Employer Branding –
The matching crisis and the bigger picture

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Declaration

I, Jacqueline Krutzler, declare that I have developed and written the enclosed Master Thesis completely by myself. It is being submitted to fulfil the requirements of the Master of Business Administration at the Dublin Business School. No part of this work has previously been submitted in support of an application for a degree or qualification at this or any other college/university.

Furthermore, all the work in this dissertation is entirely my own, except referenced in the text as a specific source and included in the bibliography.

___________________________
Jacqueline Krutzler

22nd of May 2015
Abstract

Markets without boundaries, a fast-paced global economic business environment, technological advances and demographic shifts due to population growth or decline mark a new era of disruptive change. These factors are changing the behaviours and the way relationships between people and companies are formed. While people think that running an organisation is about growth, innovation and salesmanship, the reality is that an organisation’s ultimate success stems from attracting, recruiting, engaging and retaining passionate and skilled people. Employees are the most important asset and build the foundation of a company’s success. The concept of employer branding represents a company’s reputation as an employer and embodies a company’s effort to promote a unique, distinctive and desirable employment offering, both within the company to existing employees and outside the company to potential prospective candidates. Employer brand management takes a more holistic approach to shape the culture of a company and employees everyday experience of the brand by aligning the brand ethos with every employee’s touch-point. Nowadays, employers worldwide recognise the huge impact employees have on a customer’s service experience and satisfaction, which in turn leads to business growth. This thesis aims to identify and discuss the impact of employer branding on an employee’s perception in regard to the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity.

The literature reviewed provides a concise outline to the concept of employer branding including branding, the corporate brand and the internal brand, corporate culture, organisational attractiveness and reputation as well as service quality. The thesis is descriptive and uses a qualitative, inductive approach. The strategy chosen for this thesis was a single case study that uses the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski as its object of study. A mono-method of semi-structured interviews was undertaken for the purpose of collecting the primary data. The interviews were conducted from different levels of the company, from the Director of People Services to the Chef de Bar in order to provide a clearer perspective on the impact of employer branding on the employee’s perception. The findings indicate that a distinctive and unique employer brand positively influences an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity.
1. Introduction and Problem Definition

“An idea can turn to dust or magic depending on the talent that rubs against it.”
(Bill Bernbach, cited in Mosley, 2014, p. 143)

Talent is “the main engine of business” and CEOs try to find and secure the right talent to drive their future success. The 17th PWC’s Annual Global CEO Survey revealed a 5% increase in the threat to finding potential employees who are skilled. While in 2013 58% of CEOs expressed their concerns only 53% did so in 2012. Furthermore, 93% of the participants realised that in order to attract and secure new talents they would have to change and redefine their strategies. This reveals a new but important way of thinking in today’s service and knowledge-driven economy. Employees are the most important assets and 64% of CEOs say, “… creating a skilled workforce is a priority for their organisation over the next three years.” (PwC, 2014, pp. 18-22).

2015 marks a new era of disruptive change and of a market without boundaries, which will significantly affect and reshape the global market (PwC, 2015, p. 2). In the latest edition of PWC’s Annual Global CEO Survey, CEOs worldwide believe that three trends will transform the business environment in the coming five years. 81% of the participants mentioned technological advances such as the increase of the digital economy, social media and mobile devices; trends which are not new but are progressing at a much higher pace and keep creating a different environment. 59% of the participants stated their concern in the shift of the global economic power in regards of resource and competency shortages and 60% of the CEOs named the demographic shifts due to population growth or decline. These demographic shifts are causing a major redistribution of the global workforce, which will not only have a massive influence on the workplace but will also impact the future consumption patterns (PwC, 2014, pp. 10-11).
In our fast moving environment, markets are extremely competitive and products and services are becoming more homogenous. Today’s business landscape is driven by shorter product lifecycles, increasing customer requirements and greater technological complexities. Products and services are threatened more than ever by substitutions and innovations. In order to stay competitive, companies are forced to rethink their roles and differentiate themselves. Not everything revolves around products and services anymore, customers seek values and value creation. Evolving trends in lifestyle, technology and social influences are changing behaviours and the way relationships between people and companies are formed. Employees make the critical difference between the success and failure of a company. Sergio Zyman, the Chairman and Founder of Zyman Group highlighted: “Before you can think of selling your brand to customers, you have to sell it to your employees. How the brand is positioned in the minds of consumers is heavily dependent on a company’s employees.” (Zyman, cited in Minchington, 2006, p. 5)

The idea of building an organisation’s reputation through a company’s brand as an employer is referred to as “employer branding”, which was first introduced by Ambler and Barrow in 1996, who defined the concept as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.187). The interest in employer branding highly increased after the publication of Ambler and Barrow’s article “The Employer Brand”. Employees make the critical difference between success and failure. In order to attract and retain appropriate employees with the right skill set, companies started to use the practices and principles of branding in the area of human resource management. The effectiveness with which organisations manage, develop, motivate, involve and engage the willing contribution of their employees, who work in the business, is a key determinant of how well those organisations perform. In our competitive world, talent management is an important driver for an organisation’s success.

“Why is employer branding so popular now? The answer seems to be obvious. In a situation where there is a highly competitive labour market and population decline, firms worldwide need to attract and retain qualified, value-adding employees.” (Kucherov and Zavyalova, 2012, p. 88)
In essence, this thesis aims to identify and discuss the impact of employer branding on an employee's perception in regard to the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity.

The literature reviewed provides a concise outline to the concept of employer branding including branding, the corporate brand and the internal brand, corporate culture, organisational attractiveness and reputation as well as service quality. The thesis is descriptive and uses a qualitative, inductive approach. The strategy chosen for this thesis was a single case study that uses the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski as its object of study. A mono-method of semi-structured interviews was undertaken for the purpose of collecting the primary data. The interviews were conducted from different levels of the company, from the Director of People Services to the Chef de Bar in order to provide a clearer perspective on the impact of employer branding on the employee’s perception. The findings indicate that a distinctive and unique employer brand positively influences an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity. The semi-structured interviews revealed that the case company, Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, has a very strong employer brand, where the company’s perceived image as “a great employer to work for”, and thus the expectations of potential and existing employees’ are aligned with the actual values and the culture, which positively affects employee retention, attraction, loyalty, motivation, engagement and productivity.
1.1. Purpose Statement

Evolving trends in lifestyle and technology are changing the behaviours and the way relationships between people and companies are formed. Employees, as well as customers, are no longer passive recipients. People hunger for uniqueness and for possibilities that will help them to express their individuality in an impersonal world. Due to the past economic turmoil the concept of employer branding has gained an increasing interest and plays an important part in attracting and retaining talent. "The War for Talent" is an on-going process and companies seek to become the employer of choice. In 1998, McKinsey studied 77 U.S. companies from a variety of industries and stated in the report “The War for Talent” that companies are struggling to attract, engage and retain good employees and forecasted that this occurrence will continue (Chambers et al., 1998, pp. 44-46). The quote in the McKinsey Quarterly in 1998 marks the advent of employer branding and has initiated and driven the change in the HR field. The quote can be read as follows:

“Companies are about to be engaged in a war for senior executive talent that will remain a defining characteristic of their competitive landscape for decades to come. Yet most are ill prepared and even the best are vulnerable.” (McKinsey, 1998, cited in Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 37)

Employer branding is a powerful tool to develop a sustainable competitive advantage in today’s increasingly competitive marketplace. The concept aims to externally, as well as internally, highlight the positive aspects of working for an organisation with the intention to attract new, potential employees as well as to engage and retain the current ones (Minchington, 2006, pp. 26-43). “Companies who can attract the best minds will have a distinct edge in the marketplace.” (Harari, 1998, cited in Minchington, 2006, p. 98) Therefore, companies need to develop new strategies in order to be viewed as valued companies where employees seek to work in order to stay successful and survive in the highly competitive business environment.
With a strong employer brand a company will be able to attract, develop and retain talented people who are willing to invest their knowledge and skills in the business objectives, which further contributes to the competitive advantage and leads to an increasing performance.

1.2. Research Question

This research hopes to identify the impact of employer branding on an employee’s perception in regard to the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and to productivity and therefore the research question is as follows:

What impact does employer branding have on an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity?
1.3. Organisation of the Dissertation

The organisation of the dissertation is in the following manner:

**Chapter One:** The first section represents an overall introduction to the research in the field of employer branding and the present standing in today’s knowledge-driven business environment. Furthermore, the purpose of the research and the research question is outlined and the reader is introduced to the organisation of the dissertation.

**Chapter Two:** The second chapter encompasses the literature review and examines how employer branding and talent attraction impact and influence the organisational attractiveness, employee productivity and the corporate brand. Therefore, a number of articles, journals, books, and surveys were analysed in order to collect relevant literature, to present a variety of different viewpoints and to state what have been researched so far in the field of employer branding.

**Chapter Three and Four:** Furthermore, these sections three and four outline the research methodology and the data analysis. Section Three outlines the research methodology, justifies and illustrates the research approach and methods which have been applied for the thesis in order to research the role of employer branding and the matching crisis and its impact on the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski. Section Four outlines the data analysis, and presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews.

**Chapter Five:** Section Five outlines the discussion on the research undertaken. The research topic is assessed by comparing and contrasting the findings with contemporary literature and draws a general conclusion from the results through a summary of the findings and clarifies the link with the concepts that have been raised in the literature review. Finally, section five closes with the limitations of the research.

**Chapter Six:** Section Six encompasses the recommendation and conclusion about the relevance and the validity of the outcomes and illustrates how the research has contributed toward the area of employer branding as well as managerial implications.
2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to establish, define and link different theories to the employer branding concept. This chapter illustrates the relevant theories, concepts and the interrelationship surrounding employer branding. The researcher outlines the four main sectors; namely branding and the interrelationship between corporate branding, internal branding and employer branding, the concept of employer branding, the organisational attractiveness regarding the employer brand and the influence on employee productivity.

2.1. Literature Review Introduction

This chapter investigates literature from a variety of sources, including scientific literature from academia as well as industry and company reports. The concept of employer branding originates from the field of brand management (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, p. 160) and is an extension of relationship marketing principles, which identifies the need to build attraction and retention strategies across relevant stakeholders through stronger relationships (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.186). The success of the concept is heavily dependent on a company’s culture and values as well as on the employment experience (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp. 160-161). Therefore, the key areas of this thesis revolve around branding, corporate branding, internal branding, the concept of employer branding and organisational attractiveness.

Due to demographic and structural changes, mainly in developed economies, which are followed by a volatile talent demand-supply and a tightening of the labour market, companies are forced to rethink their talent and employment management strategies. The concept of employer branding is rather new and represents a critical success factor for companies striving for a sustainable competitive advantage in the tightening of the labour market (Franca and Pahor, 2012, pp. 79-80; Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 299).
Deloitte’s longitudinal survey illustrates that successful companies place a high importance on employer brand management and the retention of talent. Companies with retention plans in place reported an increase in their financial and non-financial incentives and more than 71% of companies will increase their focus on employer branding and develop high-potential employees and emerging leaders in the following years (Deloitte, 2010).

Despite the gaining popularity of the concept, few academic literature and articles have been published. The notion of “employer branding” was first mentioned by Richard Mosley (1990), who originally invented the concept. Additionally, most of the research regarding employer branding is based on the research and work of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Barrow and Mosley (2005), Minchington (2006), Mosley (2007, 2009 and 2014), Rosethorn (2009) and Moroko and Uncles (2008 and 2009).
2.2. What is a Brand?

A brand is “… a name, a term, a symbol, or any other unique element of a product that identifies one firm's product(s) and sets it apart from the competition.” (Solomon, Marshall and Stuart, 2008, p. 286) Similar to Solomon, Marshall and Stuart, Kotler et al. (2012, p. 467) highlight the use of brands as a signalling system to generate and send an emotional meaning, which in turn leads to add value to the company and distinguishes it from competitors. Kotler et al. (2012, p. 467) define a brand as a “…name, symbol, logo, design or image, or any combination of these, which is designed to identify a product or service and distinguish it from those of their competitors.”

A multitude of definitions exist and experts are in constant disagreement concerning the definition of “the brand”. Two key schisms between the two paradigms exist. One paradigm is “customer-based” and focuses on the relationship customers have with the brand. On the basis of this perspective, Keller (1998, cited in Kapferer, 2008, p. 10) defines a brand as “a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service.” The definition places a great emphasis on a customer perceived value created by the brand. The other paradigm is concerned with a brand’s financial value (Kapferer, 2008, pp. 9-11). The growing awareness of the ability of a well-known brand to contribute to the asset value of a company began to arise in the late 1980s. The notion of brand equity was born, which is the added value with which the brand enriches a product or service (Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy and Pervan, 2011, pp. 89-91; Kapferer, 2012, p. 441; Kotler et al., 2012, p. 492; Clifton, 2009, p. 246).

Nowadays, brands are a vital source of differentiation, especially in saturated markets. A brand represents more than just a service or a product. A strong brand creates an emotional reaction (Solomon, Marshall and Stuart, 2008, pp. 287-288). Furthermore, brands act as a relationship builder between a service organisation and its customers (Kasper, Van Helsingen, Gabbott, 2006, p. 163).
As previously mentioned, different interpretations of the term “brand” exist and the notion of brands as a promise is particularly suitable for service branding because of their characteristics of heterogeneity and intangibility (De Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003, p. 1098). Therefore, Ambler and Styles (1996, p. 10) define a brand as follows: “… the promise of the bundle of attributes that someone buys … the attributes that make up a brand may be real or illusory, rational or emotional, tangible or invisible.”

In accordance with recent marketing literature, the importance of involving a variety of stakeholders to generate a unique position not only on the customer market but also on the labour market greatly impacts a company’s performance but most importantly, companies have recognised that their greatest asset are the people who work for them (Foster et al., 2010, p. 401; Mosley, 2007, pp. 124-125; Gaddam, 2008, p. 45). Therefore, a vital role of brand management represents a more employee-centric and unified view when it comes to external as well as internal communication (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 151). Furthermore, a strong corporate brand is characterised by a strong employer brand due to its alignment with the corporate culture, which is closely connected to the brand image and the ability to immerse employees’ in the brand experience (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp. 160-161).
2.3. From Brand Image, Service Quality, Employee and Customer Perception to the Competitive Edge

“If anyone can build a brand, it is the customer. Marketers cannot do that. They can only create favourable conditions for a brand image to develop in customers minds.” (Grönroos, 2007, p. 329)

The term “brand image” is the image of the product or service, which is formed in the minds of the customers (Grönroos, 2007, p. 330). The brand image plays a crucial role in creating customer satisfaction, which stems from relationships and representations. Furthermore, the brand image is an interconnected system of association, which Kapferer (2008, p. 11) named the brand system. The brand system is illustrated in Figure 1 and consists of three vital elements: the brand concept, including the value proposition with its tangible and intangible elements, the brand name and its symbol and the service or product experience.

![Figure 1: The brand system](image)

(Kapferer, 2008, p. 12)

Kapferer (2008, pp. 11-12) accentuates the power of a brand’s name, which heavily depends on the cumulative brand experience and states that a brand is “… an attitude of non-indifference knitted into consumers hearts.” Therefore, a strong brand has the power to influence the market through its product or service, in cooperation with the people who are in contact with the market as well as the price, the communication and the places (Kapferer, 2008, pp. 12-13).
In addition to that, De Chernatony (1999, pp. 172-173) argues that the brand is a more powerful tool compared to the brand image, which is focused on the most recent impression. The brand reputation assesses perceptions across many stakeholders (De Chernatony, 1999, pp. 172-173) and it is assumed that a close relationship between the employer brand image and the reputation of a company’s products and services exist due to good external brand experiences (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 149). Mosley (2014, p. 81) refers to the external reputation of a company as “clusters of associations”, which play a vital role to a company’s external perception and represents a significant characteristic of the employer brand equity and talent pool (Mosley, 2014, pp. 81-90). Gaddam (2008, p. 48) complements Mosley’s statement and adds that a company’s reputation and brand image integrate not only the employer brand but also the employee brand. Both play a major role when it comes to attracting, recruiting, engaging and retaining employees. Employee and employer brand should be balanced and interrelated to contribute to the competitive edge and coin the customer experience. Furthermore, the alignment of both can play a pivotal role in “future-proofing” the corporate reputation (Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619).

Mosley (2014, pp. 81-90) identified three major factors when it comes to the perception of the company as a potential employer; namely the industry image, leading talent competitors in relation to the standing of the company and if the target talent wants to work for an established company or for a start-up. The last but highly significant factor is attraction. A number of sources for attraction data exist but the most insightful are Towers Watson’s Global Workforce Study, Corporate Executive Board’s Global Workforce Survey and the Talent Flow Analysis by LinkedIn. Those studies revealed that the predominant drivers of attraction by far are work-life balance, compensation and job security (Mosley, 2014, pp. 81-90). Similar to organisational brand communications with its consumers where consumers buy a “holistic package of benefits”, including psychological and economic satisfaction, employer brands communicate the benefits of employment to potential employees.
The benefits employer brands offer, such as psychological (feelings of belonging, purpose), functional (developmental activities, leave allowances) or economic satisfaction (monetary rewards) to employees, are in parallel with brand offers to customers (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.187) and reinforce the employer brand’s positioning, which further leads to strengthening the value of the employer’s proposition (Moroko and Uncles, 2009, p. 182).

Foxall, Goldsmith and Brown (2005, p. 51) and Grönroos (2007, p. 331) add that a customer’s perception about a brand stems from the received information about the brand characteristic. Perceived quality is a central consideration in almost every customer’s choice context and therefore has a tremendous effect on a company’s competitive advantage (Aaker, 1996, p.123). To remain successful in today’s dynamic and fast-paced business environment, service experience and service quality is considered to be imperative in order to continuously improve and is therefore viewed as a key component by organisations (Parasuraman et al., 1985, cited in El-Said, 2013, p. 292). In order to maintain a high service quality, employee satisfaction plays a major role in providing customer satisfaction and is one of the most important drivers for quality and productivity (Zeithaml et al., 1990, pp. 90-91; Matzler and Renzl, 2006, p. 1261).

Furthermore, Matzler and Renzl (2006, p. 1261) state that employee satisfaction directly affects process quality, and in turn, determines customer satisfaction and quality costs. In the service industry, a positive relation can be seen between satisfied employees, customer loyalty and satisfaction and the company’s performance (Heskett et al., 1994, pp. 164-165). One well-known conceptualization which illustrates the interrelationship is the ‘service-profit chain’ developed by Heskett et al. (1994, p. 166). This encompasses several factors, including employee satisfaction, which results from the company’s policies, support and procedures and enables employees to deliver services to meet customers’ needs. This value creation increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, which leads to profit and growth.
In the context of the nature and process of services, Brodie et al. (2006, p. 372) developed the service brand-relationship-value triangle in order to identify and understand the multi-faceted elements of the brand creation process. The model is based on the promise concept and is illustrated in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: The service brand-relationship-value triangle](image)

The model demonstrates the importance of alignment and integration between the brand promise, which is externally communicated and the company's internal actions in order to fulfil the expectations created by the promises made. In its essence, the external communicated brand values have to be aligned with the internal values (Brodie, Glynn and Little, 2006, p. 372; Grönroos, 2007, pp. 337-338; Sirianni et al., 2013, pp. 108-109). Einwiller and Will (2002, pp. 107-108) accentuate the fundamental implicitness of integrating the employer brand in other business activities and incorporating the concept in the corporate communication and the corporate brand.
The employer brand supports the creation of identity among current employees to “live the brand”, which positively influences customers’ responses to brands and attracts future employees’ (Gaddam, 2008, p. 46; Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619; Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p.134). In order to “live the brand”, Barrow and Mosley (2005, p. 134) emphasise the importance of ensuring that the relevance of the brand is aligned with the employment experience.

Furthermore, the Social Identity Approach to Organisational Identification (SIA) underpins the notion of “live the brand” approach and demonstrates how an attractive employer brand can influence an individual’s behaviour and identity within its own self-concept which in turn leads to an employee’s engagement and reflection of a company’s unique identity (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, pp. 896-897).

![Diagram](Image)

Figure 3: Illustration of the relationship between a unique and attractive employer brand and the brand related behaviour of employees, as seen through the lens of SIA (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 897)

For decades, researchers and practitioners placed significant emphasis on the interaction between brands, potential customer and consumers and less on the interaction between the brand and employees (De Chernatony, 1999, pp. 157-173; Rampl and Kenning, 2012, pp. 218-219). Recently, the scope of marketing management has been broadened in order to encompass other stakeholders, in particular employees, suppliers, the local community and many more (Rampl and Kenning, 2014, p. 219).
The success of a company and its sustainable competitive advantage depends on a clear competitive strategy on whether the company should compete on cost or differentiation and its distinctive capabilities (Mosley, 2014, pp. 49-52). Porter’s generic strategies provide a useful framework for analysing the industry and the company’s competitive advantage. While the competitive advantage incorporates technology, organization and people, it is the people-driven process that leads to a sustainable competitive advantage (Thompson and Martin, 2010, pp. 205-207). Johnson et al. (2014, pp. 70-73) emphasise that strategic capabilities, in view of resources and competences, are vital for a superior performance and are key elements in an organisation’s long-term survival.

Marketers realised that there is more required in order to develop and manage a successful brand than understanding customer needs and desires. Underlying technical and organisational capabilities combined with a good knowledge of the market dynamics contribute to a brand’s competitive edge (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 87). On one hand, attracting and retaining skilled people helps a company to compete in the “war for talent” and on the other hand, employing qualified and talented employees leads to a high service quality being delivered to satisfy customer needs (Rampl and Kenning, 2014, p. 219).

Considering employees as a vital part in the brand building process led to a stronger brand performance. De Chernatony places a great emphasis on the alignment of employees’ values and behaviours with the brand values and the purpose of a company in order to develop a powerful brand (De Chernatony, 1999, pp. 157-173). Furthermore, De Chernatony (1999, p. 172) states that “…brands are clusters of values and, particularly for corporate brands, these values emanate from people inside the firm”.

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2.4. Branding and the Interrelationship between the Corporate Brand, Internal Brand and Employer Brand

Brands play a vital part in modern society. They shape, influence and penetrate all spheres of people’s lives. In developed economies, customers drive the business and have a wide array of choices.

This array and diversity of choices put a lot of pressure on marketers to differentiate themselves and secure their competitive advantage (Blackett, 2009, p. 17). Clifton (2009, p. 252) adds “Competing successfully in the 21st century will require more than just outstanding product and quality functions. Intangibles, such as corporate and brand image, will be crucial factors for achieving a competitive advantage.” In a nutshell, “a brand exists when it has acquired the power to influence the market.” (Kapferer, 2012, p. 9) To create value, influence the market and gain market share, the whole system, such as the product or service, combined with the people at points of contact with the market and all the sources of cumulative brand experience, have to make a name and a set of proprietary signs in order to acquire the power of a brand. Successful brands create an image in the mind of the customer, are perceived as unique and differentiate themselves from their competitors (Kapferer, 2012, p. 9).

Nowadays, the focus does not lie on a brand’s functional role but rather on its emotional role. Emotions play a significant role in customers’ selection, loyalty, and satisfaction towards brands (Kotler et al., 2012, pp. 467-469). The importance of the link between brands and personal identity has grown significantly. Brands operate as enablers by making it possible for people to create whatever identity they wish to create and adopt (Fanning, 2006, pp. 30-31). In today’s pace of change, the success of a company can no longer rely on out-dated tools and structures. Branding is not solely focused on advertising; on the contrary, it is a driving force to achieve and infuse a company with their vision. To create a sustainable advantage, companies need to focus on an integrated branding process and adapt their tools to react to continuous market changes. The integrated branding process is aligned with the strength and culture of the company and links brand clarity, organisational alignment and communications (LePla, Davis and Parker, 2003, pp. 11-16).
Figure 4 illustrates an integrated approach to brand positioning and incorporates both the customer perspective and the employee experience. While customer and employer brand compete in different markets, they are closely interrelated and influence the brand integrity. To ensure a universal perspective of the brand with its many levels of perception, companies need to make sure that brand qualities are passed onto every stakeholder's experience of the brand (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, pp. 110-111). Furthermore, Barrow and Mosley (2005, p. 111) emphasise that the strength of the customer brand plays a significant role in attracting the right talented candidates. People's desires, needs and aspirations change over a period of time. Brands cannot afford to stand still in order to offer new and compelling alternatives to satisfy the tastes of its target market and to compete in a fast-paced business environment (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 67).
The authors suggest a multifaceted approach and name six core principles of effective brand management, which significantly influence the employer brand and are as follows: insight, focus, differentiation, benefits, continuity and consistency. Barrow and Mosley (2005, p. 67) accentuate that a great degree of consistency and continuity are imperative to maintain the credibility and integrity of a brand. The most important principle is consistency in regard to communication and consistency with the management behaviour. This influences both external as well as internal brand promises, which “need to be matched by clear reasons to believe.” (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, pp. 49-50).

Three branding concepts, namely corporate branding, internal branding and employer branding exist, all of which are of utmost importance for a company. The interrelationship between the corporate brand, the internal brand and the employer brand are outlined below.

Balmer and Gray (2003, cited in Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 401) state that a powerful corporate brand is a significant “navigational tool” to a variety of stakeholders, who include not only existing and potential employees, but also customers and shareholders. A corporate brand is an “explicit promise between an organisation and its key stakeholder groups.” (Balmer, 1998, cited in Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 401) Einwiller and Will (2002, p. 101) state that every signal sent out by the company or its constituent features are delivered by communication, behaviour and symbolism.

Companies are perceived as a whole and generate a promise through the corporate brand, which in turn pervades the culture and behaviour of the company. Originally, branding was applied to differentiate tangible products but over time it was used to differentiate companies, people and places (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-503). Employees are the most important resource regarding the promise-delivering process through their personal interactions with customers and therefore, represent the key element of building a company’s corporate brand.
This corporate brand promise derives from understanding the company’s culture and the corporate identity (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 402; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 506-507). In order to attract new talented people and ensure that current employees are immersed in the corporate culture and the strategy, employer branding is gaining popularity amongst practitioners. The employer brand indicates the difference of a company’s characteristics, its unique offering as an employer to distinguish themselves from its competitors (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-502). Employees play a central role for a strong corporate, internal and employer brand and are crucial for an organisational success. However, the interrelationship between the corporate brand, the internal brand and the employer brand has yet to be fully explored in the corporate branding literature (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 401).

The influence of employees on potential and existing customers and other stakeholders’ perceptions by delivering both emotional and functional brand values highlights the importance of the alignment of employees and organisational values in order to thrive the corporate brand (De Chernatony, 2002, pp. 114-118 and p. 129). With the beginning of the recession, the focus of employer branding shifted from its external branding approach in the labour market to a more internal branding approach. Companies recognised the importance of talent attraction and employee engagement and its direct impact on the corporate reputation, which is highly important when competing in today’s fast-changing global market environment (Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619).

Today, as competition and costs increase, and as productivity and quality decrease, more service marketing sophistication is needed. Service companies face three major marketing tasks: they want to increase their service differentiation, service quality and service productivity. Over the past few years, a clear shift from the “outside-in” approach of internal marketing, where the customer brand promise was a narrowly defined focus on the customer brand experience, to the “inside-out” approach of internal branding, where the main focus lies on the value-based ethos and a wider range of brand-led corporate goals has been seen (Mosley, 2007, p. 128).
Employees’ have to be inspired and motivated to satisfy customers and offer unparalleled customer service. Therefore, companies need to attract the right people with the right expertise, values, behaviour and passion and in return provide them with the necessary resource for their needs and establish a continuous learning culture to drive the business forward by satisfying their customers (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 254). Internal branding is focused on its current employees and communication in order to understand the corporate brand values. Internal Branding is of vital importance because it carries the brand promise and incorporates it as part of the organisational culture. This alignment and understanding across the company is highly important to ensure a consistent delivery of the brand promise as well as possibly provide the organisation with a sustainable competitive advantage. A key element of internal branding is an employee’s transformation of brand values, including customers’ expectations about the company, into reality during the delivery of the brand promise (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 402).

When it comes to companies in the service industry, a brand is regarded as a relationship builder. The brand forges an intimate bond with customers based on its brand promise or value proposition, which has to be fulfilled at each service touchpoint (Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2008, p. 408). Employees play a vital role in the development of customer-brand relationships. To maintain a long-lasting relationship, companies must ensure that their employees are behaviourally and attitudinally ready to understand the brand promise and deliver it appropriately (Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2008, pp. 408-409). Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky’s (2008, p. 414) analysis of the findings revealed that internal communication and training programmes were perceived as major internal branding mechanism.
Figure 5 illustrates the two key mechanisms’ effect on employees.

Besides creating a workforce that is hard to imitate and contributing to a company’s sustainable competitive advantage, internal branding also contributes to employees’ retention (Barney, 1991; Ambler and Barrow, 1996, cited in Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 503-504).

The last component of the brand interrelationship is known as employer branding. According to Rosethorn (2009, p. 19) an employer brand is “…a two-way deal between an organisation and its people – the reasons they choose to join and the reason they choose – and are permitted – to stay.” In its essence, employer branding highlights the unique aspects of the employment offering and therefore differentiates a company’s characteristics as an employer from its competitors (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p. 502). Furthermore, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 502) state that employer branding is “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors. We examine employer branding at the organization-wide level.”
Minchington (2006, p. 116) complements that view and adds that an effective employer brand starts at the heart of the company by defining the company’s employer value proposition and communicates the company’s unique employer value proposition to potential and current employees as “a great place to work”. Moroko and Uncles (2008, pp. 165-166) propose that an employer brand is a continuous promise to employees and refer to as the psychological contract between an employer and an employee.

In general, a great variety of researchers, authors and experts are in agreement regarding the key role of employer branding. The current weakness employer branding is facing is the focus on long-term communication of the brand promise to preserve a lasting effect but Mosley (2007, pp. 131-132) emphasises that employer brand management takes a more holistic approach to shape the company’s culture by seeking to ensure that every employee’s touch point operational and interpersonal wise, is interwoven and deeply embedded in the brand ethos. The need to deliver consistent and distinctive corporate brand integrity is highly important for a company’s success. The customer brand experience and satisfaction is heavily dependent on employees and their interpersonal interactions. In order to shape an on-brand culture, managing communication and advertisement are not enough. Companies have to align the employer brand experience with the customer brand experience, make sure that the company attracts the right candidates and that the company’s employer brand reinforces a suitable culture (Mosley, 2007, pp. 131-132).
Furthermore, the value communication is established by feedback and whether a company can integrate both the employee value and the customer value propositions. Figure 6 illustrates the circle of love (Rosethorn, 2009, p. 84).

Mosley’s framework determines the everyday employee’s experience, which is deeply aligned with an organisation’s core values, leadership and management competencies as well as the everyday behaviours (Mosley, 2014, pp. 52-53).

Figure 6: Circles of Love: Linking Employees to the Customer Proposition
(Rosethorn, 2009, p. 84)

Figure 7: Employer Brand Experience Framework
(Mosley, 2007, p. 131)
The alignment of the brand ethos with a company’s employees leads to a unique employee brand experience, which, in turn, results in a consistent delivery of a customer brand experience. The employer brand influences every touch point of the employment experience aligned with personal values and “…appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture.” (CIPD, 2013)

2.5. The Concept of Employer Branding

“As in ancient times, talent has become the coin of the realm. Companies that multiply their human talents will prosper. Companies that don’t will struggle.” (Michaels et al., 2001, p. XIV)

Employer branding originates from the fusion of HR and marketing management theory (Mosley, 2007, pp. 129-130; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-504; Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp.165-166). Significant parallels can be found between those two sectors. The marketing department aims to create a value proposition for its customers whilst the HR department aims to create a value proposition for its existing and potential employees in order to differentiate a company from its competitors (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp.165-166). The HR department plays an elemental role in improving an organisation’s effectiveness and performance if integrated appropriately with people services management. Efficient systems and processes, including access to training opportunities, reward management, career mobility and talent management, suitable performance management and succession planning, have a significant impact on an employee’s experience (Mosley, 2014, pp. 52-53). Furthermore, Gaddam (2008, p. 47) highlights that employer branding relates to “the very heart” of the company and emphasises the importance of “creating emotional connectivity in the heart and soul of the workforce”. An effective employer brand needs to have a unique, distinctive and true identity, which incorporates the key motivational and behavioural factors of the target audiences, the specific skill groups the company wants to attract as well as considering the realities of the business in order to attract the preferred and right target group (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 895; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-503; Ambler and Barrow, 1996, pp. 195-200; Mosley, 2014, p. 12; Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 300).
As a result of various academic studies in the field of employer brand attractiveness, as well as “Best Employers” publications, many companies are striving to become the “Best Employer” and benchmark their own practices against companies who have been awarded the title “the Best Employer” (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 895). Maxwell and Knox (2009, p. 895) accentuate that benchmarking one’s own practices against “Best Employer” companies is problematic in relation to the distinctive identity of a company. Firstly, in incorporating those practices, there is no basis for aligning employees’ behaviour with the culture and values of the corporate brand. Secondly, a strong focus of the research lies on the attraction of potential employees and overlooks the crucial point that the corporate brand can only be realised and perceived through the interaction of current employees’ within the market (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 895).

A successful employer branding and talent-relationship-management has not only a considerable indirect correlation with the business growth of a company but also contributes to employees’ satisfaction, commitment, attraction and retention, which in turn leads to the profitability of the company (Katoen and Macioschek, 2007, cited in Gaddam, 2008, p. 47; Mosley, 2007, p. 126). Figure 8 demonstrates the correlation between profitability and employees’ satisfaction, commitment and attraction.

![Diagram](image.png)

Figure 8: Employer Branding and Talent-Relationship-Management: Improving the Organizational Recruitment Approach (Katoen and Macioschek, 2007, cited in Gaddam, 2008, p. 47)
For many years, becoming an “Employer of Choice” dominated the HR sector. Organisations were focused on building and developing a distinctive external reputation in order to drive cultural change and reinforce their competitive advantage. However, more recently, the primary focus of employer branding is evolving towards a more integrated approach where an alignment between the HR department and the marketing department, as well as the corporate strategy with its core purpose, values and the organisational culture, can be seen. Figure 9 illustrates the integrated service brand model, where the benefits of uniting the employer brand and customer brand through appropriate communication and behaviour under the corporate brand umbrella can be seen. This alignment creates a unified brand image and further represents the company’s culture (Mosley, 2007, pp. 129-131).

![Integrated Service Brand Model](image)

Figure 9: Integrated Service Brand Model
(Mosley, 2007, p. 130)
Barrow and Mosley (2005, pp. 110-111) highlight that while “…the customer brand and employer brand compete in two different markets – one for products and services; the other for talent and commitment, they are closely interrelated. The employer brand, in attracting the right employees and maintaining their commitment to high performance, plays a critical role in building and supporting the customer brand. Likewise, the strength of the customer brand plays an important role in attracting the right people to come and work for the company. Once employed, the pride they share in the company’s external reputation helps in maintaining their loyalty and commitment to delivering on the company’s brand promises to its customers.”

This shows the interconnectedness between customers, employees and the company (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p. 185). Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 185) highlight that through developing a close relationship with the employer, which can be seen as a brand, corporate performance will be influenced through positive attitudes towards the brand. Furthermore, employer branding focuses on attracting and retaining skilled employees in a company (Gaddam, 2008, p. 45). Due to the fast changing business environment and the changing market demand, companies are striving to position themselves as a unique employer with a distinctive set of benefits and attributes in order to motivate talented potential employees to join the company and to retain the current ones’ (Gaddam, 2008, p. 45; Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 300). Employees make the critical difference between success and failure. The effectiveness with which organisations manage, develop, motivate, involve and engage the willing contribution of their employees, who work in them, is a key determinant of how well organisations perform. In our competitive world, talent management is an important driver for an organisation’s success (Armstrong, 2012, p. 256). Research findings by Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) demonstrate that potential employees are attracted to companies with benefits and attributes that satisfy their own innate needs and preferences. These findings are underpinned by Maslow’s Need (Content) Theory, which stems from the belief that a person’s motivation is shaped by needs and the achievement to realise their needs in order to fulfil their own potential (Armstrong, 2007, p. 123).
According to Botha, Bussin and De Swardt (2011, p. 300) this insight into the needs and preferences of the target talent group could enhance the alignment between the employer’s benefits and employees’ preferences, which could further contribute to higher employer attractiveness and influence the decision to work for the specific company.

Even though millions of people are unemployed around the world, companies are facing rough times to find the right employee with the right skill set. In the years to come, researcher are forecasting a fiercer competition, caused by a lack of talent, which is expected due to retirements and declining birth rates. At the same time, there is a high demand for highly skilled and educated people, which companies need in order to survive in the fast-paced and complex business environment. This need for skills plays a core role in sustaining the competitive edge, influences and benefits strategies, the operational process, human resource management, leadership and incorporates many more (De León et al., 2013, pp. 3-4; Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 304). Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005, p. 168) highlight what companies need to compete successfully and globally and state:

“As organisations seek both to attract new employees and to retain existing staff, employment advertising and employment branding will grow in importance. This can only be done effectively once organisations understand the factors contributing towards ‘employer attractiveness’. Only when organisations work towards integrating these factors into the employment brand can they hope to successfully compete globally in attracting new employees.”
2.6. Employer Value Proposition

Employer Branding is a relatively new approach towards recruiting and retaining the best possible talent within a recruiting environment, which is becoming increasingly competitive. Building an effective employer brand begins with creating and defining the company’s employer value proposition, which are employment offerings and associations that characterise an employer and at the same time differentiate themselves from its competitors. This proposition, if it is delivered as promised, contributes to a company’s positive reputation as a great workplace (Minchington, 2006, p. 142). Rosethorn (2009, pp. 20-21) highlights the importance of two elements that underpin the employer brand, namely the proposition, which is the “validated definition” of the deal the company made with the employer and the employee experience, which represents the “reality of the delivery” of the made deal (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 20-21).

The employer brand consists of a set of intangible attributes and qualities “that make an organization distinctive, promise a particular kind of employment experience and appeal to people who will thrive and perform their best in its culture.” (Walker, 2007, cited in Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 248) Rosethorn (2009, pp. 8-12) underlines the correlation between the employer value proposition and the psychological contract due to its intangible attributes and qualities. According to Rousseau (1995, cited in Rosethorn, 2009, p. 9), the psychological contract is “…the foundation of employees’ beliefs and behaviours in the workplace.” Furthermore, the psychological contract between an employee and the company significantly influences people’s behaviour as well as their level of engagement.
Rosethorn (2009, p. 9) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 507) agree with Rousseau’s appraisal and stress the importance that the contract should go beyond mutual loyalty and beliefs in order to drive productive behaviour or perception of breach and violations of the psychological contract can occur. However, due to today’s fast-moving economic environment and the tightening of skilled labour markets trends toward downsizing, outsourcing, the need for flexibility and expertise on the employer’s part create a new form of psychological contract, in which companies offer employers training and development opportunities in exchange for flexibility and performance (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p. 504; Wickham and O’Donohue, 2009, pp. 77-78).

A successful company understands this “unwritten” deal, in other words the employees’ perception of employers, which shapes their behaviour and affects both parties, and is conscious of the dynamic in everyday working life and how the balance can easily change. These unwritten dimensions lay down the ground rules for the employer brand idea (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 9-10). Furthermore, Mosley (2014, p. 4) adds that defining an employer brand in terms of perception and associations is more effective and realistic due to the measurement of the employer brand’s true value and status. Furthermore, the employer value proposition is often referred to as employee value proposition or as employment value proposition (Mosley, 2014, p. 4).
Rosethorn (2009, p. 20) sees the two-way deal between an employer and their employees as an employee experience. Figure 10 illustrates Rosethorn’s concept of the employer brand in action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee value proposition</th>
<th>Employee Experience</th>
<th>Brand Strength</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The unique and differentiating promise a business makes to its employees</td>
<td>Actual delivery of the promise throughout the employee lifecycle</td>
<td>Attraction of the right candidates</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Employee engagement and retention</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiation from competitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Customer engagement and retention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: The Employer Brand in Action  
(Rosethorn, 2009, p. 20)

Furthermore, organisations should aspire their employees to become an “employee of choice”, rather than be focused on becoming the “employer of choice”, by reflecting the attributes, which employees value through the company’s unique promise. The actual delivery of the employer value proposition throughout the employee lifecycle (employee experience) will lead to an increase in the brand strength, which will result in employee engagement, retention and attraction of potential candidates as well as to a differentiation from competitors and to an increase in customer satisfaction (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 20-25). In order to create value for customers and meet their unique and specific needs, as well as support their retention and engagement, the employee value proposition has to be linked with the brand promise or proposition (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 20-21). Rosethorn (2009, p. 21) strongly suggests that an effective employee value proposition needs to be as important as the customer proposition and equipped with the ability to form sub-propositions for the diverse talent segments. Furthermore, companies need to manage their employee experience, which is a key part of a strong employer brand.
The employee experience is not about “one look or feel”; it is about understanding the employee lifecycle, understanding the core and how to find the right balance between “aspiration and reality” in order to attract and retain potential and current employees (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 23-24 and pp. 53-54). This in turn is interwoven with the organisational behaviour, the “tone of voice” and the visual iconography in order to create an emotional reaction and recognition, which in turn leads to brand strength (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 23-24 and pp. 53-54). Furthermore, Rosethorn (2009, p. 30) emphasises that the development of an employee value proposition is a highly challenging process, where employers have to capture both emotional and rational aspects of the employee deal. Three main reasons have been identified why employee value propositions fail, namely difficulties in capturing the two-way aspect of the employee deal, being distinctive and being compelling (Rosethorn, 2009, p. 30).

“Employees demand authenticity and transparency in the employment experience and customers in the products and services they buy.” (Minchington, 2010)

The global economic crisis has led to a shift in values and behaviour. This shift has led to a change in the concept of employer branding. Tower Perrin’s survey in 2007 of 90,000 employees worldwide illustrated that only 21% of employees felt fully engaged at work and close to 40% felt disengaged. Perrin’s finding shows that a disengagement of employees directly impacts the bottom line, which in turn, leads to a 33% annual decline in the operating income and an 11% annual decline in the earnings per share growth. Companies with a higher employer engagement reported a 19% increase in the operating income and a 28% growth in earnings per share (Minchington, 2010).
Minchington (2010) draws attention to a positive employee experience, which in turn “... will lead to higher levels of employee engagement which will drive customer engagement, increased investments and company and shareholder profits.“ Furthermore, the focus on trust, values and society leads to higher levels of brand advocacy and loyalty amongst employees and customers. Employees, as well as customers, are seeking to build relationships with companies whose values reflect their own. These similar values build the foundation upon which trust is developed (Minchington, 2010). According to Minchington (2010) achieving alignment between the elements of values, trust and society, which is illustrated in the model below, will lead to higher levels of profit whilst contributing to a better global society.

Figure 11: The Model of Brand Advocacy & Loyalty  
(Minchington, 2010)
2.7. The Relation between Organisational Attractiveness and Employer Branding

Organisational attractiveness is an emergent concept that has become a popular subject, not only in the business sector, but also in the academic sector and has been widely discussed in the fields of vocational behaviour, management, applied psychology, communication and marketing (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005, p. 155). The importance of organisational attractiveness regarding employer branding lies primarily in attracting the right employees in order to create a workforce, which is hard to duplicate and helps to build a sustainable competitive advantage but also to enhance the product and corporate brands (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-504). Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005, p. 156) view employer attractiveness as “the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organisation.” The more attractive a company is perceived by the potential talent target market, the stronger the employer brand equity (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005, p. 156).

In today’s global and fast moving economy, organisations are increasingly competing to attract, recruit, engage and retain the best talent (Minchington, 2006, pp. 98-99). The culture and values of a company play a crucial role in creating employer branding. An organisational culture is viewed as the basic personality of a company and therefore it is one of the most important elements, which accounts for the success or for the failure of a company (Gaddam, 2008, p. 48). Organisational attractiveness is a vital competitive advantage and refers to the way an organisation attempts to attract potential employees. Gathering employees with matching profiles due to the company’s requirements supports a company’s competitive advantage (Luce et al., 2001, cited in Gomes and Neves, 2011, p. 684). According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, pp. 504-509) a potential employee who identifies oneself with the image of the company is more likely to choose to apply for a position.
Employer branding creates two main assets, namely brand association and brand loyalty. The employer brand association influences the employer brand image, which in turn, affects the employer attractiveness to potential employees, if the company possesses the desired employee related attributes (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p. 505).

The second asset is known as employer brand loyalty, which is influenced by the organisational culture and identity and is, in turn, affected by the employer brand. It operates similarly to the product brand loyalty, but employer brand loyalty is coined by behavioural and attitudinal elements which relate to the organisational culture and identity. The organisational culture, organisational identity and the employer brand are interwoven and feed back into each other (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 504-509).

Figure 12 illustrates Backhaus and Tikoo’s employer branding framework.

![Figure 12: Employer Branding Framework](Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p. 505)

Through the shift in the global climate people are becoming more inclined to apply for jobs where the company’s values are aligned with their own (Minchington, 2006, p. 29). “In today’s increasingly competitive marketplace and global skills shortages there is so much competition for good candidates, and companies with a strong employer brand will be able to pick and choose from the best candidates.” (Minchington, 2006, p. 29)
The prerequisites which make a company attractive are more than tangible aspects, such as money and benefits. It is of the utmost importance that congruence exists between a company’s image and the image an employee has in his or her mind. Employees are attracted to companies with personalities they perceive as similar to their own ideal and actual self-concepts (Nolan and Harold, 2010, p. 645). A company’s vision and strategic approach are fundamental engagement drivers, which lead to a company’s attractiveness and success in the changing marketplace. The question companies have to ask is “Why are employees attracted to us and working for us?” and “How can we discover, unearth and tap into their discretionary effort and engage their commitment?” to secure the sustainable competitive advantage, which leads to business success. Additionally, brands generate expectations, beliefs and loyalty and are built upon corporate culture and business strategy (Rosethorn, 2009, pp. 48-51). Furthermore, Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010, p. 58) stress the importance of the interrelationship and alignment between HR management and marketing function regarding the impact of each other’s action on the branding objectives, as well as accentuating an understanding of the employer brand image, which is “the set of distinctive images” manifested in the minds of the potential target group. The revised conceptual framework of employee-based brand equity by Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010, p. 69) proposes that the effectiveness of a brand signal to its future employees strongly depends on an employer brand clarity, brand investment, credibility of the brand signals and consistency of the employer brand. Research findings of Wilden, Gudergan and Lings demonstrate that investment in the brand influences the attractiveness to a future employer and strengthens the company’s brand equity (Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010, pp. 68-70).
Figure 13 illustrates the revised conceptual framework of employee-based brand equity.

![Revised Conceptual Framework for Employee-Based Brand Equity](image)

Figure 13: Revised Conceptual Framework for Employee-Based Brand Equity
(Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010, p. 69)

An organisation’s perceived image and personality is formed not only through advertising strategies but also through the quality and type of their services and products, their employees, customers and the physical aspects of their places of business (Slaughter et al., 2004, p. 85). Moroko and Uncles (2008, p. 165) accentuate the formation of a meaningful and distinctive employer brand among the company’s competitors when developing an employer brand strategy. In essence, the employer value proposition needs to be consistent and relevant as well as ensure the delivery on the employer brand promise, which affects both future and existing employees in how they perceive the company and represents the reason employees want to stay and candidates want to join the company (Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 305; Moroko and Uncles, 2008, p. 164; Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010, p. 57).
2.8. Literature Review Summary

In this chapter, the researcher shed light into the thesis background. Existing literature on employer branding and the related topics of branding, the interrelationship between the corporate brand, the internal brand and the employer brand, as well as the organisational attractiveness regarding employer branding have been analysed and discussed.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methodology Introduction

The purpose of the research methodology is to justify that the process of conducting the study is thoroughly disclosed in a methodical, scientific and comprehensive description (Clare and Hamilton, 2003, p. 13). This chapter illustrates the research approach and methods, which have been applied to the thesis in order to research the role of employer branding and the matching crisis and its impact on the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski.

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 5) defines research as something that people undertake in order to gather and analyse data in a methodical way to increase and develop their knowledge in a particular field. The research methodology is a framework, which shows the way in which the research is undertaken and involves the procedures and techniques of data collection, analysis and interpretations that researchers suggest for their studies (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 3; Creswell, 2014, p. 16).
The “Research Onion” framework, taken from Saunders at al., is used as a basis to discuss the different layers of the research process and the design of the dissertation (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108). The layers of the research onion are illustrated and discussed below.

![Research Onion Diagram]

**Figure 14: The Research Onion**  
(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2008, cited in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 138)

Therefore, the chapter outlines the research philosophy, approach and strategy which has been taken, followed by an explanation about the time horizon and the data collection instruments as well as the selected respondents. Thereafter, the methodology will discuss the research ethics and their importance as well as influence on the research. Finally, this chapter will outline the limitations to the methodology followed by an overall conclusion.
3.2. Research Philosophy

The first layer of the research onion is referred to as the research philosophy, which relates to a researcher’s worldview and influences the process by which knowledge is developed. It shapes the research methodology and the implications for the research design. Three major ways of thinking underlie the entire research process and influence the research philosophy, namely the ontology, epistemology and axiology stance. In its essence, the ontological stance represents the study of the nature of reality; the epistemological stance is concerned with the theoretical position of knowledge and the researcher’s view in relation to what constitutes appropriate knowledge, while the axiological stance considers the role of values in the research (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 107-116). In consideration of the three major stances, the ontological assumption describes the author’s stance about the way the world operates. Therefore, in regard to this study, it is believed that social reality is subjective, a social construct where multiple realities and interpretations exist (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 47).

In its essence, philosophy is “a set or a system of beliefs stemming from the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence” (Waite and Hawker, 2009, cited in Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 43) Therefore, a “right” philosophy does not exist. The approach to philosophy depends on the research question, which the researcher is attempting to answer and needs to be considered carefully (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 108-109). In the course of time, new research paradigms have emerged due to the insufficiencies of earlier paradigms (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 43). Different authors, such as Anderson (2004, p. 42) and Collis and Hussey (2014, pp. 43-45) argue that there exist two main paradigms, known as positivist and interpretivist, in contrast to Saunders et al. (2009, pp.107-116) who identified four research philosophies, known as positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism.
An interpretive approach has been applied, not only due to the author’s assumptions on how the world operates, but also due to the subjectivist view as described by Saunders et al. (2009, p. 111), which is in line with the author’s perception an interpretive approach have been applied. Furthermore, the author deems the philosophy of interpretivism as appropriate due to the complexity of the social aspect in business and management, particularly in fields where organisational behaviour, marketing and human resource management are analysed. The philosophy conducts research amongst humans and focuses on the social world and the meaning from a people’s point of view rather than upon objects and generalisations (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 115-116). Moreover, interpretivism acknowledges that people and their understanding of situations differ and recognises the existence of bias and influences of an author’s background, which leads to individual interpretation of situations. In its essence, the interpretivist research is not a “value-free” paradigm. The paradigm is characterised by subjective realities, the researcher’s part of observation and by a high complexity because of the fast-moving environment, especially the constant changes of the business world (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 17; Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 46-47). This interpretive approach is founded on the belief that the reality is socially constructed, dynamic and is linked to political and social actions (Creswell, 2014, pp. 9-10). The view is underpinned by “...the belief that social reality is not objective but highly subjective because it is shaped by our perceptions.” (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 57) Additionally, an empathetic stance is vital to this philosophical worldview and therefore requires a different approach and logic to research. This stance represents the challenge of understanding the world from other people’s perspective and point of view (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116).

Management research operates within conflicting paradigms, and capturing complex phenomena in a single measure is misleading (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 56; Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 5-6). It is not possible to develop a consensus due to the emergent nature of the field (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 5-6). Furthermore, important characteristics of interpretivism are “small samples; have a natural location; produce ‘rich’, subjective, qualitative data and a high validity”. (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 50)
The researcher adopted the interpretivism philosophy in the examination of employer branding and its influence and impact on the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski. This research approach allows the author to examine how current employees generate an added value to the company and how this influences and adds to the company’s success. Furthermore, the paradigm has been applied due to its suitability for business research as well as due to the researcher’s assumptions and understanding of the nature of the organisation and the different viewpoints of humans and their social world, which can be influenced by their cultural and social environment, personality and the standards of living rather than objects; namely the positivist approach. Positivism originates in the field of natural science and assumes that social reality is objective and singular (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 43-44).

3.3. Research Approach

Two different approaches exist when it comes to designing one’s research, namely, the deductive and inductive approach. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 12) emphasise that one must think of those approaches as tendencies, rather than a set distinction. The deductive approach is known as the dominant research approach in the natural sciences sector, where a research strategy is designed to explain the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables, which will be tested on the bases of operational hypotheses. One of the key characteristics of deduction is generalisation (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 124-125; Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 11-12). A further aspect of the deductive theory is its logical process of reasoning (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 11).

The alternative approach to conduct research is referred to as inductive approach. Induction became popular in the 20th century due to the emergence of the social sciences. Researchers were critical of the deductive approach, in regard to its strict methodology that prohibits alternative explanations, for instance, the cause-effect link, without an understanding of the human being or how they interpret their social world.
The inductive research approach is suitable for this thesis because of the ability to study a small sample of subjects for example groups, which will be more appropriate for the research topic. In addition to that, an overly structured research design may impose limitations on the results, may permit alternative explanations and ignore other relevant findings (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 56; Saunders et al., 2009 pp. 125-126; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 146).

Induction takes a more explanatory approach to research (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 490), which involved researching the role and impact of employer branding on an employee’s perception in the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, followed by a discussion based on the findings. Furthermore, the researcher was able to gain deeper knowledge on the research topic, which gave insights to the concept of employer branding and shed light on values and attitudes of the interviewees instead of analysing quantitative generalisations. The researcher also took into consideration that the concept of employer branding is a rather new concept and therefore the inductive approach enabled the researcher to reflect upon theoretical themes the data was recommending and explored the phenomenon and patterns connected with it (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 148). One of the reasons the researcher chose an inductive approach was the preference to have a higher validity and more valuable responses of a smaller number of participants rather than a larger number, as is so in the deductive approach. Furthermore, the researcher used individual semi-structured interviews, which stems from the field of qualitative methods and involves induction. Induction has also been chosen because of the approach’s tendency to flexibility and the opportunity to gain a richer perspective and understanding of the impacts and interrelationship between employer branding, employee perception, the corporate brand and the organisational attractiveness.
3.4. Research Strategies and Techniques

The research philosophy is more than just a framework; it directs and guides the way in which research should be conducted (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 73). The research question will be influenced by the researcher’s chosen philosophy and approach to research and guides the research strategy, the choices of data collection instruments, the analysis procedures and the time horizon (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 136). The research strategy builds the general orientation of this thesis and represents the view of a socially constructed reality. The strategy primarily emphasises an inductive approach to the interrelationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2008, pp. 26-27). Bryman (2008, pp.26-27) highlights that the interconnection between the qualitative and the quantitative research are not as straightforward as assumed but that they provide a general tendency.

Five suitable research strategies exist, which can be used depending on the nature of the research (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 141). Saunders et al. (2009, p.141) accentuate that there is no such a thing as superiority or inferiority to one another. The strategies are (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 141):

- Experiment
- Survey
- Case study
- Action research
- Grounded theory
- Ethnography
- Archival research

In order to gain an in-depth knowledge and a richer understanding of the research, the author chose a case study as the best suitable strategy. The case study strategy is very effective in business and management research and investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context using a variety of methods to obtain in-depth knowledge (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 304; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 179; Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 82).
Compared to survey research or experiments, case studies take a broader perspective on problems and allow the researcher to detect potential explanations and patterns. Furthermore, a case study enables the researcher with a multiple source approach, such as the semi-structured interviews along with secondary data, such as Kempinski’s CSS report and an excerpt of Kempinski’s ESS report, compensate for the weaknesses of one approach with the strength of another approach (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 305; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 179). Furthermore, the research aims not only to explore a certain phenomenon, but also to understand a certain phenomenon within a particular context and provides answers to the questions why?, what? and how? (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 82; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 146).

A case study can be divided into four types of designs: a single case study, a multiple case study, a holistic case study or an embedded case study (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 146). This thesis researches the topic of employer branding, which is rather new and therefore underpins the choice of the researcher to explore the topic in more detail. Therefore, the researcher chose a single case study design to observe and test the employer branding theory, by using the single case to define the actual case. In addition to that, an embedded case design is chosen to examine more than one unit of analysis and to add depth and breadth to the data collection, which in turn will contribute to the validity of the research (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 147; Yin, 2003, pp. 42-46). The strength of this strategy lies in the combination of using a variety of information sources and enhances the insight into the single case (Yin, 2003, pp. 45-46). In this thesis, the author used an embedded case study design where attention has also been given to sub-units. The main unit of the case study was about the employer brand Kempinski Hotels as a whole, followed by detailed investigations about the employer brand Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski. The sub-units were individual employees and the department, People Services. On the basis of five semi-structured interviews, the researcher had the great opportunity to analyse the impact of Kempinski’s strong employer brand on an employee’s perception, the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on an employee’s productivity. Five semi-structured interviews with the Director of People Services, the Assistant People Services Manager and three employees have been applied.
3.5. Research Choices and Data Collection Instruments

As indicated above, the philosophy, approach, and design the researcher deemed most suitable for data collection was the qualitative method research design. Furthermore, the researcher agrees with Davis’s (2007, p. 574) observation that “a good qualitative research has equalled, if not exceeded, quantitative research in status, relevance, and methodological rigor.”

Data can be gathered from several different sources. The terms qualitative and quantitative data are widely used in management and business research (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). The term qualitative data is predominantly for any data collection instrument, which generates or uses non-numerical data and is associated with an interpretive methodology. Compared to that, the term quantitative data is predominantly used for any data collection that generates or uses numerical data and is associated with a positivist methodology (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 143; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). Furthermore, a major challenge for the researcher, when applying an interpretive paradigm, is to use a method that will preserve the integrity of the data. Collecting background information and understanding the conducted qualitative data within the context is highly important and crucial for the thesis’s topic. This is known as contextualisation, where data about the context can relate to time and location (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 143).

The researcher used a mono-method approach, where one data collection instrument, namely semi-structured interviews, have been used to conduct the research (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 161-165). The interviews within the case study collected data through discovering opinions, reasons and participants’ experiences without using numerical data (Creswell, 2014, pp. 185-186). Interviews are a data collecting technique in which “…sample of interviewees are asked questions to find out what they think, do or feel.” (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 144) In this research the qualitative data has been collected via face-to-face semi-structured interviews in order to obtain more detailed information about a particular answer (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 144).
Furthermore, instead of observations, interviews were chosen due to a greater possibility of gaining an understanding of how the employer branding process is working. The employer branding process and its effect is an internal process which can be very problematic to observe. The researcher used a questionnaire, “an interview guide” and was able to engage and delve deeper into certain statements where it was found to be appropriate. This gave the researcher the possibility to be more flexible in the interview process regarding the research question. Furthermore, the researcher had the opportunity to collect qualitative documents such as Kempinski’s CSS report and an excerpt of the ESS report.

3.6. Time Horizon

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 155) define two time horizons to research design, namely the cross-sectional and the longitudinal, which depends on the focus of the research question. The authors Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 155) state that the cross-sectional time horizon is seen like a ‘snapshot’ in time, which studies a “particular phenomenon at a particular time” compared to the longitudinal perspective, which has the capacity to study “change and development” over time.

The cross-sectional study is very popular in academic research as the researches are mostly time constrained or limited by resources (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 155; Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 63). This research is cross-sectional due to its time constraint as well as due to the study of a particular phenomenon.
3.7. Data collection and data analysis

The collection of qualitative data is associated with the interpretivist methodology and results in findings of a high degree of validity in contrast to the collection of quantitative data, which results in findings of a high degree of reliability (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 130). The applied method used to generate primary data has been interviews, which have been applied face-to-face with the selected participants as mentioned in section 3.4. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding and explore the interviewees’ experiences, motivation, and viewpoints on the impact of a strong employer brand. Three principal interview typologies exist, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 374-375). In order to research the concept of employer branding in the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable and therefore the chosen approach due to the flexibility of this approach, compared to structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews consisted of several key questions to explore the concept of employer branding and its impact, but at the same time allowed the interviewer and the interviewees to pursue a response in more detail. The researcher had the possibility to discover further information and perspectives as the approach allowed the interviewees to follow their own thoughts, which induced further discussions. Due to active participations and new insights, as well as due to additional discussions and questions, the data was captured by audio-recording and partly by note-taking. Structured interviews as well as unstructured, or in-depth interviews, were excluded due to informality and also due to no variation concerning follow up questions and the possibility to further elaborate a response, perspectives and discussions (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 374-375; Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, pp. 246-247).

Furthermore, secondary data has been collected to analyse the concept of employer branding, branding and the interrelationship between the corporate brand, internal brand and employer brand, organisational attractiveness and service quality.
3.8. Selecting Respondents

In selecting a research population “the researcher will have to carefully select those sources that can provide the most relevant information.” (Bond, 2006, p. 41) The method of sampling used is purposive sampling, where the researcher used personal judgement in order to select the participants who enabled the researcher to answer the research question. Purposive sampling is often used in research when working with small samples, such as a case study research (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 287). On the basis of purposive sampling, the author chose the case company Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski in Vienna to analyse the research question in the light of the influence and the correlation between the concept of employer branding, the corporate brand, the employee productivity and the organisational attractiveness. Therefore, five interviews were conducted. The participants were the Director of People Services, Assistant People Services Manager, Public Relations Manager, Groups & Events Coordinator and the Chef de Bar.
3.9. Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher followed the data analysis procedure based on Cresswell’s data analysis model. The case on the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski was established to study employer branding as a context distinct from consumer and corporate branding and to conceptualise the employment experience of a firm as a product produced by the culture, policies and processes of the company.

An overview of the data analysis process in qualitative research can be seen in Figure 15.

![Figure 15 Data Analysis in Qualitative Research](Cresswell, 2014, p. 197)

The model suggests a linear, hierarchical approach to analysing qualitative data. Furthermore, it is a more an interactive approach where the various stages of the data analysis process are interrelated and not always used in the order presented (Cresswell, 2014, p. 196).
According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 546) qualitative data is identified by its full, detailed and rich character and involves collecting natural verbal or written data, which means gaining insights into how individuals make sense of their social world. Therefore, ambiguities can be recognised in the analysis.

The researcher took an inductive approach to primary research. Saunders et al. (2012, pp. 566-578) suggest various inductively based procedures to analyse qualitative data, namely a grounded theory model, template analysis, analytic induction, narrative analysis and discourse analysis. The researcher chose to use the narrative analysis as the suitable inductive based method. Furthermore, all semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed shortly after each interview. The transcripts are saved as a word document and are being retained until the end of the dissertation process. Furthermore, coding has been used in order to identify themes within the gathered data, which have been discussed and analysed in order to draw conclusions (Creswell, 2014, p. 197).
3.10. Research Ethics

Cooper and Schindler (2008, cited in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 184) define ethics as the “norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others.” Research ethics is related to the whole research process. It is concerned with the interaction between the researcher and respondents, the question formulation and the collection of data in a moral and responsible way (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 185-186).

The research has been conducted under the guidelines of the EU code of ethics for socio-economic research, known as the RESPECT code of practice for socio-economic research. Carrying out socio-economic research and balancing different elements of the RESPECT principles, which are closely interlinked may lead to tension with each other. This RESPECT code supported and guided the researcher in avoiding any misinterpretations, in ensuring that participation in the interview was under informed consent, in making sure that the research process did not involve unjustified and inappropriate material, in recognising the importance of intellectual property rights such as data and copyright, in maintaining integrity, in conducting the research in an honourable and respectful manner, in being objective over the period that the research and the data collection was pursued, although no researcher can approach a study completely without preconceptions (The Institute For Employment Studies, 2004).

In addition to the ethical code outlined above the author protects and respects the anonymity and privacy of the participants, for example, the first two interview questions are personal to a certain extent (for instance, the duration of their employment in the company, their current position and their duties).

Furthermore, the author adopted the universalist stance, which takes the viewpoint that the ethical code should never be broken (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 124).
The participants had been made aware of “the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, the opportunity to withdraw at any time, the right to confidentiality and anonymity” in advance (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 32). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews where the interviewees were given the opportunity to remain anonymous and confidential. For instance, in the case of this research, the researcher asked the interviewee’s permission to record the interview.

Finally, the researcher conducted the research in an ethical manner and kept in mind the RESPECT code of practice for socio-economic research and the sensitivity of information with respect to the company and participants. Furthermore, the interviewees were informed that the findings would be shared with them if they would like.
3.11. Limitations of the Research

In this section the author sheds light on the limitations with regard to the methodology, which leads to further explanation of the impact on the research.

One of the thesis limitations is concerned with the timeframe, which is based on the cross-sectional time horizon due to the tight deadline restriction. The cross-sectional timeframe represents a snapshot in time and does not examine and facilitate change.

Another vital point is the question concerning the matter of subjectivity of the qualitative research. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 408) state that qualitative research tends to be more impressionistic and subjective. Therefore, the results can be more easily influenced by the researcher’s personal biases and relationships with the interviewees.

A strong aim of the researcher was to be objective and therefore the researcher tried to prevent any biases in making sure that the interview questions were open-ended with the possibility that a form of a natural discussion could arise.

Furthermore, special attention has been given to the question formulation and as advised in the research literature pilot, questions were asked to evaluate their significance and quality (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 205). Through the semi-structured interview the researcher could gain a more in-depth knowledge and insights into the concept and dynamic of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski’s employer brand.

In addition to the researcher’s bias, a participant may choose to withhold information and may not reveal as much information as the interviewer would like to explore, due to the interviewer’s presence, sensitive information or not being authorised to discuss it. Another form of bias is identified as participation bias, where a bias results from the nature of the individual (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 380-381). In order to address the possible problem, the researcher focused on clear questions and asked the Interviewee to elaborate in a sensitive way if an answer was unclear or vague.
Another limitation, and often raised issue is the generalisability of findings from qualitative research, which is based on a small number of samples. Saunders et al. (2012, pp. 382-384) state that generalisability depends equally on the nature of the sample. Saunders et al. (2012, pp. 382-383) highlight that a broader theoretical significance can be established and depends on the access to the Interviewee’s knowledge and experience, which the researcher gained, and then related the findings to existing theory. Furthermore, the researcher ensured a high level of validity by asking clear and explicit questions in order to explore responses from a variety of angles.

A final limitation of this methodology represents the concept of employer branding itself, which is relatively new and complex. Therefore, few academic literatures exist. The negative impacts and discrepancies of employer branding could not be analysed due to the thesis’s time horizon.

3.12. Conclusion

The methodology plays a crucial role in justifying the process of conducting the research. The chapter illustrated the methods, which have been applied for this research. To summarise the methods, this research adopts an interpretivist philosophy, an inductive approach and follows a qualitative strategy. Semi-structured interviews have been used to collect the primary data. Furthermore, secondary data such as journals, books, reports have been collected to analyse the concept of employer branding, branding and the interrelationship between the corporate brand, internal brand and employer brand, organisational attractiveness and service quality. Throughout the research, the author was aware of the research ethics and the limitations of the research.
4. Data Analysis and Findings

This section analyses the relevant primary data collected from the semi-structure interviews at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski. Furthermore, the findings are descriptively presented and illustrated without drawing a general conclusion, as this will be undertaken in Chapter Five, which discusses the findings of five semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed the Director of People Services, the Assistant People Services Manager, the Public Relations Manager, the Group & Events Coordinator and the Chef de Bar. In the following analysis, the five interview participants have been anonymised and referred to as Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, Interviewee 3, Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 5. The first Interviewee was the Director of People Services, the second Interviewee was the Assistant People Services Manager, the third Interviewee was the Public Relations Manager, the fourth Interviewee was the Group & Events Coordinator and the fifth Interviewee was the Chef de Bar. Each interviewee has been asked ten questions whereby the questions for the People Services Management team were marginally different compared to the employees’ interview questions. The semi-structured interviews examined how employer branding impacts an employee’s perception in regard to the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity.

The following analysis is divided into two main themes, namely the people services management team and the employees’ perception of Kempinski’s employer brand and is further broken down into sub-sections.
4.1. People Services Management Team

4.1.1. Ethos of the Company

**Question 1 - How do you define the ethos of the company? Where lies the strength of Kempinski’s employer brand?**

**Interviewee 1** responded that the cornerstone of the Kempinski’s brand ethos is its DNA, which is illustrated below:

- **Passion for Luxury** – Luxury is our way of life and we believe that luxury is limited.
- **Entrepreneurial Performance** – Since the chain’s beginnings, we have been renowned for our entrepreneurial spirit.
- **People-Oriented** – People are the key to our success. “It’s all about people.”
  - Our employees deliver our guest experience; are the foundation of our brand promise and impact the customer satisfaction.
  - We are in the people business therefore our people service department is focused on the entire employee lifecycle. Finding and managing the talent is crucial to create the Kempinski experience, which has an impact on our business performance and future development. The strategy is based on a three pillar approach, namely talent development in line with Kempinski’s growth strategy, training, and people services, which creates an environment that enables Kempinski and their people to deliver their brand promise as well as excellent business results.
  - Further focus lies on individuality, and genuine interest in the employee, both work and personal wise. Strong belief that everybody has a talent.
• **Straightforwardness** – We are a hands-on company. Honest feedback, we are willing to admit that we are wrong and encourage positive feedback.

• **Creating Traditions** – We celebrate and create traditions for every single one of our guests.

Furthermore, **Interviewee 1** supplements that “…our employees communicate a consistent and valid Kempinski DNA at all times.” The hotel is constantly searching for employees who can identify themselves with their corporate values and thrive best in this culture. The company’s focus in attracting, recruiting and employing people lies in flexibility, creativity and people who are confident and want to explore their own limits.

**Interviewee 2** supports the opinion of **Interviewee 1** and additionally places a great emphasis on “individuality” and empowerment of people through training. Kempinski is known for its uniqueness, not only for their unique concept of hotels but also for their focus on employees’ individuality. The company also preserves the individuality of each hotel. With regard to the importance of “individuality”, the company is strongly promoting “individuality” amongst their employees.

Furthermore, **Interviewee 2** highlights that the company is doing a lot for their employees. It starts with an open door policy in order to encourage employees to come to the office when they feel a need to ask questions, address problems, concerns or suggestions. The purpose of this policy is to create and establish an environment of mutual trust, respect, collaboration and high performance.

Furthermore, there are a great variety of career planning opportunities, diverse employee benefits and rewards, team building events due to regular gatherings and social activities with their colleagues (for instance, monthly birthday parties, training for the company run, soccer events for instance the Hotel Career soccer cup, divers tastings, poker club, a summer barbecue and many more activities) influence employees’ perceptions and coin their loyalty, engagement and commitment in regard to the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski.
4.1.2. Employer Brand Management and Employer Value Proposition

Question 2 - What is your perception of the hotel’s current employer brand? Has the Kempinski Hotel chain a consistent and clear EB strategy?

**Interviewee 1** states that her perception of the hotel’s and Kempinski’s current employer brand is identical. The employer brand is based on the Kempinski DNA, which is outlined in question 1. Furthermore, **Interviewee 1** states that Kempinski is proud of entering new markets, which shows a promise on a global level and gives opportunities to employees to work abroad and gain new experiences and knowledge. This was the case with China, the Middle East and Russia, where Kempinski was among the very first international luxury hotel groups to open hotels. The company is highly selective when choosing a market and makes sure that it is the right fit. Under no circumstances want they grew to fast because “luxury is limited”. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to have the right employees in place. The company hires candidates that share Kempinski’s DNA, the desire to provide customers with excellent and individual tailor-made service and constantly strive to understand our guests, which in turn provides the company with a sustainable competitive edge.

**Interviewee 2** agreed with **Interviewee 1** and added that the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski has a clear and consistent employer brand strategy based on its DNA and has several practices and policies to reinforce which ensure consistency and continuity throughout the chain.
Both Interviewees 1 and 2 believe that through the company’s effective management of the employer value proposition not only the hotel, but also the whole chain, benefits from an increase in their talent pool and employee engagement, commitment and loyalty. Furthermore, Interviewee 2 highlights that they do not have difficulties in finding talented people and said that for this year’s summer internship positions 658 candidates applied. This shows a very strong interest in our company and at the same time demonstrates that the company’s branding, external as well as internal communication is consistent, relevant, true and valuable to their target talent group and existing employees. Additionally, Interviewee 2 states that the vitality of the company’s employer brand depends on their employment experience. Each step of the employee experience cycle has a significant impact on the overall employee experience and for the company it is vital to create a consistent and positive employee experience. The company is constantly striving to manage, audit, further develop and refine employees’ touch points during an employees’ working life at Kempinski and is highly aware that these employee experiences directly impact the interaction within and outside the company. Kempinski’s employee experience cycle consists of several major touch points, which are as follows “Let’s not Forget the Everyday”, “Empower through Training”, “Take the Time to Talk Together”, “Attract and Select the Best Talents”, “What’s the Next Step – Promotion, Transformation, Task Force, Retirement, Resignation, Dismissal”, and many more.
Kempinski’s employee experience cycle is illustrated below.

Figure 16: The Employee Experience Cycle
(Gosemann et al., no date)
Question 9 - What is the employer value proposition (EVP)? How distinctive is the employer brand and EVP’s in order to support an employee’s productivity and the corporate brand?

**Interviewee 1** states that the notion “It’s all about people” builds the heart of Kempinski’s employer value proposition and is aligned with the DNA. The company is highly employee-centric oriented and employees are getting all the support, development and training that they need in order to thrive and perform at their best.

**Interviewee 2** replied that the Kempinski’s DNA is the basis of the employer value proposition, which is lived throughout the company. The DNA stays in the mind of employees also through “Refreshers Sessions”, which take place once a year. Besides these sessions, the People Services Department is always in search of new stories, based on its DNA to engage employees. For example, on their Facebook page, which is named K-Talk (Kempinski Talk), employees’ can follow and befriend themselves with Theophil Hansen. Posts concerning events, tastings, gatherings, and DNA stories of employees can be viewed. “I think this contributes to an employee’s productivity because he or she is more informed and engaged.”
4.1.3. Organisational Attractiveness and Corporate Reputation in Relation to Kempinski’s Employer Brand

**Question 3 - How do you measure the corporate reputation in regard to the employer brand?**

**Interviewee 1 and 2** outlined the company’s measurement of the corporate reputation in regard to the employer brand. The hotel uses several tools, which are listed as follows:

**CSS – Customer Satisfaction Survey** (illustrated in appendix 8.5)
The survey focuses on measuring customers’ perception of how well the company delivers their brand promise and critical success factors. It includes overall impressions, for instance overall experience, quality of service and value for money, likelihood to return and recommend, hotel design, arrival, guest room, guest bathroom, Kempinski breakfast, Spa, departure, for instance warmth of farewell, efficiency of check-out process and luggage services as well as accuracy of invoice, and restaurant iPad.

**ESS – Employee Satisfaction Survey**
The survey is apart from the annual TTTT meetings (Time to Talk Together) the most important tool for the company to measure the corporate reputation in relation to the employer brand. Due to internal reasons only an overview of the ESS can be seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working conditions</th>
<th>Fairly distributed rewards</th>
<th>Appropriate in-house training</th>
<th>Supervisor’s availability</th>
<th>Supervisor’s recognition</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Figure 17: ESS – Overview of the Employee Satisfaction Survey**
(Kempinski, 2015)
TTTT Talks (Time to Talk Together) are annual meetings where the employee and the department head meet in a private environment and evaluate an employee’s performance as well as discuss and decide their next career step together. The TTTT Talk is aimed to gain an honest feedback in order to satisfy both the needs of the employee and the company. The Director of People Services, as well as the Assistant Manager of People Services, assess this reports in order to ensure the best possible outcome in terms of trainings and needs of employees.

Other tools are travel websites, which provide information and reviews of travel-related contents, for example, TripAdvisor and HolidayCheck.

Furthermore, the hotel’s open door policy, regular feedback meetings, the monthly General Manager Breakfast, where the General Manager and the department heads are meet and discuss business related issues and news. Another important tool is the exit interview. If an employee leaves the company, this final meeting is very insightful to gain important information.

In addition to the surveys, the TTTT Talks, the web-based platforms, the meetings and the General Manager Breakfast, the Director of People Services, the Assistant People Services Manager as well as the General Manager speak regularly to their employees to make sure to get a good feeling of their employees’ well-being and satisfaction, which results in customer satisfaction and furthermore, contributes to the success of the business.
Question 4 - What impact does your employer brand have on the organisational attractiveness?

Interviewee 1 states that the company’s employer brand has a huge impact on the organisational attractiveness. The hotel employs potential employees with the same values the company stands for. Interviewee 1 stresses that good grades are not the company’s first priority because the chain has the management know-how to train their employees. The most important characteristics of employees are their attitudes and values. The company places a great emphasis on emotional competence and passion and believe that these genuine employees’ attitudes will be passed onto our guests. Empowering employees and giving them the opportunity to enhance their performance gives the company the chance to see their employees grow, which is genuinely rewarding.

Furthermore, Interviewee 1 points out that the hotel and its departments are organised like a “gear wheel”; one cannot work without affecting the other. The Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski’s good team spirit contributes to the organisational attractiveness and reputation of the company. Our employees are happy to recommend the hotel to family members and friends, which is not only a sign of trust and loyalty, but also that they are pleased and content with their jobs.

Both Interviewees 1 and 2 accentuate the open door policy to encourage open communication and transparency with their employees, which feeds into the attractiveness of the hotel as an employer.
Moreover, **Interviewee 1** underlines the hotel's strong management and leadership ability to see the whole picture and further explains their cycle:

- The management and leadership team sees the whole picture plus receiving diverse stakeholder feedback (employees, guests, suppliers etc...), leading to positive outcomes and feeds into constructive organisational feedback, which strengthens not only the employer brand but leads to better employee performances as well as results in organisational attractiveness and further strengthens the reputation as a good employer to potential talented applicants.

**Interviewee 2** highlights another reason for the hotel's reputation as a great employer, namely successful participation in numerous graduate or school fairs, which revealed a positive feedback and interest from our target talent market. Guided tours through the hotel are in great demand, where everything that participants wants to know about working at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, as well as about Kempinski’s culture, value and strategic focus is explained. We inform them where particular attention is paid, about employees’ training opportunities and programmes, etc...

Another priority of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski lies in employee competitions, for instance the Young Hotelier Award 2015, where Mr. Santin’s project won the first prize. The Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski shows the market that they are investing in their talent, which also results in a high organisational attractiveness and shows the importance of progressing their employees’ abilities and skills.

Both **Interviewees 1 and 2** mentioned their talent training management and development, especially cross exposure, which is a good tool for employees to test their skills, abilities and knowledge for two weeks in a different department. The interviews under the sub-section 4.1.3 illustrate that all the above outlined by the interviewees contributes to the corporate reputation and positively influences the organisational attractiveness of the hotel's strong employer brand, which leads to improved job applications and the attraction of a highly potential talent pool from which to recruit.
4.1.4. The Impact of the Employer Brand on the Employee’s Behaviour and Productivity

Question 5 - To what extent impacts the employer brand and its activities the behaviour of the employees?

Interviewee 1 highlights the importance of giving employees’ opportunities to challenge themselves, in the process broaden their horizons as well as encouraging employees by transferring and sharing responsibilities, which leads to highly motivated employees. The Interviewee stresses the importance of the right balance for every single employee in order not to frustrate or demotivate him or her. The hotel places great emphasis on empowerment and trust. This feeling of being trusted and valued is passed from the employee on to customers, which leads to satisfaction on both sides and drives the success of the company.

Furthermore, it is highly important that employees know that they are the hotel’s biggest asset and the heart of the company. Every single employee is responsible for the company’s success and supports the dynamic, inspiring and innovative development and culture of the hotel.

The company supports each employee’s personality and is pleased with their contribution, sharing of knowledge and information and their expertise.

Interviewee 2 agrees with the responses mentioned above and highlights the encouragement of the team spirit in the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, which contributes to a thriving culture and positive hands-on behaviour.
Question 6 - Through establishing the employer brand could you notice an improvement in the recruitment outcome?

Interviewee 1 said “Yes, absolutely.” The hotel has no problem with attracting and recruiting skilled and talented people due to its renowned employer brand and the established employees’ activities and programmes. The Interviewee also mentioned that through their good networking and relationships with other companies in the industry, they discussed and noticed a decline in skilled, qualified and talented labour especially in the tourism sector where a good work-life balance is not given.

Furthermore, the Interviewee 1 added that through their chain, employee exchanges and transfers make recruitment from within the company fairly easy. A significant aspect and highly attractive for employees is the chain’s international as well as national exchanges, either in the same field of work or in different departments. The exchanges are known as Talent Transfer Calls (TTC) and take place quarterly where the employee receives the opportunity of a tailored offer in accordance with his preference. Interviewee 1 and 2 agree that these TTC represent an outstanding possibility for an employee’s growth.

Furthermore, Kempinski launched the Kempinkis Career Days in Munich, which is an extraordinary recruiting and networking platform and was a huge success. All General Manager travel to these Career Days once a year, as well as many hotel schools in Europe and individuals interested in joining Kempinski attend these career days, which is where most of the hiring decisions for international positions are made. It is a great opportunity for the company to get a feel for the target market as well as for the potential talent pool with prospective candidates are getting the chance to speak directly to the General Managers and their team.
Question 7 – Could you notice an improvement in the employee productivity through the influence of the company’s strong employer brand?

Interviewee 1 answered with a clear “Yes”.

Furthermore, the Interviewee 1 states that the most important tool for the hotel to assess employee productivity is through the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS). The direct feedback from our guest shows that our employees are highly skilled which makes the hotel very proud to be surrounded by amazing people who share the same passion.

The survey illustrates that Kempinski’s employees are living their DNA which leads to certain behaviours and attitudes, namely creating special moments for our guests, taking the initiative, being flexible and open to change, being ambassadors of the local culture, being oneself, being unique, and constantly trying to develop one’s skills.

Interviewee 1 and 2 highlight that the above mentioned does not mean that the company never faces problems with their employees. We are all human beings and every day is different but through direct communication and the open door policy arising conflicts and quickly tracked down and eliminated as fast as possible.

Question 8 - How is employee performance respectively productivity evaluated? What appraisal techniques do you use?

Interviewee 1 and 2 state that the hotel’s evaluation and measurement of an employee’s productivity is through their ESS (Employee Satisfaction Survey), their TTTT Talks (Time to Talk Together) and regular feedback meetings.

Furthermore, Interviewee 1 highlights that the company do not use a 360° degree appraisal approach unless it is for a higher position.
The Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski has no problem with talent shortages due to its strong external and internal employer brand but has noticed as well the decline in skilled future employees.

4.1.5. Prevention of Inconsistency and Breach of the Promise Made to Employees

Question 10 - Kempinski has a very strong employer brand – how do you prevent inconsistency between the employer brand image and the corporate brand image?

Interviewee 1 and 2 state that a critical aspect of a strong employer brand is the consistency between the corporate brand and the external as well as internal employer brand. Kempinski places great importance on the company’s DNA, which is interwoven with their culture and values. An inconsistency could arise if the hotel’s internal employer brand differed from the company’s overall marketed employer brand, which is not given at the moment.

Question 11 - Have you ever experienced a breach of promises made in the employer brand message? If yes, what are the consequences of perceived breaches on an employee’s productivity?

Interviewee 1 and 2 replied that with regard to an employee’s expectation of promotions, where the hotel sees the employee’s skill and knowledge differently as oneself. But if breaches of promises made in the employer brand message arose it would be addressed openly in order to find a solution.
4.2. Employees Perception on Kempinski’s Employer Brand

4.2.1. Association with the Brand Kempinski and the Perception of the Company’s Employer Brand

Question 1 & 2 - What comes to your mind when you think of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski? What are the things you associate with the brand?

When Interviewee 3 thinks about Kempinski, “individuality” at its highest level comes to mind. For instance, the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski can look back to a great history combined with contemporary design, architecture and luxurious style. The hotel is modern and glamorous, innovative and timeless but at the same time relaxed and unconventional. Another word, which the Interviewee uses to describe Kempinski is “luxury”. Within the 5* hotel segment, Kempinski stands out against all others in the industry due to its incredible high standard, service quality and innovative gastronomic concepts.

Furthermore Interviewee 3 highlights the chain’s drive for new inspiring trends as well as their strong focus on talent development.

Interviewee 4 uses the words “European elegance, luxury, tradition but also incredible personality”. The Interviewee accentuates the benefits and advantages of the chain; every hotel has its own character and is special in its own rights. None looks alike compared to the Hilton or Marriott.

Interviewee 5 states, “For me personally – Kempinski is passion for luxury and individuality; luxury is limited, tradition meets modernity.” Furthermore, it is luxury combined with a modern and glamorous design which is yet relaxed and unconventional. The Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski opened two years ago and enjoys a very good reputation, not only due to its atmosphere but also due to its incredibly strong team.
Question 3 - What is your perception of the company’s current employer brand? What expectations do the company’s brand form, based on your own professional experience and observations?

**Interviewee 3** highlights “the development of talented people” for instance, Talent Transfer Calls (TTC) or cross trainings, and additionally, the approachability of managers in the headquarter who offer guidance and advices at all times. Other words which came to Interviewee’s 3 mind when thinking about her professional experiences with the hotel, were “be creative, innovative and do things differently”. The managers feel trust in their employees’ ability to make the right decision.

**Interviewee 4** agrees with the answers of **Interviewee 3 and 5**.

**Interviewee 5** gives one example and states that he had the best experiences based on the slogan “We develop talented people”. Employees can access a variety of training and development for instance a “Latte Art” course or cross training.

Question 8 - How likely are you to recommend the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski to a colleague or a friend?

**Interviewee 3** “It depends on the position and friend because not every person is made for the industry. In regard to the employer Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, I can highly recommend the company.”

**Interviewee 4** “I recently recommended the hotel to a friend.”

**Interviewee 5** “Very”
Question 9 - What organisational activities and programmes is the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski using to brand and distinguish the company as a great “employer of choice”?

All three interviewees agreed that employees have a great variety of opportunities and choices concerning activities and training to choose from. For instance:

- Diverse training opportunities, for instance cross training.
- Task Force is a programme where people work on a special project, for instance, an opening of a new hotel.
- TTTTs (Time to Talk Together) where supervisors and department heads have a one on one meeting with employees to assess their needs.
- TTC (Talent Transfer Calls) and Transfer Lists
- One-to-One meetings every month
- Young Talent Days, mostly for apprentices

4.2.2. The Main Reason to Work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, Brand Image and Job requirements

Question 4 - Why do you want to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski? What is the reason that you chose your current job at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

Interviewee 3: “It was the atmosphere of the hotel. When I first walked into the lobby I wanted to work for this hotel, right then and there. I had an instant WOW effect.”

Interviewee 4 was presented with the opportunity to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski.
Interviewee 5: “At first it was my goal to work only in the 5* hotel sector but then I saw the hotel for the first time and the atmosphere, the buzz, inspired me. I wanted to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski – tradition and modernity is a great concept combined with a great team.” Furthermore, activities and a variety of programmes are used by the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski to brand and distinguish the company as a great “employer of choice”.

Question 6 - Did your brand image of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski match your job profile?

Interviewee 3: “Yes, you have to keep in mind that we are working in the tourism industry, which means there is a strong element of flexibility involved.” “It is not a suitable industry for everyone.”

Interviewee 4 stated that the job is more extensive than previously thought; this can be interpreted in both ways.

Interviewee 5: “Yes but in the tourism industry working hours fluctuate due to the service element.”

Question 7 - What do you find most attractive/least attractive about the company?

Most attractive:

- Interviewee 3 mentioned talent development, the image and the international job opportunities.
- Interviewee 4 finds the dynamic corporate culture, the Kempinski DNA, the people focus and the hotel as well as the chain’s emphasis on quality and European luxury, not on quantity, very special. The hotel is very selective and is not taking any business.
- Interviewee 5 lists training, the team spirit and the Kempinski DNA as the most attractive in regard to the company.
Less attractive:

- **Interviewee 3** states that the internal corporate communication compared to other industry sectors is developable as well as the intranet. There is no one responsible for the intranet; each hotel uploads their own data and information.

- **Interviewee 4 and 5** could not think of a less attractive thing.

4.2.3. The Influence and Effect of the Employer Brand on an Employee’s Performance and Decision-Making

**Question 5** - In what way does the employer brand affect your performance and decision-making?

**Interviewee 3** stated that the employer brand influences the Interviewee due to their standards, which they have to uphold and on the other side due the company’s corporate identity, which has to be shared in her field of work. Team spirit and their solidarity are highly important.

**Interviewee 4**: “The employer brand affects the Interviewee’s performance all the time due to the standards as well as due to the high level of service quality and therefore I try to to deliver the best possible service.” The Interviewee further elaborates that she is also affected by their values and great team spirit of the company.

**Interviewee 5**: “I am trying to offer and deliver the best possible service not only for Kempinski but also for me because I have the same values as the hotel.” “I am proud to be a member of the Hotel Palais Hansen’s team and I represent it with utmost honor.”
Question 10 - How important are the following factors in making your decision to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

In the last part of the employee questionnaire an open question was asked about the most important factors in making the decision to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski. The findings illustrate that the “fit” with the company’s corporate culture (vision, mission, values and promises), the reputation of the company followed by career opportunities and the strong management and leadership culture of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski were the most important and attractive factors in making the decision to work for the hotel. Furthermore, this highlights the company’s strong employer brand and illustrates employees’ identification with the company’s brand image and promises. Moreover, the findings represent the successful alignment of the employer brand with the corporate strategy, people services management, communication and the brand ethos, which results in the perception of the company as an attractive employer.
The table below illustrates the statements of the interviewees 3, 4, and 5 in regard to their decision to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging workload</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training and development opportunities available</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A “fit” with the company’s vision, mission, values and promises</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of family, friends, or colleagues about the company</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the company</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of the company</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wage level</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong management and leadership culture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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(1-5; 1 = is not important at all, 5 = extremely important)

Table 1: Important factors in making the decision to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski
5. Discussion

On the basis of the research findings, which have been presented in the previous section, this section discusses the findings in comparison to the secondary research to deepen the understanding of the impact of a strong employer brand on an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity. The following section assesses the findings in accordance with contemporary scientific literature within the field to develop and revise the understanding of how employer branding impacts on an employee’s perception. Therefore both the manager’s perceptions as well as the employee’s perception were examined.

5.1. Ethos of the Company

“...our employees' live and communicate a consistent and valid Kempinski DNA at all times.“

All interviewees approve of and name the Kempinski DNA with regard to the brand ethos and the strength of Kempinski’s employer brand. This illustrates a deep alignment with the corporate culture and represents a strong link between the corporate brand and the employer brand, which contributes to the sustainable competitive advantage of the company (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp. 160-161). Employees’ are “living the brand”, which not only makes the company attractive to the future talent pool but also positively influences customers’ responses (Gaddam, 2008, p. 46; Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619; Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 134). Furthermore, this underpins Clifton’s perspective (2009, p. 246) that a well-aligned brand has an extraordinary economic value, which in turns contributes to the sustainable wealth of a company.
Additionally, the integration and interrelationship of both the employer and the employee brand, which play a vital role in attracting and recruiting potential employees and retaining and engaging the current ones, as well as coin the customer experience process demonstrates Kempinski’s well aligned brand promise and internal, as well as external, values (Gaddam, 2008, p. 48; Brodie, Glynn and Little, 2006, p. 372).

Furthermore, the company recognised that skilled and experienced employees are their most important asset, in regard to the promise of delivering and of product development process, through their personal interactions with customers and therefore, represent the key element of building a company’s corporate brand, which derives from understanding the company’s culture and the corporate identity (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010, p. 402; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 506-507). Employees are immersed in the brand experience, which represents the alignment of the internal culture and the external brand promise (Moroko and Uncles, 2008, pp. 160-161). The company’s culture, values and communication, in essence the Kempinski DNA, reinforce the strategic alignment, which plays a vital role in the integration process (LePla, Davis and Parker, 2003, pp. 11-16). This can be seen in the employees’ perception under sub-section 4.2, where interviewees 3,4 and 5’s responses to the association with the brand and the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski identify themselves with the organisational culture and values, which increases the organisational performance, customer satisfaction and creates a sustainable competitive advantage. All three interviewees highlight “individuality”, “passion for luxury”, “talent management and development” – hence “people oriented”, “tradition but also personality”.

5.2. Employer Brand Management and Employer Value Proposition

The employer brand consists of a set of intangible attributes and qualities “that make an organization distinctive, promise a particular kind of employment experience and appeal to people who will thrive and perform their best in its culture.” (Walker, 2007, cited in Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 248)

Interviewee 1 and 2 are in agreement and respond that the chain has a clear and consistent employer brand based on the Kempinski DNA, which represents the employer value proposition. The Kempinski DNA articulates the unique promise and appeal of why individual and talented people want to work for them. The DNA combines what is significant to the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski and the chain with what is important to its employees.

Kempinski’s employer value proposition is underpinned by Minchington’s view (2006, p. 116) that an effective employer brand starts at the heart of the company by defining a unique employer value proposition to future and current employees as “a great place to work”. Furthermore, the company places a great emphasis on ensuring that they keep the promises they make to employees at all times. Moroko and Uncles refer (2008, pp. 165-166) to it as the psychological contract between an employer and an employee.

Kempinski’s unique and distinctive value proposition is illustrated below:

- **Passion for Luxury** – Luxury is our way of life and we believe that luxury is limited.
- **Entrepreneurial Performance** – Since the chain’s beginnings, we have been renowned for our entrepreneurial spirit.
• **People-Oriented** – People are the key to our success. “It’s all about people.”
  o Our employees deliver our guest experience; are the foundation of our brand promise, and impact the customer satisfaction.
  o We are in the people business therefore our People Services Department is focused on the entire employee lifecycle. Finding and managing the talent is crucial to create the Kempinski experience, which has an impact on our business performance and future development. The strategy is based on a three pillar approach, namely talent development in line with Kempinski’s growth strategy, training and people services, which creates an environment that enables Kempinski and their people to deliver their brand promise as well as excellent business results.
  o Further focus lies on individuality and genuine interest in the employee both work and personal wise. Strong belief that everybody has a talent.

• **Straightforwardness** – We are a hands-on company. Honest feedback, we are willing to admit that we are wrong and encourage positive feedback.

• **Creating Traditions** – We celebrate and create traditions for every single one of our guests.

The company places a great focus on their employees and the effective management of the employer value proposition, which leads to the perception of, not only the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, but also the chain, Kempinski as an attractive employer who then benefit from an increase in their talent pool and employee engagement. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 added, “The company is highly selective when choosing a market and makes sure that the employee is the right fit. Under no circumstances do they want to grow too fast because “luxury is limited”. Therefore it is of utmost importance to have the right employees’. The company recruits employees that share the same value – the Kempinski DNA, tailor-made service and constantly strive to understand our guests, which gives the company a sustainable competitive edge.”
The company is able to create an emotional bond with its employees due to its true identity, which integrates the key behavioural and motivational traits of the potential talent target market, which the company wants to attract as well as that of their existing employees (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 895; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-503; Ambler and Barrow, 1996, pp. 195-200; Mosley, 2014, p. 12; Botha, Bussin and De Swardt, 2011, p. 300). Furthermore, this statement underpins the Social Identity Approach to Organisational Identification, which represents how an attractive employer brand can influence an individual’s behaviour and identity within its own self-concept, and further influences an employee’s engagement (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 896-897).

Interviewee 2 highlights that they do not have difficulties in finding talented people and said that “for this year’s summer internship positions, 658 candidates applied. This shows a very strong interest in our company and at the same time demonstrates that the company’s branding, external as well as internal, communication is consistent, relevant and true to their target talent group.”

Furthermore, Kempinski Hotels distinguish themselves from their competitors through their unique offering, their DNA. This highlights the unique aspects of the employment offering and differentiates a company’s characteristics from its competitors (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-502). The vitality of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski’s employer brand depends on the employment experience, which is deeply aligned with the core values. The leadership and management team, People Services Management organise ritualised processes such as open door policy, gatherings, Refresher Sessions and Fun Runs, as well as HR processes, and they communicate this through their immediate supervisor/line managers. This mirrors Mosley’s employer brand experience framework where every employee’s touch-point is aligned with the brand ethos (Mosley, 2007, pp. 131-132). Kempinski’s employer brand attracts the right kind of people due to their employer brand management, which ensures that every employee’s touch point, operational and interpersonal-wise is interwoven and deeply embedded in the brand ethos. The employer value proposition is reinforced by their culture and values, ranging from the front-line employees to the management team.
The reinforcement of the company’s employer brand is also shown by the employees’ interviews: Interviewee 3 highlights the chain’s drive for new inspiring trends as well as their strong focus on talent development, for instance Talent Transfer Calls (TTC) or cross trainings. Added to this is the approachability of their management and leadership team who offer guidance and advices at all times. Other words which came to Interviewee’s 3 mind when thinking about her professional experience with the hotel, were “openness in the light of creativity, innovativeness and the company’s trust in their employees’ ability to make the right decision” all of which leads to empowerment.

Interviewee 5 emphasised the promise “We develop talented people” and states that he has made the best personal and professional decision in working for the company and further elaborates that he has had very good experiences based on that promise. Employees are valued and have the possibility to access a variety of training and development courses, for example, a “Latte Art” course or cross training.

All three interviewees agreed that employees have a great variety of opportunities concerning activities and trainings to choose from and the promises Kempinski, the Hotel Palais Hansen or the chain, are making are not meaningless promises. This directly contributes to employees’ satisfaction, commitment, attraction and retention, which in turn lead to the profitability of the company (Katoen and Macioschek, 2007, cited in Gaddam, 2008, p. 47; Mosley, 2007, p. 126).

Some training and development opportunities are listed below:

- Diverse training opportunities, for example, cross training
- Task Force is a programme where people work on a special project, for instance, an opening of a new hotel.
- TTTTs (Time To Talk Together) where supervisors and department heads have a one on one meeting with employees to assess their needs.
- TTC (Talent Transfer Calls) and Transfer Lists
- One-to-One meetings every month
- Young Talent Days mostly for apprentices
5.3. Organisational Attractiveness and Corporate Reputation in Relation to Kempinski’s Employer Brand

Organisational attractiveness in regard to the employer brand focuses mainly on attracting and retaining the best talent to create a sustainable competitive advantage and enhance the company’s corporate brand through their talented and skilled workforce (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, pp. 501-504; Minchington, 2006, pp. 98-99). Furthermore, Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005, p. 902) complement those perspectives and argue that individuals are not solely focused on the employer condition when it comes to organisational attractiveness. Candidates are attracted to organisations with a thriving environment where employees get the opportunity to grow (Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005, p. 902). In addition, the culture and values of a company play a vital role and influence the employer brand on a fundamental level. The organisational culture represents the identity of a company and is closely interrelated with the employer brand (Gaddam, 2008, p. 48). Furthermore, Mosley (2014, pp. 81-90) points out that the external reputation of a company plays a vital role in the external perception of the company and represents an important characteristic of the employer brand equity. Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 188) add that employer brand equity is an intangible asset in the minds of current and potential employees, which has been developed through good HR and marketing practices and influences employees’ loyalty. Furthermore, the authors state that this in turn should lead to an improvement in employee motivation and further on to an improved performance, which will impact customer relationships and strengthen the overall brand equity. Their assumption represents a virtuous circle and implicates that companies with strong customer relationships and brand equity tend to show positive employee relationships and successful long-term performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.188). Therefore, the importance of culture and alignment of both the employer brand and the employee brand play a vital role and has a huge impact on the corporate reputation (Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619).
Interviewee 1 states that the company’s employer brand has a huge impact on the organisational attractiveness. The hotel employs potential employees with the same values the company stands for and further mentions emotional competence and passion as vital employee attitudes. Empowering employees and giving them the opportunity to enhance their performance gives the company the chance to see their employees grow, which is genuinely rewarding and contributes to the organisational attractiveness and the corporate reputation. This relates to Mosley’s, Gaddam’s and Martin, Gollan and Grigg statements, which have been discussed above (Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011, p. 3619; Gaddam, 2008, p. 48; Mosley, 2014, pp. 81-90).

Interviewee 1 sees the company’s organisational attractiveness in the hotel’s strong management and leadership ability, which is focused on innovation and trends. Another contributor to the company’s positive external reputation as an employer stems from its team spirit and the company’s encouraging environmental condition. Interviewee 1 points out that the hotel and its departments are organised like a “gear wheel” and one cannot work without affecting the other. Another attractive point to her is their open door policy and their talent management and development strategies.

Both Interviewees 1 and 2 emphasise the open door policy to encourage open communication and transparency with their employees, which feeds into the attractiveness of the hotel as a great and trustworthiness employer.

Interviewee 2 highlights another reason for the hotel’s reputation as a great employer, namely, successful participation in numerous graduate or school fairs, which reveals a positive feedback and interest from their target talent market. Furthermore, “Guided tours through the hotel are in great demand, where we explain and cover everything that participants wants to know about working at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, as well as about Kempinski’s culture, value and strategic focus. We inform them about to what we pay particular attention, about employees’ training opportunities and programmes.”
Another priority of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski lies in employee competitions, for instance, the Young Hotelier Award 2015, where Mr. Santin’s project won the first prize. Added to that, both Interviewees 1 and 2 mentioned their talent training management and development strategies, especially cross exposure, which represents an excellent tool for employees to test their skills, abilities and knowledge for two weeks in a different department. Talent development is a key strategic focus for Kempinski, as its success relies on their worldwide team of professional, well-trained and dedicated employees. It is their people who make the difference and provide a genuinely caring service to their guests.

The Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski’s position in the Austrian Market is regarded as an attractive employer and places great importance in showing the market that they are investing in their talent, which results in a high organisational attractiveness and shows the importance of progressing their employees’ abilities and skills. The company and its management team try hard to fulfil the expectations of their employees as well as creating satisfying working conditions to support their professional development. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, pp. 504-509) a potential employee who identifies oneself with the image of the company is more likely to choose to apply for a position. Employer branding creates two main assets, namely, the brand association and the brand loyalty. The employer brand association influences the employer brand image, which, in turn affects the employer attractiveness to potential employees, if the company possesses the desired employee related attributes (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p. 505).

In regard to the organisational attractiveness Interviewee 3 highlighted the company’s focus on talent development and the international job opportunities. Interviewees 4 and 5 added the dynamic corporate culture, the Kempinski DNA, people focus and the chain’s focus on quality. This underpins Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005, p. 902) perspective on the interrelationship between the employer condition and the environmental condition in regard to an organisation’s attractiveness.
Interviewee 3 sees room for improvement in the internal corporate communication of the hotel, compared to other industry sectors, as well as the company’s intranet platform. A single responsible person concerned with maintenance of the intranet does not exist; each hotel uploads their own data and information.

### 5.4. Employee’s Perception of the Employer Brand

**Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski**

The interviews illustrated that the employees’ perception of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski’s image is shaped by their professional and personal experiences and this determines employees’ behaviour and attitudes. The company audits its employer image through their ESS (Employee Satisfaction Survey) in order to observe if the image is congruent with those of its employees and to ensure a thriving, supportive and satisfying working culture as well as to ensure the attraction of prospective candidates. The research shows that there is a direct relationship between employer branding, organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and an employee’s productivity. Individuals are more attracted to companies with similar values and traits to their own personality (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003, p. 76). The company’s employer value proposition, which is built upon the Kempinski DNA, creates a high level of identification for employees who are working in the hotel and further leads to an increase in their engagement, satisfaction and productivity. Furthermore, Mosley (2007, p. 132) accentuates that the role of employees in creating a strong employer brand is highly important because they are the individuals who are delivering a distinctive customer brand experience, which is based on interpersonal interactions, as well as communicating the employer brand to the market, which has a major impact on the organisation attractiveness. Furthermore, the leadership team of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski is highly aware of the fact that their behaviour and belief in the brand underpins the culture and values of the company and influences employees (Mosley, 2007, p. 129). The company recognises that their most important assets are their future and current employees. This is underpinned by table 1, which illustrates the most important factors in the decision to work for the company and underlines the company’s successful employer brand management.
5.5. Limitations of the Research

To examine how the employer brand impacts an employee’s perception in regard to the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity, an interpretive approach, and subsequently, qualitative methods were applied. These methods were demonstrated to be suitable in gathering the needed information to answer the research question. In addition, the thesis applied a single case study, which provided the researcher with a deeper examination of the problem area. However, the main critique of applying the qualitative research design lies within its tendency to subjectivity and thereby leads to an inability to replicate the study in similar contexts.

Furthermore, the limitations in regard to the research as mentioned earlier results due to the nature of the methodology used in this dissertation (outlined in section 3.4 ‘Limitations of Methodology’) and somewhat due to the execution of it. These are: the cross-sectional timeframe of the study, which results in the collection of data at only one point in time, the use of semi-structured interviews, which were restricted by the sample size as opposed to other data collecting methods and only allowed a certain number of participants as well as interview questions. Furthermore, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews in a single company, the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, and thereby, due to the sparse number of participants, a generalisation of the research results into different fields is not advisable. In regard to generalising employer brand management, it has to be said that no ideal strategy and template exist for an employer brand. An employer brand and its value proposition have to be shaped to tailor the resources and objectives of an organisation. However, it is recommended that further researches be conducted with the use of a more representative sample size in order to make generalisations and therefore gain more external validity by using probability samples of wider populations. Nevertheless, due to the strong employer brand and its influence underpinned by diverse authors, it is assumed that the overall outcome regarding the case company Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski would have been the same if a maximum size of samples had been reached. The Hotel Palais Hansen Keminski is constantly striving to improve their employer brand by continuously measuring performance, adjusting activities and strategies.
This internal process begins with understanding their distinctive and unique employer qualities and offerings, and continues with sustaining and promoting it as vibrant, attractive and living entity.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The complex context of today’s labour market led to an increased organisational focus on unique and distinctive strategies to attract and recruit prospective talents with the right skill set, as well as to retain and engage the existing employees. On this basis, the aim of the study was to gain better insights into the field of employer branding and to examine how employer branding impacts an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity. In order to identify the impact and influence of employer branding on an employee’s perception the following research question was posed:

What impact does employer branding have on an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity?

This chapter contains a summary of the most important results of the study. By reviewing and discussing contemporary theory in the field of the research, the research results reiterate and underpin the initial literature review findings. The findings proved that employer branding influences and shape an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity by generating certain associations with the employer. This certain employer association leads to fundamental beliefs and in turn to associated meanings and expectations towards the employment relationship in a company.

With regard to the case company Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski, the semi-structured interviews revealed that the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski has a very strong employer brand. The company is perceived as “a great employer to work for” by its prospective candidates and existing employees.
These associations with the employer brand illustrate that the associated expectations and elemental beliefs of potential and existing employees are aligned with the actual values and the corporate culture, which positively affects employee retention, attraction, loyalty, motivation, engagement and productivity. Employees’ satisfaction and motivation is one of the leadership team and the company’s major priority. The findings illustrate a direct correlation between the hotel’s successful performance and their employer brand.

The concept of employer branding is a valuable and potential tool, not only to communicate to its prospective talent target pool, but also to existing employees that an employer value proposition is more desirable and different to the ones of a company’s competitors. Employer branding can be applied to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, the potential target talent market and its related stakeholders. In its essence, employer branding embodies the process of attracting and retaining future potential and existing employees.

The link between employer branding, organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and employees’ productivity is not a new field of research but balancing and managing the interrelationship between these fields has evolved and gained importance due to today’s fast-moving and increasingly competitive environment. The brand ethos of the company needs to be embedded in leadership and people management processes in order to have a distinctive and unique corporate brand. The corporate brand is tied to an individual’s identification with the company’s culture and values. Based on this sustainable brand-led culture, the employer brand, as well as the internal brand, is translating the brand ethos into the everyday employee working experience, which reinforces a company’s ability to deliver a unique and distinctive customer brand experience.

Employer branding, as well as employee retention through internal branding, influences a company’s image and the corporate brand. Based on the findings of the present study and discussion, the importance of employee training and development, working conditions, as well as job satisfaction, are significant contributors for building the company’s positive brand image, which represents the hotel’s internal branding strategy.
Companies have to align their key components as their vision, culture, values and their stakeholders’ image in order to be successful and create a strong employer brand. The greater the alignment of the key components, the stronger synergy and the more successful and powerful the employer brand.

The findings show that the human resource department/people services management plays a pivotal role in the creation, implementation and preservation of a strong employer brand. Some of the functions are given below:

- Workforce planning
- Effective recruitment and retention strategies
- Ensuring a great working environment and thriving atmosphere
- Customised training, development of management programmes and career growth opportunities
- Performance management
- Succession planning
- Networking and building public relations
- Incorporating the brand image (Kempinski DNA)

Understanding the needs, desires and aspirations of your employees is a good starting point, but in order to ensure an effective internal brand strategy the company needs to develop an understanding of employees’ implicit needs, the corporate culture and the labour market as well as the cultural context in which the employer brand will be operating (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, p. 85).

The key components for a successful employer brand strategy are consistency and continuity (Barrow and Mosley, 2005, pp. 110-111). The leadership and management team of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski places great emphasis on a consistent and coherent promise.
The thesis thereby contributes to the theoretical field by extending current knowledge and illustrates the impact of a strong employer brand on an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and the productivity. Moreover, the present thesis contributes with new knowledge to the employer brand theory by suggesting how it impacts the perception of current employees. Furthermore, companies benefit from this knowledge by understanding what impact, their employer brand has on its existing employees and potentially develop and improve this impact not only on its current employees but also with potential candidates by integrating employer brand management in the strategic management process.
6.1. Recommendations for Future Research

Previous research shows that the concept of employer branding is a rather new field, in both the corporate, as well as the academic, sector. Despite the fact that the concept is gaining popularity in the HR literature, empirical research is relatively insufficient (Cable and Turban, 2001, cited in Priyadarshi, 2011, p. 511), although several publications about employer branding, the employer brand image, the employer brand equity, employer attractiveness and its strategic implication exist.

For future research and to further investigate the subject and strengthen the empirical findings of this study of a strong employer brand in relation to employees’ perception, one recommendation is to conduct a more extensive research including a larger sample selection.

Additional research in this field could encompass the relationship between a strong employer brand and the construction of an employee’s positive self-identity due to working in a prestigious company.

Further research could focus on the influence of employees’ experiences in relation to external stakeholders and measuring the direct relationship between these groups.

Another suggestion for further research is the focus on the interrelationship between communication and the internal employer brand in retaining existing employees and its influence on the external employer reputation in attracting and recruiting potential candidates.

This study identified some support for theories and techniques regarding the impact on an employee’s perception of a strong employer brand but it is recommended that this be further explored and investigated, especially as regards tourism, as there are close to no studies in this field.
6.2. Managerial Implications

Changing demographic and economic conditions, especially in developed economies, have led to increasingly competitive labour markets, where the competition for the best talent is strong. Corporate leaders realise the significance behind a strong employer brand since the competition for individuals with competences is intense, which means that in order to attract the right kind of people with matching values, to encourage them to remain loyal and committed, they are required to consistently and continuously shape and manage their presence on the market.

The results and findings of this study show how a strong employer brand can be used to attract and retain skilled employees. Moreover, this thesis accentuates the importance of the internal starting point when developing and launching a successful, tailored and effective employer brand strategy.

Managerial implications for developing an effective employer brand are illustrated on the following page.
The managerial implications for developing an effective employer brand:

- Integrate the employer brand in the corporate strategy and the company’s overall communication strategy in order to coin the employer associations.

- Companies have to be aware that potential candidates are affected by elements such as the marketing and brand strategy, products and services, organisational communication, reputation of the company, word of mouth, the media and the current employer brand messages. Therefore, an alignment between the corporate culture, brand ethos, human resource management, internal communication and marketing are integral parts.

- Do not take employees’ loyalty and commitment for granted.

- In order to deliver a consistent on-brand service experiences the management of every interpersonal, intrapersonal and operational touch-point has to be thought through.

- In order to coin the employment experience, touch-point planning and management involving people management practices must be aligned with the employer value proposition and constantly reviewed to avoid discrepancies.
7. References


Grönroos, Ch. (2007) *Service management and marketing – customer management in service competition*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.


8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix 1 – Reflection

“There is a continuous search for knowledge; there is no end point.”

(Brockbank and McGill, 2007, p. 85)

Reflection is not only considered a very important part of continuous learning (Moon, 2010, pp. 100-101), but also improvement and development either of one’s own behalf, professional development or self-empowerment (Moon, 2010, pp. 63-64).

This chapter outlines my development and learning process on how my individual skills have evolved during the master programme and the dissertation phase. The reflection document is separated into learning styles, self-appraisal, implications including personal obstacles and problem solving, and finally I will summarise my acquired knowledge and skills as well as outline how pursuing the dissertation has added value to the researcher’s learning process.

Learning Styles

In pursuing an MBA, the researcher gained not only extensive and insightful knowledge within the field of business administration, but it has also provided me with the opportunity to take my knowledge and skills a step further and view business cases out of a multidisciplinary perspective. In retrospect, a very useful model for me was PPD “Personal and Professional Development”. It was focused on how to develop a person’s skills both personally and professionally. The module guided me through the critical thinking process and enabled me to take control of the critical thinking in every part of my life. In addition to that, the module introduced me to Honey and Mumford’s “The Learning Styles Questionnaire”, which is a powerful tool for empowerment and very beneficial to every person. What I have learned is that if a person knows in what way they learn best, he or she will be able to adjust their learning style which will lead to more efficiency and to more enjoyment of work.
I undertook “The Learning Styles Questionnaire” in March 2014, which revealed my learning style to be that of a reflector, closely followed by a strong preference for a pragmatist and a moderate preference for a theorist. Throughout the MBA programme, I have found that whilst my reflector style is very dominant, I also had the ability to step back and look at different angles, either through my theorist glasses, for example focused on the logical aspect and on concepts and models, or through my pragmatist glasses, for example, what is the practical advantage and is it relevant. A repetition of the test after working on my thesis for some time showed a slight change in the preferences. The preference for the reflector increased by two points and lies now in the field of a very strong preference. I have noticed the increase in the reflector trait as I collected and searched for more information, which led to an on-going process in the literature review for as long as it was possible. Whilst I was partly satisfied, I kept searching for more both suitable and critical sources and different angles. Reflecting on the dissertation process, my strong preference for the reflector style is tied to my approach. I created a schedule of my objectives in order to have adequate time to consider and prepare the pieces. If I did not finish in my set timeframe, I used the pragmatist approach and figured out how to save time on other parts of the thesis in order to finish my current piece.

Self-Assessment and Challenges

Through analysing various secondary sources, as well as through conducting my primary research, I gained additional knowledge and a deeper understanding in the area of my dissertation topic of employer branding, employer brand management, corporate strategy, human resource and people services management, brand management as well as strategic management. I highly benefited from the MBA programme, especially from the courses of international management, business strategy and strategy for human resource, which raised my awareness and sensitised me to the business issues faced nowadays. The above mentioned courses and in-class discussions created the first impulse regarding the direction of the topic and the first ideas.
Prior to my Master programme, my Bachelor studies taught me the importance of a balanced approach when reviewing literature. In the early stages of my Bachelor thesis I learned to be objective and open-minded and not use only sources and reports which support my own view and perception. In regards to my Master thesis, I tried to include multiple sources with different point of views although there are not many different perspectives on the topic. The success of a strong employer brand boils down to a strong people-oriented organisational culture supported by every person working in the organisation.

While the modules we were taught over the duration of the programme, particularly Research Methods I and II, had prepared me for the dissertation proposal and had contributed to the process of working on the dissertation, I discovered that starting to write the dissertation itself, narrowing and refining my research topic and question as well as specifying my literature review was not without challenges. During the literature review stage, I learned to prioritise the secondary data related to my research question. Two of the major challenges I encountered were, firstly, the feeling of where to start because I believe I read too much regarding my topic and constantly found new ideas and approaches as well as, secondly, I am more creative and focused when I have to work under pressure. In hindsight, this is why working on the dissertation with a deadline in the future was very challenging at the beginning but I overcame my struggle, took a head-on approach and increased my productivity by setting deadlines to complete parts and structured it more clearly, which allowed me to work on my dissertation at a more steady-paced timeframe.

In general, the research, both primary and secondary, was highly interesting and allowed me to compare the current point of views as well as broadened my insights and horizons in the field of employer branding.
Learning Process

My learning process over the duration of the MBA programme was very beneficial and challenging in a good way. I had the great opportunity to increase my academic knowledge, gain deeper understanding and insights in strategic and global issues, and improved my personal growing process as well as my research skills. Furthermore, the MBA enhanced my critical thinking and discussion ability, organisational, communication and interpersonal skills as well as the ability to shed light on different perspectives, which will be advantageous for my future career and personal development.

Conclusion

The MBA programme was very precious to my personal and professional development. In retrospect, it was a great pleasure to delve into the theory of employer branding and research the subject. The experience of undertaking the MBA and writing my dissertation was very valuable and challenging. I am looking forward to gain more in-depth knowledge on the subject in the working environment and observer first-hand the challenges and benefits of applying an employer brand to a company's culture.
8.2. Appendix 2 – Employer Branding Questionnaire

General Information

Name:
Department:
Position:

How long are you working at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

Ms / Mr Director of People Services - What is your key responsibility in the company?

1. How do you define the ethos of the company? Where lies the strength of Kempinski’s employer brand?

2. What is your perception of the hotels current employer brand? Has the Kempinski Hotel chain a consistent and clear EB strategy?

3. How do you measure the corporate reputation in regard to the employer brand?

4. What impact does your employer brand have on the organisational attractiveness?

5. To what extent impacts the employer brand and its activities the behaviour of the employees’?

6. Through establishing the employer brand could you notice an improvement in the recruitment outcome?
7. Could you notice an improvement of the employee productivity through the influence of the company’s strong employer brand?

8. How is employee performance respectively productivity evaluated? What appraisal techniques do you use?

9. What is the employer value proposition (EVP)? How distinctive is the employer brand and EVP’s in order to support an employee’s productivity and the corporate brand?

10. Kempinski has a very strong employer brand – how do you prevent inconsistency between the employer brand image and the corporate brand image?
General Information

Name: 
Department: 
Position: 

How long are you working at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

What are the main tasks of your work?

1. What comes to your mind when you think of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

2. What are the things you associate with the brand?

3. What is your perception of the company's current employer brand? What expectations do the company’s brand form, based on your own professional experience and observations?

4. Why do you want to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski? What is the reason that you chose your current job at the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

5. In what way does the employer brand affect your performance and decision-making?

6. Did your brand image of the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski match your job profile?

7. What do you find most attractive/least attractive about the company?
8. How likely are you to recommend the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski to a colleague or a friend?

9. What organisational activities and programmes is the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski using to brand and distinguish the company as a great “employer of choice”?

10. How important are the following factors in making your decision to work for the Hotel Palais Hansen Kempinski?

(1-5; 1 = is not important at all, 5 = extremely important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging workload</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training and development opportunities available</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A “fit” with the company’s vision, mission, values and promises</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opinions of family, friends, or colleagues about the company</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of the company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong management and leadership culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Work-Life Balance</td>
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PROJECT TITLE AND SUMMARY

Employer Branding – The Matching Crisis and The Bigger Picture

In an era of globalization and changing demographics where talent is tight and the war for it is becoming fiercer, companies have to find ways to differentiate themselves. As the economy strengthens and shifts towards a job seekers' market, the key to success lies within an organization’s ability to integrate creativity and innovation into corporate culture, products and services. Herein lies the ‘secret’ to connect with existing employees and potential candidates. While for many years employer brand development was primarily associated with recruitment advertising, it is now widely recognised as a key component of an organisation’s overall HR strategy. Therefore, branding an organization as an employer of choice has important implications for attracting and retaining employees.

The main objective of the study is to identify various factors associated with employer branding. On this basis, the aim of the study was to gain better insights in the field of employer branding and to examine how employer branding impacts an employee’s perception of the organisational attractiveness, the corporate brand and on productivity.

TIME COMMITMENT
The interview will take us 20-30 minutes.

PARTICIPANTS’ RIGHTS
You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study’s outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY & ANONYMITY
I assure you that I will treat the received information in a confidential manner with respect for the interview participant/s and I will present the information anonymously if desired.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
I, Jacqueline Krutzler or my supervisor Gay White will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

______________________________  
Name  

______________________________  
Participant's signature

______________________________  
Jacqueline Krutzler  

Student's signature

22\textsuperscript{nd} of April 2014, Vienna
8.5. Appendix 5 – Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Palais Hansen Kempinski Vienna</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Country of Residence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Nationality</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Standard Report

#### Overall Impressions

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
<th>Not at All Satisfied</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Experience</td>
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<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Likelihood to Return/Recommend

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to Return Property</td>
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<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to Return Kempinski</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to Recommend Property</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to Recommend Kempinski</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Hotel Design

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional architectural features</td>
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<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandeur of public areas</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegant interior design</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarkable landscape design</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
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</table>

#### Arrival

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<th></th>
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<th>Not at All Satisfied</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction with Booking</td>
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<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction with Arrival</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with limousine transfer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth of front desk service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency of check-in process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of room upon arrival</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast luggage transfer to room</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency and warmth of check-in process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Guest Room

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
<th>Not at All Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spaciousness of room</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive interior design and lighting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort of bed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical work area</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<th>4/20/2015</th>
<th>Responses - Medallia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access &amp; speed of Internet</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-room entertainment (e.g. TV)</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology (the iPad, the TV system, telephone etc.)</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of housekeeping service</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasant room fragrance</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spacousness of room and attractiveness of interior...</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall quality and functionality of bathroom</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of linen, towels and amenities in the room/...</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXTREMELY SATISFIED</strong></td>
<td><strong>NOT AT ALL SATISFIED</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest Bathroom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractive interior design</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort of bath/shower</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional bathroom lighting</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generous counter space/storage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of towels and linen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of bathroom amenities</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXTREMELY SATISFIED</strong></td>
<td><strong>NOT AT ALL SATISFIED</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kempinski Breakfast</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KB Overall satisfaction with the Kempinski Breakfast</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>KB Excellence of service</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>KB Appealing atmosphere</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>KB Preparation of breakfast selection</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KB Variety of breakfast selection</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spa: Spa 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Overall satisfaction with the SPA 2</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Availability of desired appointment times</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Variety of SPA 2 treatments</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Customisation of treatment to your needs</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Availability of towels and amenities</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Expert service during treatment</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Quality of SPA 2 products used in treatments</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA 2 Your privacy</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spa 2 No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXTREMELY SATISFIED</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warmth of farewell</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency of check-out process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency of luggage services</td>
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<td>Accuracy of invoice and information of charges</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Restaurant iPad Question</th>
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