlights a strong believe in the organization and brand, that most of the existing employees feel. One of the interviewees explained this feeling of commitment by not being able to imagine working for another company where she could not identify with its values like at Collina Trade. She goes on to explain the terms “value” and “brand” by naming integrity and trustworthiness. Those cultural values are implemented by Collina Trade’s employees also beyond organizational life. A statement of the corporate social responsibility officer underlines this fact where she explains how she utilizes cultural values and trainings on her son. (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

**Employee engagement and external image building**

Concerning employee engagement Martin et al. (2011) discuss the importance of authenticity in the context of employer branding. Thus the employer brand needs to be constructed in a co-creational way, involving employees to create a locally responsible and authentic employer brand rather than having it designed in the human resources, marketing or communication department (Martin et al., 2011).

Authenticity, which gains more and more interest in other management literature also, is seen as the core of employer branding in this article. In this context, it is defined by
individuals explaining their authentic voice as self-identity and feeling empowered to tell the truth about themselves. Individuals need to be able to fight for what is important to them and for their own wisdom as well as expressing their individual opinion and perspective (Harquail, 2009).

Employee engagement is here directly linked to innovation and the introduction of staff to new social media like open access social networking, blogs, wikis or media sharing. Thereby possibilities for active participation in the employer branding process and a very genuine communication channel are provided (Martin et al., 2011). With this practice perspective and by considering the consequences of power relations, pluralistic perspectives and differing values of employer branding participants, Martin et al. stress the active performance of employer branding (Martin et al., 2011).

3.2.3 Measurement and Evaluation of the Employer Brand

Although the importance of measuring employer brandings contribution to the organizational success is mainly agreed upon, most employer brand managers acknowledge the problem or even impossibility of measuring the effectiveness. At the same time they underline the importance of legitimizing their position and actions by providing some kind of evaluation. This results in the employer brand manager’s publicity, conviction and enthusiasm not solely resulting from organisational interest but also from the interest to consolidate and manifest their role in the organization and gain recognition (Edlinger, 2015).

Also Martin et al. connect the employer brand to reputation and provide a model that associates it with different forms of capital (Figure 6). This model shows potential long-term effects on the reputational capital of the organization (Martin et al., 2011). Accordingly it affects reputational aspects since it strives to attract talented employees and undermines trust on the management and an overall positive employer image (Burke, 2011; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Conversely reputational capital influences employer branding since a strong, positive organizational reputation affects talent management and employer branding (Martin et al., 2011).

4 The term practice here refers to „the interconnection between the actions of different, dispersed individuals and groups and those, socially, politically, and economically embedded institutions within which individuals act and to which they contribute“ (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 9).
Martin et al. (2011) also state that employer branding can have positive effects on the organization to develop in an authentic, responsive way and to build social capital. Doing so by supporting innovation processes and transformative business model change.

However the aim of employer branding should be to develop social capital and human capital and thereby influence all other forms of capital in the organization. And to increase the overall intellectual capital through an interplay between different parties of the employer brand in order to obtain continuous innovation (Martin, 2007).

Figure 6: Effects of employer branding, Source: Martin et al 2011, p. 3621.
4 Embedding Employer Brand Management into Holistic Brand Management

Following the analysis of employer brand management and its tasks from a traditional, functional perspective and from a more critical, holistic view the subsequent part of the thesis provides a comparison and analysis. Insights will be drawn and be brought into context with appropriate, reasonable theoretical models. Lastly, implications will be drawn from the analysis in order to develop ideas for holistic, sustainable employer brand management suitable for modern organizations.

4.1 Findings from the Analysis

Firstly, it occurs that many similarities can be found in traditional literature and the texts by Russell & Brannan, Martin et al., Edlinger and Mölk & Auer. Basic employer branding activities like the creation, implementation and overall management of the employer brand are often described similarly. Both of them consider the different stages of employer brand management, namely the creation, implementation, management and measurement. The different aspects of those stages however are examined and perceived very differently. Traditional papers mostly stay with those different stages of employer brand management, concerning especially recruitment and employer attractiveness (i.e.: Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Baum & Kabst, 2012). Critical literature however considers the holistic impact of recruitment strategies beyond the design and branding campaigns (Russell & Brannan, 2016). It offers a more intra-organizational view of the topic and gives insights into concrete processes of employer brand management, especially concentrating on its establishment (Mölk & Auer, 2017).

Authenticity

One aspect that is highlighted as part of successful employer brand management by many sources of traditional as well as more critical literature is authenticity. Functional literature emphasizes the importance of authenticity and sincere belief of their employer brand ambassadors (Thunig, 2015). Empirical examples and interviews with em-
ployer brand managers especially underline the importance of authenticity and integration of all stakeholders (i.e.: Kriegler, 2015; Petkovic, 2008; Barrow & Mosley, 2005). The aim is to convince and enthuse employees through internal employer branding measures and to create dedicated brand ambassadors that promote the company as employer (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Also, consistency throughout the communication process and in the alignment with other organizational brands is seen as vital (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Acceptance is also named as key requirement for successful employer branding (Thunig, 2015). Especially in organizations with various branches and several different stakeholders, so called education marketing activities, including structured management processes, guidelines, strategies, trainings, evaluation and control are suggested to handle possible difficulties, problems with alignment or resistance (Christiaans, 2012). Niels Becker from the Techniker Krankenkasse for example explained that a detailed analysis including all stakeholders had been carried out in order to create a company-wide accepted strategy. He names acceptance and a positive attitude towards the employer brand as important effect of their employer branding measures (Kriegler, 2015).

Russell and Brannan (2016) offer similar insights in the analysis of their empirical case. The status as trusted, respected employer and even being a member of “Best Companies to Work For”-rankings is especially emphasized in the external employer brand communication of the CollinaTrade company. Job advertisements also mainly focus on the core brand values and the mission statement, often without even naming actual specific requirements for the position (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

However, recruiting strongly builds on the employer brand and its values as reference point for possible candidates. Also, the representation in schools, universities and fairs reflects the aim of attracting only people that match the company’s culture (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This is where analytical sources see the need for a more critical approach. Empirical studies and classical employer branding literature mostly do not consider the political effects of equalization and exclusion of traditional selection criteria and strategies of alignment. Also the self-selection process that is created by political effects of recruitment techniques, strongly relying on the employer brand is criticized (Russell & Brannan, 2016). Employer brand advocates are expected to give realistic, authentic insights about
the employer brand and working conditions in the organization. However they are still selected based on their alignment with organizational values and their enthusiasm for the employer brand.

This also applies for the choice of employer brand managers and participants of the project in general. Applying boundary work as analytical perspective Edlinger questions the employer brand as a full and authentic representation of the organization (Edlinger, 2015). Here employer branding is rather seen as a managerial practice including and excluding information and meanings in order to create advantageous content and attractiveness (Edlinger, 2015). Literature especially refers to human resource management in making use of the employer brand to emphasize their importance in the organization. The employer brand offers them the opportunity to profit from additional resources or to gain authority and recognition within the organization (Edwards, 2009; Martin et al., 2011).

While traditional literature and statements by employer brand managers point to the importance of authenticity and inclusion in the employer branding context, empirical studies show that restriction, control and alignment are often the case in reality (Edlinger, 2015).

Nevertheless, authenticity is still seen as important concept for employer branding with Martin et al. even suggesting it should be “at the heart of employer branding” (Martin et al. 2011, p. 3631). In contrast to traditional employer branding literature he stresses giving people an authentic voice in order to express themselves, their needs, ideas and perceptions of the employer brand and not making them fit to the employer brand by trainings, selection or management strategies (Martin et al., 2011).

Especially in big, complex organizations with different branches like in the “Techniker Krankenkasse” example, he sees a need for more authentic voices and identity (Martin et al., 2011). Rather than taking away or encouraging participants to ignore corporate guidelines, this approach wants employees to make sense out of them on their own. By providing them with more freedom, they are expected to create “local expressions of these values, authentic identities and meaningful strategies for themselves, and in doing so benefit the corporation as a whole” (Martin et al. 2011, p. 3632). This idea is very much opposing to the overall perception and opinion in functional articles, favouring a
more top down approach on implementing employer branding measures (see Chapter 3.1.1).

Integration
Aligned with the topic of authenticity, also integration is a key element discussed in both fields of literature. While there are still many sources and studies promoting a top down strategy, some practice literature also offers a broader approach. Some sources even point to the relevance of dialogue (Kriegler, 2015), a concept that does not seem familiar in this context. Announcing and informing about the employer brand to achieve fundamental understanding is seen as insufficient. For this reason, dialogue and reflection are suggested to embed the employer brand in a sustainable way. Similar to Martin et al. Kriegler (2015) states that the employer brand needs to be perceptible and experienced by participants in order to get integrated, internalized and exemplified. Apart from naming measures like the behaviour of the management, human resource management, internal communication or the design of the workplace as elements of internal employer branding, he also mentions more cultural aspects. The employer brand thus also is exemplified through the feedback culture, appraisal interviews, guidelines or management development (Schlüter, 2011).

Selecting criteria for participants in the employer brand creation as part of the integration process leaves room for criticism. The analysis shows that employer brand managers are not only influenced by characteristics like the educational background or specific competences in selection measures. In her study, Edlinger discovered that especially factors such as loyalty or passion for the employer, which can be seen as more subjective aspects have a favourable impact in the recruiting process. People with traits perceived as troublesome, however, are unlikely to be taken into account. Especially cooperation and enthusiasm for the employer brand are seen as key conditions for including people in the process or not (Edlinger, 2015).

This political aspect offers room for controlling techniques, with employer brand managers trying to protect the ideal image. Upcoming criticism, different perceptions or insufficient enthusiasm for the employer brand is often interpreted negatively in the recruiting process (Edlinger, 2015). Instead of striving for heterogeneity and openness, these practices lead to a development towards allegiance and similarity where feedback
is only welcome during the phase of evaluation when specifically asked for (Edlinger, 2015). Unwanted opinions however are mostly perceived as detrimental and repelled by tactics of negating the speaker’s legitimacy (Edlinger, 2015).

In this context Martin (2007) also points to the dangerous effects of generalizing attributes of a “perfect” or typical candidate or employee. Arguments that attract people to the organization differ between varying candidates and existing personnel. An ongoing communication process between different stakeholders is extremely important in order to create relevant, authentic values and employer branding content (Martin, 2007).

In the task field of creating and integrating the employer brand, their authority and sovereignty as experts is not questioned in contrast to their activities in co-creating employer reputation. For this reason employer brand managers feel more confident accounting for the creation and maintenance processes (Edlinger, 2015).

**Innovation**

Another point that is mentioned both in functional and more critical literature is the relevance of technology and innovative techniques for employer brand management. While Martin et al. draw on possibilities for innovation and involvement provided by technical instruments (Martin et al., 2011), functional literature highlights the potential especially for recruiting and representation (Kriegler, 2015).

Social media in particular gains a lot of attention in the more traditional employer branding context. Technological opportunities are also acknowledged in the context of internal employer branding measures as methods for internal communication. Skype, blogs or chats are effective tools for direct, double-sided interactions parallel to the more formal communication (Mast & Simition, 2016; Petkovic, 2008).

Especially in the context of authenticity and encouraging employees to raise their voice and to implement employer branding measures, social media is mentioned as a supporting tool. Martin et al. see it as one opportunity to capture the authentic voice of employer brand stakeholders both inside and outside the company (Martin et al., 2011). It is believed to even improve effectivity and contribute to innovation through stimulating and inspiring participation in the progress. Social media is named alongside open access social networking, media sharing, blogs, wikis and online discussion forums (Martin et al., 2011).
Measurement

A recurring topic in both traditional and critical literature is the evaluation and measurement of the employer brand. While both streams seem to agree on the difficulty of measuring employer brandings outcome or contribution to the organizational success, there is also concurrence about the importance of this step in the process.

Functional literature sees a need for long term management and controlling mechanisms especially for larger organizations that do not grow organically and are exposed to complex conditions (Christiaans, 2012). It also calls for well-organised structures and communication routines, the establishment of a collaborative, respectful environment in employer brand management as well as a clear structure and defined roles between employer branding participants to achieve an efficient management framework (Kriegler, 2015).

A system of employer brand controlling is recommended that supports resource management, reinforces positive effects and enables the discovery of unwanted developments early (Petkovic, 2008; Christiaans, 2012; Immenschitt & Stumpf, 2014). Mosley (2014) however also emphasizes that employer brand management should aim for designing a flexible and learning controlling architecture where rules, control routines and standards should only play a minor role.

The German Employer Branding Academy therefore developed the “Circle of employer branding success” as tool for evaluation (Figure 4). It offers four quality dimensions and their according success factors, such as employee activation as an indicator for operative-internal quality or the degree of identification as a strategic-internal quality. It does however not offer any insights as to how those indicators can or should be measured with many of them being highly subjective and difficult to capture (Kriegler, 2015).

Although literature acknowledges the difficulty of developing reliable measuring structures for employer branding concerning attitudes or the fit between organizational values and employees, it still offers recommendations for potential indicator systems. The general suggestion given by traditional employer branding literature is to establish a clear measuring system using only those indicators that can be captured easily and
clearly brought into context with employer branding activities (Kriegler, 2015). With employer branding especially concerning inner attitudes and the interrelation between organizational and human culture and values, it is however hard to prove a clear correlation between measures and appearing consequences. Therefore a success analysis of employer branding effects often build on non-quantitative, inaccurate qualitative assessments or estimations of employees and management (Kriegler, 2015).

In the absence of a central indicator for measuring the employer brand’s success, large companies in particular often rely on rankings as key performance indicators (Christiaans, 2012). Those employer image ratings however often evaluate the general quality of structures, offerings and procedures within the organization (Kriegler, 2015).

Insights from empirical studies often show a pragmatic approach to the topic of measuring the employer brand. In some companies increasing numbers of unsolicited applicants, declining developments in turnover rates and sick-leaves are considered as positive effects of employer branding. Other businesses rely on examining the internal indicator of employee identification as one part and perceive applicant fit for advertised positions as sufficient evaluation indicator for external employer branding measures (Theurer et al., 2016).

Although traditional literature points to the controversial aspects of evaluating employer branding’s contribution to the organizational success, it is seen as significant for employer brand managers. Edlinger notes that for the purpose of legitimation and emphasize of their role inside the organization employer brand managers seek for forms of evaluation (Edlinger, 2015). Accordingly their enthusiasm, conviction and belief in the employer brand and its importance does not necessarily picture the authentic situation. It might however result from the desire to consolidate and manifest their role and recognition within the organization (Edlinger, 2015).

Martin et al. (2011) provide a model that associates employer branding with different forms of capital, and shows potential long-term effects on the reputational capital of the organization (Figure 6). This model illustrates the effects the employer brand has on different forms of organizational capital especially stressing its impact on reputational capital. Thus the employer brand strengthens the overall image of the company as employer and undermines trust in management (Burke, 2011; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).
On the other hand, positive, strong reputation as employer influences employer branding and talent management (Martin et al., 2011).

**The role of the employer brand manager**

Another recurring aspect in both, traditional and critical literature is the role of the employer brand manager. The role is not completely clear in functional literature but it offers an overview over the multidisciplinary and versatile sides of this profession (See Chapter 3.1.1). Most traditional employer branding literature however still reduces responsibilities to employer image branding and external personnel marketing (Baum et al., 2012).

A clear affiliation to the Human Resource department can be observed, with most employer brand managers belonging to this department (Edlinger, 2015). Next to every day operative activities, they also take care of the consistency and overall strategic direction of the employer brand over time (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). They monitor internal and external influencing aspects and classify them in order of their relevance for the employer branding process (Foster et al., 2010).

According to the plurality of tasks, traditional literature recommends the function of the employer brand manager for all-rounders and mature personalities with a structured, task-oriented and prudential working method (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). They are requested to work multidisciplinary with the ability to adjust to subjects of different fields like human resources, branding or communication (Martin et al., 2005).

With their role as mediator between those different areas, employer brand managers need to be able to adapt, react to them and enthuse them about the project. This points to the requirement of social and personal skills in order to communicate the meaning of the employer brand to those various groups (Petkovic, 2008). Traditional literature however also mentions the importance of the employer brand management being able to critically reflect on the development phases and reconsider strategies, target groups and aims (Kriegler, 2015).

While traditional sources do not get more critical in their considerations of the employer brand management and its role in the organization, paragraph 3 concerning authenticity shows that this topic gains a lot of attention in critical literature (see i.e. Edlinger, 2015; Martin et al., 2011; Mölk & Auer, 2017).
4.2 Relevant Insights from Theoretical Models

Many aspects that have been discussed in the analysis of the previous chapter can be brought into context and extended with insights from various theoretical organization studies models. For this reason the following chapters go into further detail about those ideas and how they can be related to the findings above.

**Neo Instititutionalism**

The first theory that can give meaningful insights for the thesis is the theory of Neo Institutionalism. This particularly concerns the emergence and rising popularity of the employer branding topic during the past years. Apart from obvious reasons for this development like the demographic, technological and societal change, neo-institutionalism is seen as an endorsing factor (Baum et al., 2012).

With the concept fitting for many analyses concerning management concepts, it seems obvious to use it for the examination of employer brand management as well (Baum et al., 2012) since employer branding seems to enjoy a very positive reputation as effective tool for recruitment and retention overall (Kriegler, 2015). This favorable image and the growing interest in the topic suggests for organizations to gain legitimacy when engaging in employer branding (Baum et al., 2012).

One of the central assumptions of Neo Institutionalism is that organizations take on practices that are expected from their environment to ensure their legitimacy (Baum et al., 2012). Legitimacy assures access to vital resources and thus secures the survival of the organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). According to neo-instituationalist theories, organizations take on new practices, concepts or processes independent of their actual efficiency in order to strengthen their legitimacy on the market (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Through adapting to institutionalized elements conforming to their environment, the legitimacy of organizations can be increased and access to important resources can be secured (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Legitimacy thereby marks the assumption that organizational actions are expected and seem appropriate. They need to comply with norms, values and beliefs of a social system. Organizational activities ideally are seen as entirely legitimate and thus their actions remain unquestioned (Suchman, 1995). The term “institutionalization” describes
the process of duties, operations and facts becoming an unquestioned part of reality and gaining lawful status in social thinking and action (Mayer & Rowan, 1977).

Many elements of formal structures are highly institutionalized and act as rationalized myths of organizational design. Inside one organizational field, companies therefore get more and more similar since they face the same environmental conditions. This process of adjusting structures is called isomorphism. Three different forms of isomorphism are differentiated (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983):

- Isomorphism forced by formal and informal pressure of environmental expectations. Actions and Thinking are similar in organizations that face the same legal circumstances.
- Isomorphism by mimetic processes in situations of doubt and insecurity. Companies tend to orientate themselves on others that seem legitimate and successful.
- Isomorphism through normative pressure according to the growing professionalization of certain occupational groups (DiMaggio & Powell 1983).

Since demographic and global changes seem to increase the interest in a strong employer brand, organizations look for their competitors that already developed a successful employer brand for inspiration (Baum et al., 2012; Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005). Adapters take on the concept of employer branding and thus contribute to the distribution of this method. Accordingly they react to the norms presented by their environment and adapt to them (see DiMaggio & Powell 1983, p. 148f.).

Especially larger firms facing a higher public interest are confronted with a high institutional pressure and market conditions. In times of technological progress, information technologies and social media, the derecognition of legitimacy by media and the public can have serious consequences on the organizational image (Lederle, 2007). Furthermore there is a correlation between the size of the company and the budget for personnel measures that gets assigned internally and is afflicted with expectations, which creates pressure to engage in highly regarded measures like employer branding (Christiaans, 2012). Deephouse and Carter (2005) confirmed in their article that organizations with lower recognition tend to imitate strategies of successful organizations.
The professionalization of human resource functions also offers insights to explain the success of employer branding. The perceived professionalization secures the legitimation of personnel decisions, which is reflected in the distribution of power within the organization (Baum et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2011). A higher rate of professionalization increases interference within strategic corporate management (Baum et al., 2012).

**Enactment**

Another theory that is mentioned in the context of employer brand management is the theory of enactment. It names the process of social construction of a certain reality. As a result, some structures and incidents that constitute an organization are only created through its very actions (Weick, 2009).

Luhmann (1982) claims that organizations are in a constant process of self-creation through communication. Every organization or other form of sociality therefore only exists as long as those communication actions continue.

As a result the different actors of the organization actively create, shape or destruct the organization, its programs, organizational culture or its environment. This means that there is hardly any difference between organizational reality and the construction (Weick, 2009).

This insight can be brought into context with the integration of the employer brand into the organization. It emphasizes the importance of scope for participants to integrate the concept rather than imposing it from the top (Martin et al, 2011). Corporate structures and values should be translated in an equivocal way, in order to leave space for parties to interpret them and realize employer branding measures in their own discretion (Martin et al, 2011).

Making participants, brand ambassadors and employer brand managers “...become strategists rather than adversaries..” (Martin et al., 2011, p. 3633) influences the creation of the employer brand and how it is actually constructed in the end. Also recruiting measures and including media to encourage participation can be linked to enactment.

Following Edlinger’s note, employer brand managers are enabled to create the brand by including and excluding information and meanings (Edliger, 2015). By doing so they try to emphasize their importance for the organization and hence create the employer brand in a way that leads to positive consequences for them.
By pointing to the importance of re-conceptualizing employer branding in a co-creational way rather than in a functional top-down approach, Aggerholm et al. (2011) also point to enactment. Through dialogue and seeing employer branding as a holistic, processual concept it can be established in a more sustainable manner. Continuous interaction and negotiation with the different stakeholders as well as reflecting on the organization, its context and its role for society influences this process (Aggerholm et al., 2011). In this context employer branding is “...defined as the enactment of sustainable employer-employee relationships with the purpose of co-creating sustainable values for the individual, the organization and society as a whole.” (Aggerholm et al. 2011, p. 117).

4.3 Implications for Employer Brand Management

Given the insights from theoretical models and findings from the analysis of employer branding and its management in the previous chapters, this section will focus on implications that can be drawn for modern employer brand management.

Both traditional and more critical literature show a strong focus on the creation of an “authentic” employer brand that is accepted and internalized by the participants (Thuńig, 2015; Russell & Brannan, 2016). To achieve this goal, popular sources mainly suggest guidelines, trainings and evaluation activities (Kriegler, 2015). Also imposing organizational values, norms and culture during the different employer branding phases is named in practical examples (Kriegler, 2015; Russell & Brannan, 2016).

Another implication for employer brand management could be the creation of a platform for all affected stakeholders to achieve a collaborative construction of meaning and interaction (Mark & Toelken, 2009). In order to create a more complex, integrative understanding of employer brand management Aggerholm et al. (2011) link it to Corporate Social Responsibility⁵.

Based on a stakeholder dialogue a sense-making process can emerge and lead to the creation of three different characteristics of the employer brand, illustrated in Figure 7:

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⁵ The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility describes the contribution of a company to a sustainable development that goes beyond requirements of the law. This model of corporate self-regulation stands for responsible organizational actions in the classical work field of the company, ecological aspects, the relationship to its employees and in the interaction with their stakeholders (Rasche, Morsing & Moon, 2017).
The combination of these different fields in a more stakeholder-oriented way broadens the perspective and offers a more integrative approach. It shows the necessity for negotiation between the different fields and thus enhances co-creation and enactment between the company and existing or probable employees (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

Since the employer brand and its relationships are influenced continuously by the environment its members and society, ongoing negotiation is crucial to achieve sustainable value for the different stakeholders. Following this model, employer brand management and the organization constantly needs to engage in reflection about its meaning for society, the relations to affected individuals and the integration into general branding activities (Aggerholm et al., 2011). The goal is to achieve acceptance and authenticity by involving all agents, creating perceptibility of the employer brand and engaging in dialogue (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

Especially during the recruiting and selection phase, political implications of both new employees and participants in employer brand management activities have to be taken into account. Boundary work can work as perspective to broach the issue of struggles for authority and credibility in the area of employer branding (Edlinger, 2015).

With the employer brand managers working in a relatively new area located in between different disciplines, they often follow a need to establish a powerful status in the company. This inherently political character of employer branding offers room for conflicts.
to emerge. Therefore great efforts need to be taken in the selection process of employer brand managers and participants (Mölk & Auer, 2017).

Edlinger (2015) requests more diversity in the constellation of employer branding partners in order to also include more critical opinions. Without being questioned, employer brand managers might act as “police officers” presenting the company as attractive employer and ignoring valuable critical voices. Those new opinions and different conceptions however might offer useful new perspectives (Edlinger, 2015).

Excessive promotion and imposing the employer brand and its values on the organization without leaving space for reflection also holds the danger of homogenisation and isomorphism (Russell & Brannan, 2016; Edlinger, 2015).

Since employer branding gains a lot of attention in relevant literature and practice, also neo institutionalist tendencies of isomorphism can be a point to consider by those made responsible for its introduction in the organization. Due to the positive image of employer branding, organizations can be tempted to engage in it in order to ensure their legitimacy on the market (Baum et al., 2012). Accordingly companies might implement employer branding activities independent of their actual efficiency but rather to emphasize their legitimacy on the market (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

With several environmental circumstances reinforcing the interest in a strong employer brand, organizations also try to copy competitors that already established a successful employer brand (Baum et al., 2012; Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005). Employer image ratings like “Great Place to Work” also contribute to the distribution of the phenomenon, although they often don’t refer to the employer brand in specific but rather represent the general offerings of employers such as the organizational culture (Kriegler, 2015).

Especially larger organizations facing high competitive, institutional pressures or even public interest tend to refer to other successful employer brand examples for inspiration (Lederle 2007; Christiaans, 2012). Less prestigious companies also look for well-known promising examples in more successful organizations (Deephouse & Carter, 2005). Also employer brand managers themselves feel under pressure to develop this new field of action effectively and tend to copy practices that are highly regarded (Baum et al., 2012).

Since measuring the actual effectiveness of employer branding and its contribution to the organizational success is very hard to determine, neo-institutional tendencies seem even more obvious (Baum et al., 2012).
Hence the establishment of an employer branding system and the decision whether to engage in employer branding or not has to be well considered. Especially the topic of authenticity and the danger of upcoming resistance to the introduction of employer branding measures based on reasons of isomorphism have to be taken into account. Also the creation of very similar employer brands in different organizations can be a possible negative outcome of isomorphism and lead to the contrary result of legitimation. The effect would rather be distrust and decreasing respect for the employer brand. A dynamic balance between creating a differentiating, unique brand on the one hand and being legitimate on the other hand has to be achieved (Martin, 2007)
5 Discussion

Due to the recognition of employees as significant success factor and competitive advantage (Baum et al., 2012; Sponheuer, 2010) as well as organizations struggling with various challenges in recruitment and retention (i.e.: Chhabra & Sharma 2014; Theurer et al., 2016) the concept of the employer brand remains very important. The ongoing discussion about the topic offers a vast amount of research studies and empirical surveys.

Especially the amount of functional literature with more traditional approaches to employer branding and employer brand management seems vast. The focus often lies on external employer branding and on the creation of an attractive employer image and its effects on potential applicants.

External employer branding measures include the promotional implementation of the strategy by working out a creative concept, budgeting and scheduling it (Schuhmacher & Geschwill, 2014; Breuss & Forneck, 2015). Media use and actions are planned with the goal to achieve efficiency and cost savings. Literature also highlights the importance of aligning the employer brand with other organizational brands (Tomczak & Kernstock, 2014). Subsequently, a large amount of literature offers advice on how to structure to achieve best results. Practical examples also show the focus on communication strategies and creative concepts, while also stressing the meaning of authenticity for external employer brand communication (Kriegler, 2015).

However, lately the focus, responsibility and means of employer branding changed along with its perception in literature. It is now seen as aimed at a much broader target group affecting every stakeholder inside and outside the organization (Radermacher, 2013). Accordingly, also internal employer branding activities have been added to the discussion, extending the tasks of employer brand management. Practical studies show a common agreement on the employer brand needing to grow from within, with a strong fundament inside of the company (Kriegler, 2015).

Internal employer branding activities are targeted on the positive employer positioning inside the company. The aim is to convert employees into brand ambassadors, convinced and dedicated to the values and objectives of the organization (Mosley, 2014).

The main spheres of activity for employer brand management in internal branding are
the leadership of the employer brand, the internal communication, design of the working environment and human resource management activities in order to align processes, instruments and products with the employer brand (German Employer Branding Academy, 2008). Although classical employer branding literature also points to the need for dialogue in the context of internal branding, most of the sources refer to a more linear approach. It is often suggested to impose the employer brand and its values from above with the focus on creating dedication and enthusiasm (i.e.: Kriegler, 2015; Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This is where critical literature sees problematic potential. Empirical examples and interviews show that these techniques can have possible negative effects by creating uncomfortable situations for the concerned parties (Russel & Brannan, 2016). Especially the danger of homogenisation and isomorphic effects of excessive promotion activities are criticized (Russell & Brannan, 2016; Edlinger, 2015).

Both traditional and analytical literature however agrees on the importance and difficulty of measuring employer brandings outcome and contribution to the organizational success. Traditional literature calls for well-organized management, structures and communication and recommends controlling as suitable tool. Clear structures and defined roles of employer brand participants and managers are seen as crucial (Petkovic, 2008; Christiaans, 2012; Immerschitt & Stumpf, 2014). Although some traditional sources also point to the difficulty of measuring inner attitudes and relations (Kriegler, 2015), the overall suggestion of building some kind of measuring system still remains.

One important insight which is not considered in most traditional sources concerns the role of the employer brand manager. Since this role is mostly very new in organizations, forms of evaluation and prove for employeer brand’s contribution to organizational success are perceived as vital by employer brand managers (Edlinger, 2015). Also in the context of external employer branding measures, recruitment and the selection of employer brand management members, the political role offers room for controlling techniques. Another concern in this context is that the manager’s enthusiasm, conviction and belief in the employer brand might derive from the desire to manifest their role and power rather than from authentic feelings (Edlinger, 2015).
Although traditional literature concerns the role of the employer brand manager, the complexity and plurality of his tasks and the multidisciplinary, political implications are rarely mentioned.

Authenticity is mentioned as key prerequisite for successful employer branding in critical as well as in traditional literature. Nevertheless contrasting sources follow different conceptions about the phenomenon. In many studies with a functional background, authenticity is strongly connected with the sincere belief of participants and employer brand managers in the brand (Russell & Brannan, 2016; Edlinger, 2015). The integrations and alignment with other organizational brands, the integration of different stakeholders and the early inclusion of all participants into the project are mentioned as requirements for authenticity (Kriegler, 2015; Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

Also critical sources like Martin et al. see authenticity “at the heart of employer branding” (Martin et al., 2011 p. 3631). However, here the focus lies more on creating a dialogue and giving people an authentic voice in the organization. Giving them the ability to express themselves, their needs, ideas and perceptions of the employer brand rather than making them fit to the employer brand by trainings, selection or management strategies (Martin et al., 2011).

According to Weick & Luhmann’s theoretical model of enactment and sense-making, individuals are not aimed to ignore guidelines and requirements but to make sense out of the employer brand on their own. By granting them more freedom in the implementation, they are expected to create “expressions of these values, authentic identities and meaningful strategies for themselves, and in doing so benefit the corporation as a whole” (Martin et al., 2011, p. 3632). The authors suggest that in that way corporate structures and values can be interpreted in an equivocal manner (Martin et al., 2011).

For employer brand management, this idea could result in a re-conception from a top-down approach to a more co-creational, processual concept including forms of dialogue and continuous communicational exchange. Rather than undermining different opinions, reflection and critical questioning could be embraced in order to create a more sustainable, successful employer brand (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Martin, 2007).
6 Conclusions and Future Prospect

With employer branding still being a highly discussed topic in professional and practitioner studies, this thesis wants to contribute to existing literature by offering new perspectives. It aims at examining current sources and assembling a substantiated understanding on what employer branding is concerned with and how it is managed and integrated in the organization. By including both traditional sources and more critical articles, the thesis aims to address the topic in a more differentiated way, offer new perspectives and thus contribute to the discussion.

While traditional literature often focuses on external employer branding actions, this analysis shows the pluralistic action field of employer brand management by including different areas of the concept. Therefore, more critical sources and findings from theoretical models were used to offer additional insights. Some sources still remain sceptical about the importance and significance of the employer brand for successful organizations by calling it a temporary trend (Baum et al., 2012). Neo-institutional theories emphasize this perception as they attribute organizations taking on popular practices that are perceived positively by their environment. Accordingly, some experts perceive the popularity of employer branding as a result of those isomorphic developments.

In this thesis however, employer branding and employer brand management are acknowledged as holding a lot of potential for organizations and the development of more sustainable human resource practices in particular. It sustains the alignment of different organizational departments like human resources, marketing, communication and innovation (Martin et al., 2011). The task for employer brand management therefore is it to find a dynamic balance between gaining legitimacy and creating a unique employer branding processes (Martin, 2007).

The analysis also showed, that although some traditional sources mention practices like dialogue for the implementation of the employer brand, it is still mostly perceived as a measure that needs to be managed. Authenticity, internal employer branding actions
and the anchoring inside the company are acknowledged. Still, most functional literature follows a top-down approach and offers advice about how to achieve a successful employer brand inside and outside the organization.

This perspective is extended by the theoretical model of enactment and corresponding insights from analytical literature. Accordingly, one implementation for modern employer brand management given by Martin et al. (2011) is to try and capture the authentic voices of stakeholders inside and outside the organization. Through allowing them to make sense of the employer brand for themselves, question basic assumptions and reflect on it, an authentic employer brand can be created (Martin et al., 2011).

This call for more plurality and integration also works for the role of the employer brand manager in order to counteract problematic political implications. Rather than looking for the best fit to the employer brand and organizational values diversity can work as a concept for successful employer brand management (Edlinger, 2015).

Opportunities of modern technological communication tools like blogs, chats or social media stimulates participation in the creation of the employer brand and helps to raise the authentic voice of all participants (Martin et al., 2011). Through those double-sided, direct forms of interaction communication can be made more bilateral and dialogical and the interaction between sender and receiver is enhanced (Martin et al., 2011). Thereby, greater acceptance and visibility of the project can also be provided and resistance can be minimized. Since the inclusion of more stakeholders into the project can result in a growth of complexity, technology can offer helpful tools to avoid this problem by offering flexible, simple ways of interaction.

Accordingly, employees are perceived as stakeholders of the employer brand and recognized in a more relational way rather than as channels to fulfil the brand promise to external stakeholders (Aggerholm et al., 2011). The aim here is to achieve a co-creational framework and possibilities for employees to engage in it (Aggerholm et al., 2011).
**Limitations**

Although the author of this thesis tried to conduct this study very carefully there are some limitations that have to be mentioned at this point.

The literature that was used for the findings in this thesis was selected with the highest care of objectivity in order to achieve a realistic picture of current research concerning the topic. Of course the literature selection can still be named as limitation since the author cannot claim for it to be complete and fully objective. A full comprehensive analysis would go beyond the scope of this work.

Since analytical or more critical sources about employer branding are especially rare, chapter 3.2 of the thesis mainly builds on four key sources. This of course can also be named as a limitation since those studies only offer a small perspective and singular case studies.

**Further Research**

Since an integrated approach to the constitution and management of the employer brand is currently only available in limited sources, additional academic research is needed.

Also, research on equivocality in corporate employer brand management should be analyzed in cases where a co-creational approach has already been taken on. Thereby findings about the integration and responsiveness could be gained.

Furthermore it would be helpful to get insights about the honesty and real attitudes of employees about the employer brand, since current studies mainly provide positive perceptions. The question arises if those representations are really honest or if they just show a representation of what the researcher or management wants to hear.

Another possibility for additional research is the question whether this originally positive perception of an employer remains, once hired.

Also research on employer branding under the light of theoretical models like neo institutionalism is rare and would add a new facet to the perception of this phenomenon.
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