Employer branding dimensions

A case study of how brands communicate their unique offering as an employer on social media

Marketing
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This research discusses the theme of employer branding and how its dimensions manifest themselves on social media. Employer branding is a marketing theme that hasn't been in the spotlight for too long, is nowadays more important than ever as the business world is facing a current '*war for talent*' and organizations struggle with attracting the best candidates. The objective of this research is to gain deeper understanding on employer branding and its central dimensions seen in social media. This way we can gain more knowledge on how brands seek to communicate their unique offering as an employer. This was approached with the following research questions 1. *What are employer brand and employer branding?* 2. *What are the central dimensions of employer branding* and 3. *How do the central dimensions of employer branding manifest themselves in the researched companies' social media channels?*

The theoretical framework of the research was built with the help of prior theoretical contributions and by combining them into an employer branding dimension framework. This framework included four dimensions: diversity, development value, work culture and social value. Later during the empirical study also CSR was added to the framework. The research topic is researched with the help of a qualitative social media content analysis that analyses two case companies – Accenture and Gofore. The research material was gathered from social media posts on LinkedIn and Instagram from the two companies' accounts.

According to the results, work culture, social value and diversity are the most important employer branding dimensions. The two case companies' social media posts highlighted similar themes with each other and did not have any major differences between them. Regards to how the dimensions manifested themselves on social media the following four themes showed of great importance: focus on soft offerings, the importance of individuality and inclusivity, thought leadership content and the rise of CSR.

All the three most important dimensions and the four themes can be seen to promote the 'soft' aspects of employer branding. These offer the employee intangible benefits and often something that is unique to the workplace. According to the results, organizations should focus on promoting these soft values, highlighting what actually makes their workplace unique and to present it as truthfully as possible.

Key words: employer branding, social media, employer branding dimensions, diversity, development value, social value, work culture

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Tämä tutkimus käsittelee työnantajabrändäystä ja sitä, miten sen eri ulottuvuudet näkyvät sosiaalisessa mediassa. Työnantajabrändäys on markkinoinnin teema, joka ei ole ollut valokeilassa vielä kovin pitkään, mutta on nykyään tärkeämpi kuin koskaan, kun yritysmaailma ja organisaatiot käyvät parhaillaan "sotaa kyvyistä" (*war for talent*) houkutellakseen parhaimpia työntekijöitä palvelukseensa. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä työnantajabrändäyksestä ja sen keskeisistä ulottuvuuksista sosiaalisessa mediassa. Näin saamme lisää tietoa siitä, kuinka brändit pyrkivät viestimään työmarkkinoille ainutlaatuisesta tarjoamastaan työnantajana. Tätä teemaa lähestyttiin seuraavilla tutkimuskysymyksillä 1. *Mitä ovat työnantajabrändi ja työnantajabrändäys?* 2. *Mitkä ovat työnantajabrändäyksen keskeiset ulottuvuudet* ja 3. *Miten työnantajabrändäyksen keskeiset ulottuvuudet näkyvät tutkittujen yritysten sosiaalisen median kanavissa?*

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys rakennettiin aikaisempien teoreettisten kontribuutioiden avulla ja yhdistämällä ne työnantajabrändäyksen dimensioiden viitekehykseksi. Tämä viitekehys sisälsi neljä ulottuvuutta: monimuotoisuus, kehitysarvo, työkulttuuri ja sosiaalinen arvo. Myöhemmin empiirisen tutkimuksen aikana viitekehykseen lisättiin myös CSR-dimensio. Tutkimusaihetta tutkitaan laadullisen sosiaalisen median sisällönanalyysin avulla, joka analysoi kahta tapausyritystä – Accenturea ja Goforea. Tutkimusmateriaali on kerätty sosiaalisen median julkaisuista LinkedInissä ja Instagramissa kyseisten yritysten tileiltä.

Tulosten mukaan työkulttuuri, sosiaalinen arvo ja monimuotoisuus ovat työnantajabrändäyksen tärkeimpiä ulottuvuuksia. Kahden tapausyrityksen sosiaalisen median julkaisut korostivat keskenään samanlaisia teemoja, eikä niissä ollut keskenään suuria eroja. Mitä tulee ulottuvuuksien ilmenemiseen sosiaalisessa mediassa, seuraavat neljä teemaa nousivat erityisen merkittävinä esiin: keskittyminen 'pehmeään' tarjoamaan (*soft offering*), yksilöllisyyden ja inklusiivisuuden merkitys, ajatusjohtajuussisältö ja yhteiskuntavastuun (CSR) nousu.

Kaikkien kolmen tärkeimmän ulottuvuuden ja neljän teeman voidaan nähdä edistävän työnantajabrändäyksen pehmeitä ominaisuuksia. Ne tarjoavat työntekijälle aineettomia etuja ja usein jotain työpaikalle ainutlaatuista. Tulosten mukaan organisaatioiden tulee keskittyä näiden pehmeiden arvojen edistämiseen, nostaa esiin mikä todella tekee heidän työpaikastaan ainutlaatuisen ja esitellä se mahdollisimman totuudenmukaisesti.

Avainsanat: työnantajabrändäys, sosiaalinen media, työnantajbrändäys dimensiot, diversiteetti, kehitysarvo, sosiaalinen arvo, työkulttuuri

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the topic

Employer branding, a marketing theme that has not been in the spotlight for too long, is nowadays more important than ever. Employer branding is the means to strengthen and boost the company's employer brand. It includes a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the perceptions of employees, potential employees, and relevant stakeholders. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 501; Sullivan 2004.) The ongoing '*war for talent*' in the business world has become a real strategic challenge as talented employees now have more power to choose where they wish to work and under what conditions. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 799.) In addition, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has also affected this situation and has increased the ongoing trend of people changing their jobs. Some have even described this as the era of 'the great resignation'. According to Microsoft's Work Trend Index published in 2021, over 40% of the 30,000 global survey respondents are thinking about leaving their employer this year. (Microsoft 2021.) In Finland, it has been reported that there is a shortage of skilled workforce that covers almost every industry, especially when it comes to IT professionals. Naturally, this trend can be seen on a global scale as well. (Talouselämä 2021.)

This situation creates real challenges for companies, especially for the ones whose business is highly dependent on skilled employees. The importance of human capital is especially important in industries where the employees are in a big role in shaping the success of the company, such as in consulting or service business. The quality of the workforce can have important effects on the organization's survival and success as talented workforce is also essential for delivering top service quality to customers. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219; Leekha Chhabra & Sharma 2014, 48.) As this situation can create many challenges for companies it can also create many opportunities on the other hand. Companies now have the opportunity to stand out as great employers with the help of employer branding. (Talouselämä 2021.)

Given the current market situation employer branding has become one of the leadership teams' top priorities. Leaders have noticed that human capital is one of the most valuable intangible capital within the company and attracting skilled people has great significance for the business. According to a study conducted by O'Boyle and Aguinis (2012), high

performers can be over 400 percent more productive than average performers. At the same time, it has been noted that attracting and retaining skilled employees has become more difficult than before. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 756.) Research in this area has also shown that employer attractiveness is not only about functional attributes like compensation or opportunities to advance in one's career but also about brand personality traits and the social value it provides to its employees. These can be brought into attention with the help of employer branding. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219.) The personality traits' significance is important because they are a feature that is not easily copied by the competition and thus, they create a unique aspect to the company. There is also social value that comes from belonging to a unique group, which in this case is through employment, that can enhance one's social image.

To remain relevant in the competition, companies must build their employer brand and focus on it especially on social media platforms. Social media is seen as an excellent tool for employer brand promotion because it is a good way to showcase the company's employer brand to a wide audience, including prospective candidates and current employees. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 801.) Those who fail to do this promotion in social media are likely to fail at standing out from the competition and attracting the employees they wish to onboard. (Mičík & Mičudová 2018, 171-174)

1.2 Research gap

Employer branding has become increasingly important because of the changes in the 21st century, including political, economic, and social changes that alter the business world. Its importance is likely to only continue increasing. In addition, the younger generations are more aware of what type of environments they wish to work in, and talented graduates are looking for companies as employers that have certain characteristics and fit their own needs as well as possible. (Brusch et al. 2018, 149-150.) Because at the moment skilled employees and job seekers have good leverage and opportunity to choose where they work, they can look for the company that matches their personal features the best.

Even as the concept of branding is well-developed and researched within the marketing literature, the different perspectives related to employer branding are still evolving (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502; Biswas & Suar 2016, 57) Research on employer branding is still fairly scarce and requires more insights. A few studies have researched the role of social media in promoting the employer brand and the effects of social media employer

branding. However, there is not much research on what are the aspects of employer branding done on social media that are most used and what type of topics do they seem to focus on when promoting the employer brand. Most of the research that has been conducted related to social media has been about the personal use of social media or branding products. Kaur (2013) points out in his research that 'the potential of employer branding via social media is not fully exploited and needs to be further explored'.

There is also little research on how companies highlight their social and brand value for the potential and current workforce. Whereas this is a commonly researched topic in product marketing, is not as well known in employer branding and in attracting potential employees. It is highly beneficial to research this topic further because previous research points out that even as companies do employer marketing they still fail to stand out from competitors, which suggests that their employer marketing strategies are not successful or well implemented. (Kaur 2013, 549.) This is especially important since the younger generations are even more selective about where they wish to work. Surveys have discovered that Generation X and Y participants consider employer brand as a critical element when considering their career choices and places of employment. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 803.)

1.3 Research purpose and limitations

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of employer branding and its central dimensions that are seen in social media. This topic is researched with the help of the following research questions:

1. What are employer brand and employer branding?

2. What are the central dimensions of employer branding?

3. How do the central dimensions of employer branding manifest themselves in the researched companies' social media channels?

Questions one and two are answered with the help of prior theory and the third question is answered with the help of the empirical research of this paper. This topic is researched with the help of qualitative research methods which in this case are qualitative social media content analysis and a case study. The qualitative case analysis is performed from two chosen international companies' regional social media channels. The chosen social

media channels for the analysis are LinkedIn and Instagram. These two social media channels were chosen because they are very different in nature from each other. The chosen companies for the research are Accenture and Gofore. Both companies offer IT consulting services which are highly dependent on a skilled workforce.

The case analysis only contains materials from the two companies and both companies all are in the same industry. Even as the analysed companies operate internationally, the social media channels in question are at the Finnish or European level.

1.4   Research structure

This   thesis   will   proceed   in   the   following   structure:

RESEARCH STRUCTURE

Introduction	Theory	Research	Findings
Research gap	Employer branding	Qualitative social media content analysis	Results
Research questions	Central dimensions		Conclusion
Purpose and limitations			Theoretical & managerial implications
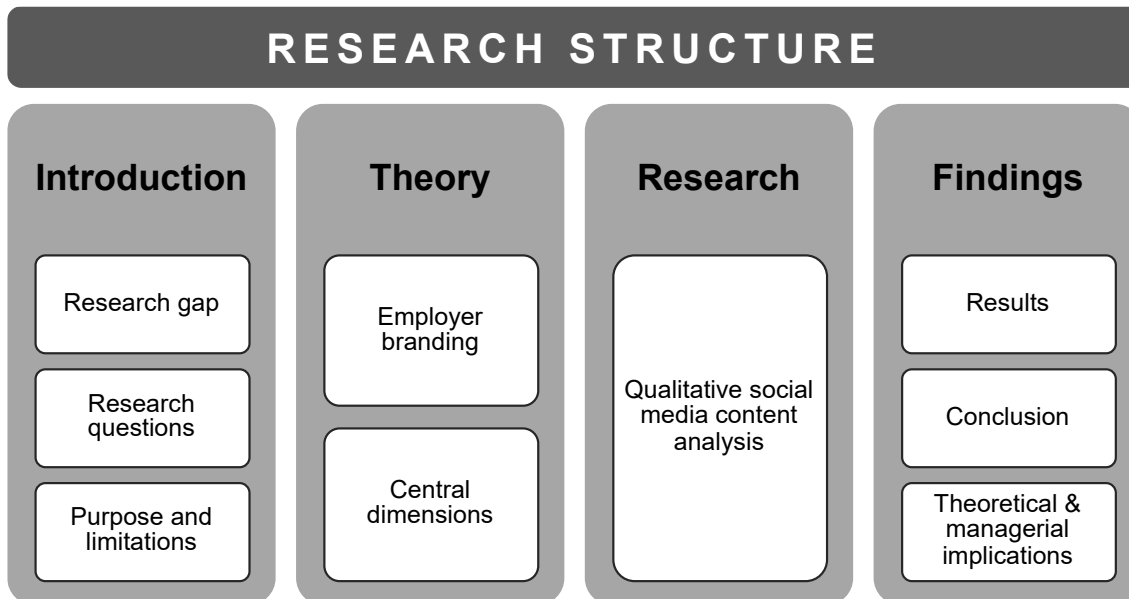
Figure 1. Research structure

Next, Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical background of employer branding. It covers central concepts such as the employer brand and employer branding, its means, and its dimensions. These dimensions also showcase what features are highlighted when employer branding is used in practice by companies. Dimensions like social value are the ones that make the organization stand out from competitors, help distinguish their employer brand and are not easily copied by others.

After the theoretical background, Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the research. This research will be carried out as a case study including two case companies that are researched with the help of qualitative content analysis. The chapter will take a closer

look at the research strategy, gathering of empirical materials, and the analysis implementation. The methods and their fit for this research is discussed and explained in this chapter. It will also discuss the quality of the research and the ethical aspects related to this research project.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the research. As only the third research question is answered with the help of the empirical study, this chapter will focus on solely presenting the results related to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2. This results chapter will go over the results one by one for all employer branding dimensions that were relevant to this research.

Chapter 5 offers the conclusion of the research. In this chapter, we will go over the key findings of the research, offer managerial conclusions and discuss the theoretical contribution of this research. This chapter also includes the discussion related to research limitations and offers further research proposals. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the research project and presents the key elements and findings one last time.

2 Employer branding

2.1 Central concepts

2.1.1 Employer brand

A brand is all about what makes the organization that exact organization and distinguishes it from any other organization. According to Kotler and Keller (2016) it covers the basis, consisting of different identifiers, such as a name, sign, symbol, or some mixture of them. These identifiers distinguish the company's products or services from the competition. Priorly brands have always been associated with differentiating *tangible* products from each other, but nowadays it's seen suitable for differentiating *intangible* products, services, organizations, and people as well. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 24) According to Aaker (1997) brands also have a symbolic function to them, because they people seem to associate human traits with brands. It shows for example in how some brands are considered innovative, some old fashioned and some trendy. (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, 79) This goes for employer branding as well. The brand is about what distinguishes them as an employer different from the competitors. (Theurer et al. 2018, 157.)

During the 21st century the topic of employer branding and the employer brand have gained a lot of attention within the business world. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 501) Whereas the importance of brand and reputation is well established in the product and consumer market, it has now become important in the labour market as well, including the recruitment process and retaining talented employees. (Sivertzen et al. 2013, 473) Ambler and Barrow (1996) define employer brand as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". They were the first ones to introduce the definition of employer brand. Moroko and Uncles (2008) propose that an employer brand can be seen as a psychological contract between the employer and the employee. This employer brand forms the identity of the company as an employer. It gathers the company's policies, value systems, and behaviours towards the objectives of motivating, attracting, and retaining the company's employees, both current and potential ones. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502.)

Employer brand equity is an intangible asset that exists for both the existing and potential employees that can be measured and valued so that its significance can be estimated. The

employer brand also has a personality, and it should be consistent with its personality that it witnessed by other stakeholders in its business network for it to be trusted. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190.)

As corporate brand and consumer brand are sharing the same brand message but in a different shape and for a different audience, the same goes for the employer brand. The purpose of employer brand shares the same working principle as the corporate brand. It seeks to create a brand that is noticeable, relevant to its audience, unique and able to positively impact its shareholders. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190.)

There are also other main groups of concepts that share similarities with the employer brand theory:

- Internal marketing

- Corporate culture and identity

- Corporate reputation

- Personnel marketing

(Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190; Brusch et al. 2018, 150.) Figure 2 seeks to clarify the many different relations between the different types of branding. The circle presented on the figure showcases what this study aims to focus on.
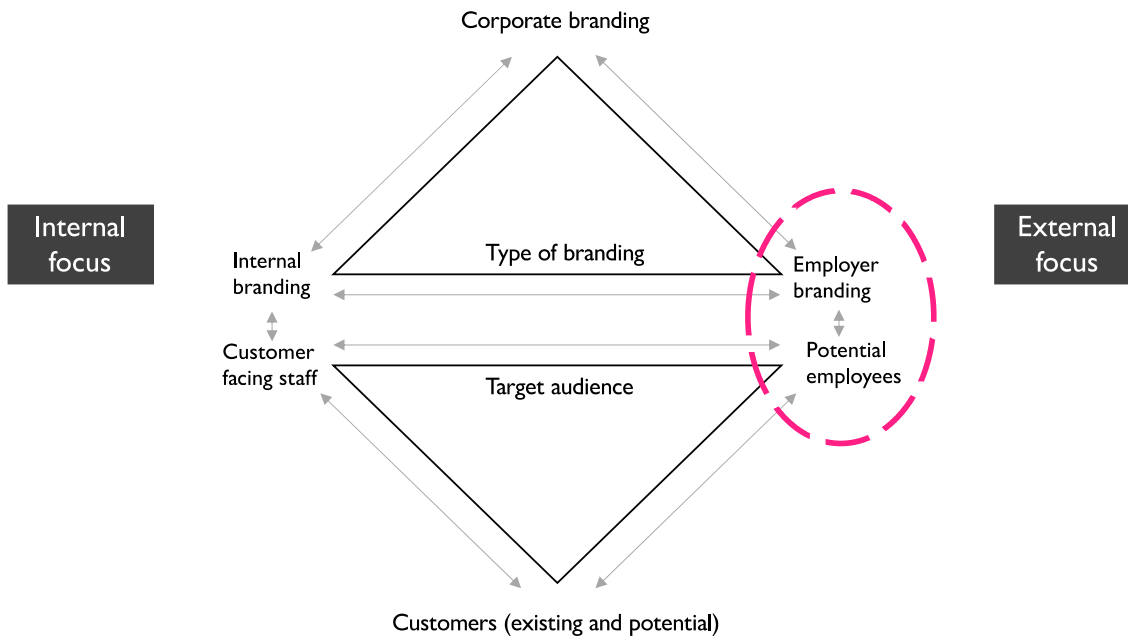
Figure 2. Different branding relationships (retelling Foster et al. 2010)

As these branding measures share similar target audiences and features it sometimes might be difficult to distinguish them from each other or to see the differences that they hold. The relationship between corporate branding, internal branding and employer branding measures is still somewhat open and remains to be fully explored. Most of the research done to date tends to focus on researching these as standalone concepts and not on how these are adopted together into a coherent corporate branding experience. (Foster et al. 2010, 401-403.) According to Foster et al. (2010) corporate branding is mostly about promise management that internal branding and employer branding are seen to support, although from different perspectives.

It is important that these brand messages align with each other, especially since stakeholders nowadays can have truly complex identities, which can create problems if the brand messages are not aligned. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 58; Foster et al. 2010, 403; Moroko & Uncles 2008, 166) Like other brand areas as well, the employer brand's value depends on the importance of 'customers' and the benefits the company is able to deliver and differentiate itself from others. In this scenario the customers are the current and potential employees. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502) So in total we can see three types of 'customers' in Figure 2 – customer facing staff, customers and potential employees. Everyone in the target audience is relevant to the organization as some type of customer. What is also interesting is the fact that at the same time potential applicants can also be

the customers of the company. This creates a possible dual role for the target audience since both applicants and customers can be seen as key external stakeholders. (Foster et al. 2010, 403-404.)

Internal marketing or internal branding is about the actions that are directed to the employees of an organization. Its purpose is to ensure that employees are effectively executing desired projects and company policies. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190.) Kotler (1994) defines internal marketing as "the task of successfully hiring, training and motivating able employees to serve the customer well". Internal branding has a value-based approach that seeks to create a common value-based goal for the employees, usually in the form of a corporate mission or a vision. (Mosley 2007, 128) At the same time it helps in creating a workforce that is not easily imitable by other companies and competitors. Internal branding's most important goal is to strengthen brand-supportive behaviour among the current employees. (Hoppe 2018, 452.) This can also be seen in Figure 2 where internal branding is linked in a type of continuum with staff and corporate branding. Sometimes internal branding can be also difficult to distinguish from good HR practices as three types of internal marketing benefits that have been identified are employee development, rewards and vision which gives employees something to believe in. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190) Personnel marketing on the other hand is included in human resources management and it covers the efforts that are directed towards recruiting new employees, motivating current ones in their daily work and towards higher satisfaction within the company. (Brusch et al. 2018, 150) Thus when looking at Figure 2, in a way, it can be seen to represent the dual sided arrow that is between internal branding and employer branding.

Corporate culture and identity can be defined as the specific values and support the company's organizational purpose and strategy or its corporate identity. Corporate reputation in the minds of employees include a wide variety of employer aspects that affect the affect the corporate image and reputation, such as organizational attributes, stakeholder benefits and the vision. Because of this, it is important that the organization takes good care of it with the help of corporate branding. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 191-193.) Corporate branding has relations to both employer branding and internal branding as can be seen in Figure 2.

What is evident from the previous research is that employer branding shares the same theoretical foundations with consumer and corporate branding and that they share many stakeholder groups that they have impacts on, including shareholders, customers, and potential and current employees. (Moroko & Uncles 2008, 161) Figure 2 showcases how complex and multidimensional the relationship truly is and how there are many aspects and point of views that it can be researched from.

In this research the focus is on the circle that is highlighted in Figure 2, as in the employer branding measures and the target audience of potential employees. However, the realization that current employees are included in employer branding efforts is not overlooked. Otherwise, the relationship between the branding areas is not further explored in this study, but this basic understanding of the familiar and interrelated concepts helps to understand the theme of employer branding better and how it links to the company's branding efforts in the bigger picture.

Whereas Ambler and Barrow originally saw employer brand something related directly to employees and something that is a developed concept from internal marketing, other researchers have then begun to see it also as an external facing concept of employer branding, which tackles this topic from a wider perspective as Figure 2 showcases. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 501.)

2.1.2 Employer branding

Originally the term '*branding*' was used only to differentiate tangible products from each other and its means of targeting potential customers has been traditionally one of the core topics in marketing. But today its scope has broadened to other stakeholder groups as well and it can now be used also to differentiate people, places, and firms, as in employers. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502; Rampl & Kenning 2014, 218; John, & Jagathy Raj 2020, 24.) Employer branding is the means to strengthen and boost the company's employer brand. According to Sullivan (2004) It can be defined as the "targeted, long term strategy to manage awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm". This concept was introduced during the mid-1990s (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 186; Brusch et al. 2018, 150) Ideally employer branding presents a picture of an organization which includes the instrumental and symbolic traits that help differentiate it from its competitors in the recruitment market. (Mičík & Mičudová 2018, 172) Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) define employer branding as

"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". It can also be seen as applying branding principles to human resource management practices. These definitions show that employer branding includes promoting both for outside and within the company. But what remains the same in these promotions is the clear view on how companies differ from their competitors and what features and aspects make them desirable as a future or current employer.

Employer attractiveness is a concept that is closely related to employer branding, and they work towards the same goal in a way. Berthon et al. (2005) define employer attractiveness as "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization". It can be explained through both functional traits, like monetary compensation and through brand personality traits. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219) It can be seen as an antecedent of the general employer brand equity concept. In practice it means that the more attractive the employer is perceived, the stronger the organization's employer brand is. (Berthon et al. 2005, 153-154.) Different dimensions of employer attractiveness that can be used in employer branding are discussed further in Chapter 2.3.

It has been noticed that traditional marketing and branding techniques such as company brochures and websites do not seem to be sufficient enough when it comes to prospective candidates that are looking for a job. Nowadays they are more interested in a more personal from the organization and from its actual employees. (Kaur 2013, 547) Employer branding is a way to stand out of the crowd of competitors and attract talented employees by bringing something unique to the table. Companies seek to differentiate themselves from competitors by highlighting their personal characteristics and the unique aspects of their offerings as an employer. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2005, 502.)

Based on previous research there are certain features that make a successful employer brand. Moroko and Uncles (2008) found that there are three characteristics that stand out as highly consistent with the consumer-focused and corporate branding efforts and theories. (1) *Being known and noticeable*, is highly important because just like in the consumer market without brand awareness it is unlikely that there is much action, which in this case would be new employees. This type of awareness is a key factor in attracting talented people. (Ambler & Barrow 199, 200) The connection between a known employer and a successful employer brand is strong and has been reported consistently in previous

research. The next characteristic is (2) *being seen as relevant and resonant*, and it's all about how well the organization manages to communicate its employee value proposition and to the right audience. Successful employer brands manage to communicate a value proposition that is appealing to the potential employees and fits what they are looking for in an employer. (3) *Being differentiated from direct competition*, is very similar to what makes brands successful in the consumer markets. This is a key step also in building a successful employer brand and an important factor in attracting the talented employees in the highly competitive job market.

Moroko and Uncles also found characteristics that are additional in employer branding, which are fulfilling a psychological contract and unintended appropriation of brand values. These two focus more on the actual employment side and things that are experienced during employment. They are about fulfilling the promise to the employees that was made during external employer branding and matching their perceptions during the employment experience. According to the research conducted by Ambler and Barrow (1996) company awareness and psychological benefits were the most important factors in employer branding when it comes to attracting, motivating, and keeping the best people. What is important to take into notice is that most of employer branding research, like this one conducted by Moroko and Uncles, focuses on potential employees and the external audience. Based on research the internal audience react differently to employer branding and what they claim to be important. According to research conducted by Maxwell and Knox (2009) features that current employees find important are employment factors, organizational success, construed external image and product attributes. They found that in the eyes of current employees the employer brand is more attractive if the organization is perceived as successful and its external image is attractive. In a way these findings support the findings made by Moroko and Uncles which were 1. being known and noticeable and 2. being seen as relevant.

2.1.3 Why employer branding has gained its recent popularity

The popularity of employer branding has been on the rise for the past two decades and there are no signs for it slowing down anytime soon. (Moroko & Uncles 2008, 161) And no wonder, based on all the positive things that employer branding can bring to the organization. As employees can act as a huge competitive advantage, they can help companies build brands that succeed in the global markets. (Graham & Cascio 2018, 366.)

Some even see that human talent is the primary competitive enabler of businesses. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 57) Employees also add value to the organization through both financial and non-financial means, such as customer satisfaction. (Graham & Cascio 2018, 366.) Top-tier talent always have the luxury of choosing where they would like to be employed. When an organization has a strong employer brand it is more likely to succeed in attracting these talented people to work for this specific organization. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 801.)

In addition, during the recent years literature and research have drifted from the employer brand to employer branding. This implies that the employer brand is not just about the brand's identity but a key strategy for driving corporate success. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 25.)

The CIPD (2007) suggests four reasons for the recent rise of employer branding among different companies:

1. The power of branding

2. The increasing focus on employee engagement

3. The impact of human resources practices on business

4. The war for talent

(Biswas & Suar 2016, 58.) The power of branding activities hasn't gone unnoticed, and nowadays branding is no stranger to recruitment practices either. Today branding efforts can be seen everywhere. Whether it's branding an individual person or a social group, such as a work community, branding efforts can be seen beneficial in many situations. No matter what the organization sells, a strong brand is the most important and sustainable asset that they are able to possess. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 4.) So why not apply these principles to employer branding as well? Employer branding enables the organization to create a brand that can then be marketed to desired talents. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 57.)

One of the main reasons why focusing on employee engagement is important is because the employees have the bigger leverage in choosing where they wish to work and in what kind of an organization. Current labour market conditions are tight and tricky for employers. Unemployment remains low and the shortage of talented workforce keeps continuing. (Kaur 2013, 546.) To tackle parts of this problem, organizations have to make

sure that they are able to keep the talented workforce that they have been able to attract to the company. They must keep their current employees happy and engaged in the company and this can be done with the help of employer branding, and more specifically with the executing the employer value proposition that was made during the employer branding process. This also highlights the importance of human resources practices on the business. (Goswami 2015, 264) Because of this HR teams also seek for strategic contributions and recognition in improving this situation and support the employer branding from within. (Kaur 2013, 546) This also shows how employer branding is not just about the external audience, but also about maintaining the made promises within the company.

McKinsey's Steven Hankin came up with the term 'war for talent' in 1997 and it has since become a well-known topic in the field of employer branding. The term refers to "the increasingly fierce competition to attract and retain employees at a time when too few workers are available". (McKinsey 2017.) McKinsey's paper suggests that when organizations have a superior employer brand value propositions, they are able to appeal to the specific people that they were trying to attract and then keep them. (Goswami 2015, 263)

Organizations and previous research have also found distinctive benefits from focusing on employer branding actions. There are many different benefits that companies can achieve within and outside their organization, such as standing out from competitors, increasing their employer attractiveness, and achieving an employer-of-choice (EOC) status. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019; Hoppe 2018; Backhaus & Tikoo 2004; Kissel & Büttgen 2015.)

Establishing an EOC status can be seen as a strategy in trying to beat competitors in the talent market and it can create sustainable competitive advantage for the organization. Tanwar and Kumar (2019) state that at "EOC is a kind of organization that employees would aspire to work for and would, therefore, accord preference to over other organizations in their selection of jobs". Therefore, it is slightly different for example from job organization attraction, where the organization's attractiveness to potential employees is measured in general. When an organization has managed to become an EOC it means that it has succeeded in creating an environment where individuals are eager and motivated to work for because they now see it as an excellent place to work in.

Research has shown that nowadays companies need to be active in social media channels in order to achieve an EOC status. This status can be achieved with the help of employer branding efforts in social media and the process of becoming an EOC is linked to the employer branding process. The process starts with developing the desired value proposition and then promoting it externally and internally. This promotion happens through employer branding. Previous studies have shown that individuals prefer organizations present values that match the individual's personal interests and values. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 800, 815.) This match is possible to explain through person-organization fit, which is further discussed later in section 2.3.4.1.

2.1.4 Social media's importance for employer branding

Social media varies depending on the definition. The Cambridge Dictionary (2022) defines social media as "websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone". It is generally used as an umbrella term that includes a span of a wide range of platforms and services, that include for example blogs, chartrooms, discussion boards, consumer service rating websites and most importantly and perhaps most famously, social networking sites, because when we say social media, we most commonly mean different social networking sites. (Aichner et al. 2021, 215.)

Social media has been playing a huge role when it comes to the changes in what ways people communicate. It has made communication faster than ever and now people are able to communicate with each other any time from almost anywhere whenever they feel like it. What is special related to social media, compared to the rest of the world wide web is its communicative nature. Users don't just receive information, but they also actively participate in content generation and communicating with other participants in the medium. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 756.) Both people and companies generate and absorb content in the same platforms, which changes the game when it comes to corporate communicating and marketing. It changes the communication more into a dialogue instead of just one message to the desired audience. This dialogue is now ongoing between companies and stakeholders, like customers, but also between the stakeholders. (Robertson et al. 2019, 110.)

As the importance of social media has increased the ways we utilize social media have increased as well. We use social media more and more to connect with brands, to start a

conversation and to share our thoughts about a specific item or incident with a brand. Like mentioned above, social media gives people the opportunity to interact with each other in addition to interacting with the brand, and a chance to share their thoughts and experiences related to a specific company. This is not only happening in the world of consumerism and customer experiences but in the world of employment as well. (Smith et al. 2021, 834.)

People are now able to share their experiences, see what others think about working there and communicate with the brand itself when considering them as an employer. This gives the future and current employees the chance to see through the brands employer branding efforts and to evaluate whether the employer brand message that they are pushing is truthful of not. There are sites aimed for job seekers such as Glassdoor where current and former employees are able to anonymously share their experiences with a company. This can for example include salary information, interview tips for a specific company and truthful feedback on the experienced company culture, work-life balance, and benefits. (Glassdoor 2022.) Because of this it is well advised that brands take into consideration the importance of these social media channels, especially since brands often do not have control over the content of reviews on these platforms or what is being said about them. (Robertson et al. 2019, 110.)

Yet at the same time this gives the brands a great opportunity to actively communicate and interact with people in a way that wouldn't necessarily be possible without social media. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn enable the company to communicate with prospective employees fast and in a relaxed way. Because the atmosphere is more relaxed than in a career fair or a job interview, the interested candidates might be more engaged to communicate with the company or ask questions they wouldn't necessarily ask in a more formal setting.

Kissel and Büttgen (2015) show in their research that perceived organization attractiveness is a major dimension that drives application intentions and that this is especially true in the context of perceived attractiveness from social media. By highlighting their symbolic brand features in social media organizations are able to differentiate themselves in a way that is more effective than when highlighting instrumental attributes. Especially features such as well-developed audio-visual tools give more opportunities than ones in the conventional media channels and this makes the

employer brand communication more effective. It also gives them the chance to build a strong brand personality. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 757.)

Kissel and Büttgen (2015) also show that jobseekers feel that company-controlled social media sites are more credible than independent sites. This on the other hand conflicts with some of the previous research that has claimed that people trust the non-company-controlled sites more. None the less, because of these findings, organizations should be eager to create authentic content on their social media channels that matches their employer image.

2.2 Employer branding means

2.2.1 Employer branding process

It is crucial to remember that employer branding will only deliver the desired effects if the marketers behind it understand what contributes towards a successful employer brand. Organizations need to find the factors that contribute to their employer branding positively and integrate them into their employer branding efforts. (Berthon et al. 2005, 168.)

Based on the literature and previous research, employer branding is generally seen as a three-step process that is demonstrated in Figure 3.

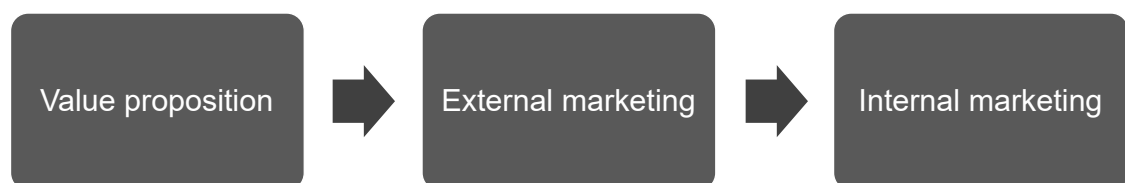Value proposition → External marketing → Internal marketing

Figure 3. Employer branding process (Kaur 2013; John & Jagathy Raj 2020; Backhaus & Tikoo 2004)

When developing employer branding the company must start with developing an employer value proposition that covers the benefits provided by the organization. (Kaur

2013, 547) These benefits include everything that is included by the organization to the current and potential employees, including financial and non-financial benefits and values. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 26) To develop this value proposition the organization uses information about its management style, organization culture, current employment image, features and qualities of the current employees and gathered impressions of their services. The value proposition needs to be embodied in the brand and it's intended to be a truthful representation of the organization's offerings to its employees. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502.) But on the other hand, it helps if the organization manages to create the value proposition so that it improves employer attractiveness in the eyes of potential employees. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 26)

When the first step of creating the value proposition is complete, the organization must then create strategies to promote it based on what was created. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 26) The organization then has to market it to the external target audience, which in this case is potential employees and different recruiting agencies. The main purpose of external marketing of employer branding is to attract the target audience and to make them aware of the organization. External marketing efforts need to provide the external audience a clear picture of what are the benefits of joining the company and what values are included. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 502; John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 26) But at the same time, these efforts can help support the service or product and boost the corporate brand as well. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 503) The external marketing step will help the organization in becoming an employer of choice (EOC) in the job market, when executed successfully. When potential employees manage to form a positive image of the organization, they later have easier time absorbing into the company culture if they decide to join the company. (John & Jagathy Raj 2002, 26)

After this as the final and the third step comes internal marketing, which is about showing that they are fulfilling the promises that were made to the prospective employees during the recruitment phase. (Kaur 2013, 547) This is a highly important part of the process because in this part the organization gets to prove its trustworthiness by fulfilling the promises it made on the previous steps of the process. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, 503) The goal of internal marketing is to make the employees committed to the organization's values and goals, as was mentioned previously in section 2.1.1. These internal marketing or branding efforts are highly important when it comes to the success of the organization. When the internal target audience, as in the employees, are content with their organization

it improves their brand loyalty, and they are more likely to become brand champions of the organization. (John & Jagathy Raj 2002, 26-27.)

The three-step-process of employer branding helps the organization become more visible to a larger external crowd and to improve its employer image. This unique employer image also helps the organization to stand out from its competitors and to be distinguishable among different external stakeholders. (John & Jagathy Raj 2002, 29.)

2.2.2 Portraying an accurate image

For employer branding to be able to create actual value it has to be accurate and truthful. When looking for an employer potential applicants evaluate the employer brand image, which is formulated through the organization's intent statements that are being used to attract prospective employees. (Foster et al. 2010, 403) These can be for example employer's posts on social media and the content on their website and recruitment advertisements. The presented employer brand message needs to be accurate, or it will not have desired outcomes. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 508) This is because there is a 'psychological contract' involved in employer branding that the organizations need to fulfil. The employer brand can be seen as an ongoing promise to the employees and this promise needs to be accurately displayed through employer branding efforts. Employees view these company features during the recruitment process based on what is being presented to them by the company together with informal information and form an image of the company that creates the basis for the psychological contract. Then during the actual employment period this contract or brand promise is either fulfilled or broken.

If the employer fails to deliver the employer brand promise and the psychological contract to the new recruits it is likely that staff turnover will increase, and post-entry performance has negative effects. Because of this it is crucial that the presented employer brand messages are accurate and true to the real nature of the company. The message needs to be accurate on every aspect, whether is about the company's culture, identity, or values. This gives the potential applicants the possibility to form a realistic psychological contract that will later be reflected by their employment experience. (Foster et al. 2010, 403; Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 508; Moroko & Uncles 2008, 166.) Also, if the psychological contract is not fulfilled it can lead to bad word-of-mouth and negative feedback on social media, press and image among job seekers. (Moroko & Uncles 2008, 166)

2.2.3 Involving everyone within the organization

Employer branding doesn't just fall in the hands of marketing or human resources, but instead it is a responsibility that includes everyone and every segment of the company. To form a unified picture of the employer brand the message needs to be unified and clear within and outside the company. This requires that everyone is on the same page when it comes to employer branding, from the top of the management pyramid to all the way to the bottom. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 58.) Because of this, employer branding must involve an integrated internal mix of key groups:

1. The top management group,

2. the business processing group,

3. and the cross-functional group.

The top management group includes the aspects of vison, empowerment, support, and leadership. The business processing group involves important features such as staffing, process changes and incentive systems to the mix and the cross-functional group involves important aspects like marketing, human resources, and corporate communication to the process. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 58.) Commitment from the top management group to employer branding is crucial, because of its long-term nature. It is important that they share the same vision with the rest of the organization. Top management group and senior management teams also need to have good communication with marketing and HR and empathy towards these contributors in order to avoid major obstacles in employer branding efforts. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 203.)

In addition to commitment, leaders have a significant impact when it comes to employer branding. According to previous studies highly skilled workforce values great leaders and it can help a company stand out in their eyes. These strong leaders can be inspirational, supportive and empowering. When the organization manages to portray a successful image of a great leadership team it can help strengthen the employer brand value proposition and attract higher quality applicants. (McKinsey 2017; Pathardikar et al. 2013, 90.) This type of leadership branding can be seen as natural continuum from employer branding. Because leaders can have a noteworthy impact on many employee attributes and behaviours it is important to take this into notice in employer branding as well. (Hodges & Martin 2012, 3796.) Strong leaders also represent the brand with their

actions and thus influence the employer brand as well. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 5) Shaping the leadership brand can help the organization present their leaders as having the ideal corporate identity and thus it can help them attract likeminded employees. (Hodges & Martin 2012, 3796) Naturally, there is also another side to the story when leadership branding has gone wrong, is overlooked, or doesn't have the desired outcomes because of a scandal for example. According to a study conducted in the UK by the professional platform LinkedIn, bad leadership and the resulting weak employer brand can cost millions due to loosing great talent because of it. (LinkedIn 2015.)

Current employees also play an important part in employer branding. They are the organization's best advocates and most important ambassadors. Current employees play a significant role because they actually work within the organization and can thus share their own experiences of what it is like working there. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 58.) During the digital era that we are living in social media usage inevitably also influences employees' work lives as well. This is an important factor to take into notice when creating and maintaining successful employer branding. Employees' activity on social media can be a great resource but it can also create harms and risks at the same time. Generally, employees use social media platforms to network with others, like co-workers, and to create online social capital. (Huang & Liu 2017, 513; Yoganathan et al. 2021, 525.)

To ensure a positive employer perception it is important that employees' competent social media utilization is take into notice. This can be for example with the help of social media training and guidelines of what is accepted to post and what is not. When employees are aware of what and in which tone, they are allowed to post work related content when speaking as an employee, the company is able to avoid crisis that could affect their reputation and brand better as well. (Yoganathan et al. 2021, 525.)

2.2.4 People 'living the brand'

Based on the type of business that the organization does, the frontline employees often serve as the people that are seen 'living the brand'. They represent the brand by how they appear and behave, and they offer an intensive brand experience at the same time. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759.) In the minds of the customer, the employees embody the company's brand. (Smith et al. 2021, 834) The behaviour of the current employees plays an important role when it comes to branding. This is because of the influence that they

have on customers and other stakeholders and because they act in the frontline of the company that is visible to the external audience. (Yoganathan et al. 2021, 524.)

Companies have noticed the importance of employees for the audience, but this usually still extends only to the consumer-targeted context. However, it is highly beneficial to take this into notice in the employer branding context as well. This is especially beneficial in social media, where the audience is wide and can reach many stakeholder groups. The touchpoints vary from brand-to-customer to customer-to-customer to brand-to-employee, employee-to-employee and even to customer-to-employee. This large scale of different touchpoints and opportunities has disrupted the traditional journeys and means of communication and also affects the internal and external branding activities. Because of this, its value shouldn't go unnoticed, especially when trying to attract new employees with the help of the real experiences of the current ones. (Smith et al. 2021, 835.)

Job seekers can form their realistic image of a typical employee by seeing current employees in action and developing associations through that experience. If these observed employees manage to present themselves in a way that is consistent with the brand identity, their interaction should also transmit brand meaning which can then lead to a more positive brand attitude. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759.)

This importance of behaviour also extends to social media, both personal and corporate. Employee's online behaviours have become vital for developing and maintaining the reputation of an employer brand. Since employees play such an important role it is important than when building a strong external employer image that the company must already have a good internal relationship between the current employees and the employer brand. (Yoganathan et al. 2021, 524.)

2.3 Employer branding dimensions

Research has shown that the applicant's early impressions about an organization image as an employer are strong predictors of their actions and job acceptance decisions. But what still remains a bit unclear is that which attributes help differentiate an organization from its competitors. These attributes, or brand attributes, are highly crucial in employer branding efforts because they express what is promised and expected by a certain company. Job searchers then evaluate these attributes in their 'matching game' when trying to seek for the perfect fit, based on what they find attractive based on what is being

presented by the companies. Young and talented job seekers base their expectations to both real attributes and ideal attributes of an organization. (Bonaiuto et al. 2013, 781-782.)

There are several dimensions of employer branding that can be presented to potential and current employees. Traditionally both soft and hard aspects have been explored in the field of employer branding. (Bonaiuto et al. 2013, 780.) Figure 4 seeks to present the many dimensions of employer branding. Each of these dimensions are relevant, but some perhaps more commonly used than others.
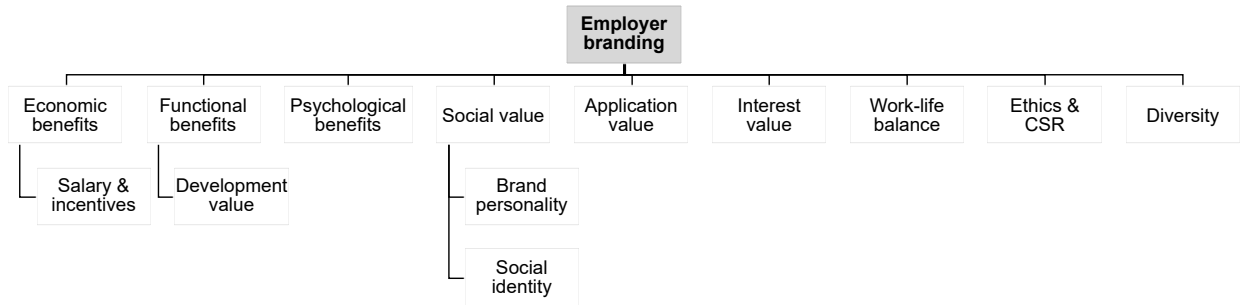
Figure 4. Employer branding dimensions (Ambler & Barrow 1996; Berthon et al. 2005; Tanwar & Kumar 2019)

According to Ambler and Barrow (1996) the benefits of the employer brand are similar to the benefits that are offered to consumer customers by conventional product brands. Ambler and Barrow stated in their well-known research that the employer brand is a "package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by the employment" and they divide the employer brand dimensions based on this to the three dimensions. (1) Functional benefits include activities that are related to development and other useful factors. (2) Economic benefits include all material and monetary rewards, such as salary and incentives and (3) the psychological benefits bring additional value to the employee through feelings like belonging, purposefulness and having a direction. They also point out that employer brand also has a personality, that can be seen as a part of the benefits.

As an extension of the three dimensions introduced by Ambler and Barrow (1996), Berthon et al. (2005) created 5 dimensions that help measure the employer brand; (1) Interest value assesses individual's interest in exciting work environment and innovativeness and (2) social value considers individual's attractiveness to a fun, happy work atmosphere. (3) Economic value assesses individual's attraction to an employer that offers competitive salary and opportunities for promotion. In Figure 4 it is below Ambler and Barrow's economic benefits due to their similarity. (4) Development value is about individual's attractiveness to an organization that provides recognition and advancement opportunities, and it is placed under the functional benefits in Figure 4 because of their closeness. Finally, (5) application value assesses individual's attraction to an employer that gives its employees a chance to apply what they have learned and to teach others at the same time. These dimensions can also be observed when examining an organization's employer branding efforts and related content.

Tanwar and Kumar (2019) have then examined Berthon et al.'s dimensions and based on it added three new dimensions in their study; corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethics, work-life balance, and diversity. CSR is designed to measure the effect that organizations or corporations have on the society that they are a part of. Positive ethics and CSR actions also allows them to attract new customers and employees. Work-life balance covers the relationship between employee's personal and private life and the organization's policies related to it. Lastly, diversity is about the organization's mix of workforce that brings many diverse aspects to the organization, such as experiences and strengths.

Many of the previous studies have focused on the functional attributes that the organization offers to its employees, such as pay, career programs, and advancement opportunities. (Cable & Graham, 2000; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001; Lievens & Highhouse 2003) As in the economic value and development value presented by Berthon et al. (2005) But the fact is that these factors are not usually the ones that usually truly differentiate the organization from the rest of the crowd, sometimes they can be seen even as less useful dimensions to feature since usually they tend to be quite similar and easily copiable amongst competitors within the same industry. (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, 76.)

As there are so many dimensions to employer branding it is not necessarily useful to focus on all of them during one study. Looking at all of the dimensions, they tend to be quite scarce and sometimes overlapping with each other. This current study will focus on a mix of dimensions introduced by, Ambler and Barrow (1996) Berthon et al. (2005) and Tanwar and Kumar (2019). These dimensions are social value, diversity, work culture, and development value. The selected dimensions can be seen in Figure 5.
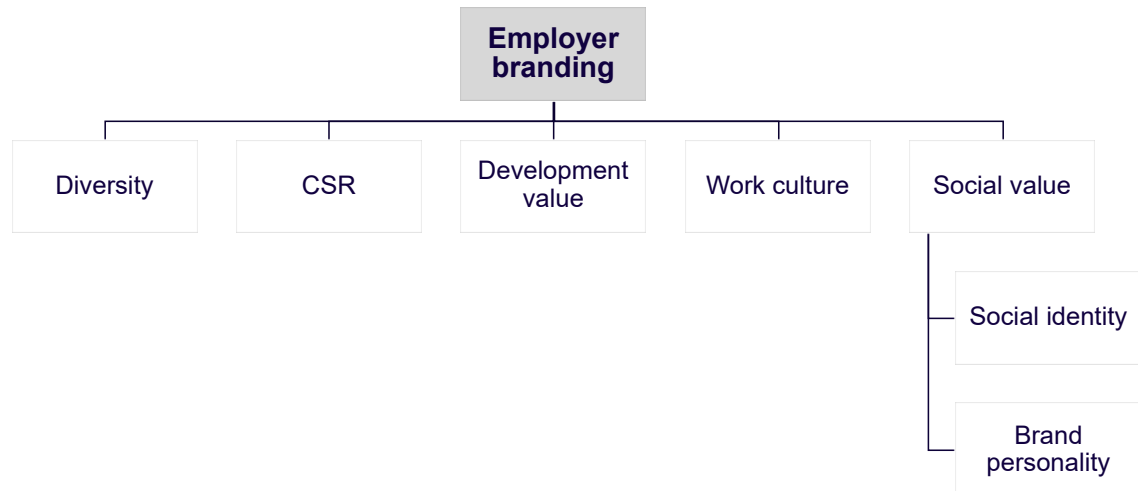
Figure 5. Employer branding dimensions used in this study

This mixture of dimension was selected as the attempt is to dive more deeply into what dimensions make an organization unique and how can this be presented trough means of employer branding. Today, the more common belief is that the employer branding strategies and features should be centred most importantly around the soft aspects, because they are not as easily copied by the competition. They are what makes the organization unique and thus what should be highlighted in the employer branding efforts. Hard dimensions, such as economic benefits, are easily copied by competitors and easily achieved across organizations. Soft dimensions also help employees to identify better with their current or future employer. (Bonaiuto et al. 2013, 780.) Because of this, it is useful to look at other organizational dimensions that could help sharpen the organization's employer branding efforts. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) propose that job applicant's initial attraction is formed also with the help of symbolic meanings that they associate with that specific organization.

There is reasoning behind why some dimensions are left behind in this study. Economic benefits are not discussed further in this study because of its easily copiable nature. Application value and interest value are left out because they focus more on recruitment activities. Ethics and CSR dimensions are left out because it can be difficult to distinguish when they are being used specifically for employer branding or just as a general brand promotion. Psychological value is left out from this study as Ambler and Barrow defines it, but the dimension partially be seen within the wider dimension of social value, in the social identity section.

As can be seen in Figure 5, in this study social value is taken into notice in a broader way than the other dimensions because it has more depth when it comes to the employer branding concept. Social value contains the working environment that is provided by the specific organization and the psychological benefits that come from belonging to an organization. (Highhouse et al. 2007, 135) It is different from the other values presented because it takes the company's brand into notice. This dimension is further discussed in Section 2.6 as its own entity, where we examine how social value can bring more depth into employer branding and lives of the employees. Social value is more complex and includes a variety of different dimensions that can affect the meaning and importance of it to the individual.

Next sections will introduce the chosen dimensions further and discuss their meaning to employer branding. These dimensions will later be used in the conceptual framework and in the empirical study of this research.

2.3.1 Diversity

Addressing diversity and inclusivity is an important aspect of many companies' corporate agenda today. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 616) There can be diversity related to both the people and the job tasks. According to Tanwar and Kumar (2019) diversity is referring to a mixed workforce. It has a large variety of different experience, abilities, knowledge, and strengths. But there is also cultural diversity that needs to be taken into notice and that has been gaining a lot more attention during the past years. Cultural diversity in the workplace is very important for creating a fit between the employees and the organization. It affects how individuals perceive different job characteristics and how likely they are attractive ones in the eyes of the individual. (Graham & Cascio 2018, 367.) Communicating about the organization's diversity and inclusivity can attract talented

individuals and can help them in becoming an employer of choice. Highlighting these aspects can also help brand the organization as an 'diversity-driven employer' and can signal that it is a great employee for diverse job candidates. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 617.)

Promoting diversity has great potential in becoming a more attractive employer and creating a work environment where talented employees wish to work in. Having a diverse workforce gives the organization an opportunity to create and communicate change that can nourish and grow the human potential of their employees. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 621) Naturally this has great importance today, as human capital is one of the most important aspects of companies today. Investing in diversity also may have important implications when it comes to international brand building. Organizations must understand the main differences between cultures and try to create the desired employer brand for each culture that the organization has presence in. This can be tricky because at the same time the organization has to make sure that it stays true to its fundamental employer brand messaging. (Graham & Cascio 2018, 368.)

The same also goes for the diversity experienced in the work tasks. Talented applicants who are high achievers are most likely to prefer to work in an organization that offers them diversity both in task and challenging roles. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 804.) Task diversity also contributes towards the meaningfulness of the job. (Gomes & Neves 2011, 686)

Promoting diversity in employer branding efforts thus can have many opportunities. However, it is important that the messaging about diversity is truthful. Otherwise, it can have negative impacts or can lead to a steep decline in the employer brand image. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 621; Elegbe 2017, 273.)

2.3.2 Development value

Development value cover's the employees' opportunities to develop and be recognized within the company. It includes recognition, confidence and self-worth and opportunities that are provided by the organization. These opportunities can be career-enhancing experiences or fast tracks to different future employment opportunities. (Berthon et al. 2005, 162.) Development value was chosen in the conceptual framework to represent the more functional benefits that can be provided by an organization. Talented people rarely like to stay stagnant in one role for the time being, but instead they are motivated to

develop themselves and thus are looking for employers that offer these types of development opportunities.

Development can be seen as a more 'traditional' dimension in employer branding but nonetheless it is still an important and highly relevant one. Development and training opportunities can be seen as a direct investment to the organization's employees. (Berthon et al. 2005, 162) Development brings benefits both to the employer and the employee. With development and training the employee is likely to become more skilled and a more valuable worker. But at the same time, it brings personal value to the employee as well. Most likely the skills gained during development are skills that the employee is able to use in their next job as well or as a leverage when applying for a new job. Yet, if the development opportunities are good the employee might also be less inclined to change jobs anytime soon.

2.3.3 Work culture

Work culture includes the different organizational attributes that a specific organization has, which refer to organization's policies and work conditions. (Gomes & Neves 2011, 686.) It represents the organizations beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and ideologies. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 802) In this study also work-life balance is included in the work culture, because it describes the organization's policy quite well. These types of organizational or work culture characteristics are used in open job listings commonly and previous literature has shown that they have an impact on job choice intentions. (Gomes & Neves 2011, 686.) According to a survey conducted by Glint (2021) top five drivers for work culture are the following:

1. Opportunities to learn and grow

2. Belonging

3. Organizational value

4. Support for well-being

5. Collaboration.

These drivers have changed significantly during the recent years due to the pandemic and are likely to keep on evolving as the world adjusts to the 'new normal' of working after. (Glint 2021)

Work-life balance covers the state of balance that individuals can achieve in relation to their professional and personal lives. It also includes organization's policies that are made in order to be able to offer the employees a healthy balance between their workload and personal time. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 802.)

The next chapter will introduce the brand's social value that can be used in employer branding. These dimensions help differentiate an organization from its competitors with the help of its unique features that are not easily copied. At the same time, they help to explain why an individual is attracted to a specific organization as an employer or why they wish to work there.

2.3.4 Social value

Social value is highly important for employer branding because it brings more depth to the subject. It includes features that are not as easy to compare or copy, such as is the employee having fun and feeling happy in the workplace, collegial relationships a good team atmosphere within the organization. (Berthon et al. 2005, 159.) In this study social value is covered from a larger perspective than the previous studies have investigated. This is because social value is able to highlight the organization's unique aspects more and to take the brand into notice. Because of that it is able to bring of a unique aspect to employer branding that is not as easily copied by competitors. (Highhouse et al. 2007, 135) In this study social value is further divided into two dimensions social identity and brand personality. Social identity covers the topic of belonging and brand personality reflects more on identity and status.

2.3.4.1 Social identity and fitting in

Choosing an employer that is the right fit for you is not an easy decision. It has important and sometimes even unpredictable consequences to an individual's personal life and these employment decisions include uncertainty and risk. Because of this, it can be compared to an extensive purchase decision made by consumers. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 757.) Both of these decisions include intensive internal and external information search, high

search costs and typically a long period of time before the final decision is made. (Lamb et al. 2011, 193) Previous literature shows that the compatibility between individual identity and organizational identity has a positive effect on the individuals job choice decisions and can thus relieve the decision-making stress and uncertainty. (Xie et al. 2015, 127; Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 817.)

Research has discovered that potential applicants compare their needs, values and personalities to the employer brand image. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 800) The better the fit between individual's self-identity and perceived organizational identity the more likely it is that the individual is attracted to the organization. (Xie et al. 2015, 127) It is also found that in this situation the individual is more likely to apply for a job where the person-organization fit seems to match well and where organizational attraction has increased. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, 506) This is because it enhances self-continuity, which is enhanced because the information is easy to understand because of self-relevant information. When the person-organization fit is good, the individual member is drawn closer to the organization, compared to a situation where the fit is not as good for that individual. (Xie et al. 2015, 128.)

Social identity theory covers the topic of belonging to a distinctive group. This belonging creates the individual a feeling of pride that comes from being a part of that group. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 620.) During the 80's researchers suggested that social identity theory could also be applied to studying organizations as well. (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Tajfel & Turner 1979) In the context of employer branding this distinctive group is the work community or an organization that the employee belongs to. (Jonsen et al. 2021, 620.) The work community can be seen as one of the individual's social groups. (Maxwell & Knox 2009, 896)

Social identity consciousness (SIC) means individual's concerns for gaining social approval through working in a specific organization. (Highhouse et al. 2007, 136) It has been shown that individuals may pinpoint certain organizations and working there as an opportunity to enhance their self-esteem. They identify these organizations as a way to express themselves and to get recognized in the broader community and as attempts to attain social approval and acceptance. This identification by individuals may differ based on their identification according to which level does the certain organizational membership fulfil their self-esteem and self-consistency needs. In addition, it also

depends on the extent to which relevant audience exists in supporting their membership to this organization. (Younis & Hammad 2021, 246-247.)

This type of organizational identification has been proven to enhance different emotions amongst employees that may support the organization's brand as well. It can motivate them to engage in organizational citizenship behaviour, to project a positive image of the organization to different external stakeholders such as customers and to behave in a matter that mirror the organization's unique identity. It has been also found that the employees form stronger identification with their organization when they perceive that their organization's identity is unique and attractive. (Maxwell & Knox 2009, 896-897.)

Taking these social identity features into notice in employer branding can be beneficial because they help differentiate the organizations. Brands should learn and utilize what features might be alluring for the type of talented people that they are trying to attract and use this in employer branding efforts. This way it might be possible to affect the job applicants concerns for gaining social approval through employment. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 579; Highhouse et al. 2007, 137.)

As was mentioned before, employees found an organization more attractive if it is known and noticeable and when the organization is considered successful externally. It can be beneficial to promote the organization's success when trying to attract talented employees. As individuals seek social approval through working in a specific organization, they might be more motivated to switch to an organization that is more noticeable or successful because at the same time it can help promote their own social brand and enhance their self-esteem.

2.3.4.2 Brand personality

Brand personality traits are defined as a "set of human characteristics associated with a brand". The characteristics include sincerity, excitement, ruggedness, sophistication, and competence. (Aaker 1997, 347.) For already many years different researchers have been suggesting that brands also have personality traits. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759) This definition was first introduced by Aaker in the 90's and has since been explored further, especially with the help of his *brand personality scale* (BPS). (Aaker 1997, 347; Sung & Kim 2010, 640; Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219.) These types of human personality characteristics have been used to describe the different intangible assets of an

organization's brand image for a long time. (Keller & Lehman 2006, 741) They can also be used in employer branding and standing out from competitors, especially when attracting new employees. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219) When it comes to competition, they are recognized as an efficient way to stand out from other competitors at a symbolic level. (Sung & Kim, 2010, 640) Research suggests that employer brand attractiveness is not only the outcome of alluring functional attributes, like compensation or advancement opportunities, but is also affected by brand personality traits. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219)

Whereas consumers purchase different kinds of goods to express their identities, employees are doing the similar thing by deciding where they wish to work. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759) Rampl and Kenning (2014) suggest that an employer fulfils a central role in the formation of an employee's social identity and self-concept. The employees may use their employers' brand personality as an agent through which they seek to communicate their social status or bring out their moral values. The right formation can be found on the base of the job seeker's current or ideal personality. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759.)

Scholars have been investigating the differential effects of brand personality and employer brand attractiveness. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) were the first ones applying the brand personality context to the employer brand context. Doing so they were able to form a modified version of the brand personality traits that were priorly introduced by Aaker. These include innovativeness, competence, and prestige. These brand personality traits have been used when trying to explain the noticeable variance in employer brand attractiveness. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219-220.)

Organizations can use brand personality to their benefit in employer branding. When the organization is able to exhibit certain personality traits that match the jobseeker's personality or their ideal personality that they are trying to achieve, the organization becomes more attractive in the eyes of that jobseeker. (Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759.) This is because in that moment the organization succeeds in satisfying the jobseeker's underlying self-esteem needs. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219) Utilizing this aspect in employer branding is increasingly important nowadays as the importance of social media has grown. More and more jobseekers turn to social media to look for cues about the organization. They look for detailed information about the organization and its

personality traits that then helps them to form a more informative and holistic picture of the organization. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219, Kissel & Büttgen 2015, 759.) This is done also by observing the people living the brand, the employees, as was mentioned in Chapter 2.2.4.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research strategy

3.1.1 Qualitative research supplemented by numerical distributions

As the purpose of this research is to gain deeper understanding on employer branding dimensions the research is conducted first and foremost with the help of the qualitative research method. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) say that qualitative business research enables the researcher to focus on the complexity of business-related phenomena in a specific context. Qualitative research method was seen as a great fit for this research as it seeks to gain more understanding by describing a phenomenon, understanding a certain function, or giving interpretations of different topics. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 73.) In addition, the aim of qualitative research is to provide descriptive data and to create new insights and findings, instead of focusing on testing previous theories or hypotheses, like quantitative research methods tend to aim. (Taylor et al. 2016, 17-18) What is also great is the fact that with qualitative research it is possible to focus on understanding reality as socially constructed and how it is interpreted though different cultural meanings. A feature that is not quite possible in quantitative research. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 5.) Since there has not been many studies that have researched the employer branding dimensions seen in social media, the qualitative approach will offer a way to create more in-depth understanding on this matter.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) say that there are many different approaches to qualitative research and numerous methods for data collection and analysis. As this research seeks to gain more in-depth knowledge by analysing two different companies' social media posts, it seen to be a case study. By focusing on these two companies, this research seeks to gain a vast amount on information on a specific case and from a specific perspective. But when it comes to case studies, it is also good to take into notice that the method has also faced some criticism as well. The criticism is formed because of a possible lack of discipline from the researcher's side. The lack of discipline comes when researchers have not acted based on systematic procedures or have let their biases affect their research. (Yin 2003, 14) In addition to the researcher's actions, the case study approach has also faced criticism for its limited possibilities for generalization. As they tend to only focus on a small number of cases, the results cannot be generalized into

statements that would be true as it is in other situations as well. But not all information has to be generalizable. As Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) point out, case studies do not seek to create information that is generalizable to begin with. Instead, it seeks to delve into and gain insights from that specific case's perspective. Creating deeper understanding such as this also contributes to business knowledge on its own valuable way. (Farquhar 2012, 7)

It is rather traditional to describe qualitative and quantitative research as the opposites of each other, but this is not the only way to see things. Both methods are needed to study different kinds of subjects. There also is not a one answer to whether the two should complement or rule out each other. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 53.) Even as this research is mainly qualitative, some features in the analysis process still remind us of quantitative research. For example, discovering how many social posts of each dimension falls into the quantitative side of research. In this study however, no actual statistical analyses are conducted. The use of qualitative methods and case study will help this research in its aim to describe a phenomenon and create more understanding, instead of trying to create quantitative generalizations. (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 61) The nature of the qualitative content analysis is further discussed next in section 3.1.2.

3.1.2 Qualitative content analysis and internet research

Qualitative content analysis can be seen as a bundle of text analysis procedures that integrates both qualitative and quantitative steps of analysis. The analysis method aims to bring together features of both qualitative and quantitative methods by establishing a mixed methods research approach to text analysis. (Mayring 2014, 365.) The analysis method systematic by nature and seeks to describe and analyse different kinds of qualitative research materials. (Schreier 2013, 1) Prior to qualitative content analysis, quantitative content analysis was largely popular. (Mayring 2014, 365.) According to Berelson (1952, 18) content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Content analysis is not pursued only to describe a content but to also analyse underlying meanings of structures. Quantitative content analysis has later received criticism for being unable to fulfil requirements and only producing superficial findings instead of meaningful ones. Because of this the method has reaches some level of stagnation. (Mayring 2014, 368.)

Qualitative content analysis on the other hand has become a standard procedure for text analysis especially within the field of social sciences. The analysis method is not a standardized instrument of research but must be fitted in a way that suits the situation and the constructed so that it is made for the issue in hand. Thus, every situation must be examined individually and based on it determine how qualitative content analysis is approached in the given situation and context. (Mayring 2014, 365-370.) This research does not have a specific research process model that it seeks to follow specifically, but it follows some of the analysis implementation guidelines and steps suggested by Philipp Mayring. As qualitative content analysis situations must be examined individually, it seems fit to choose some of the steps that seem the most logical and fitting for this research.

According to Mayring (2014) the qualitative content analysis method seeks to retain the known strengths of quantitative analysis and "against this background to develop techniques of systematic qualitatively oriented text analysis". He explains that the method combines two primary steps of analysis. The first is a qualitative-interpretative step that follows a hermeneutical logic when assigning categories to text fragments. These categories are priorly decided with the help of theoretical research. The second step is quantitative analysis of frequencies – finding out how many times these categories appear in the research materials. The method can be reduced to three principal types of interpreting: summary (*text reduction*), explanation and structuring, as can be seen on Table 1.

Table 1. Fundamental forms of interpreting in qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2014, 373)

Reducing procedures	Reduces the material so that only the essential contents remain.
Explicating procedures	Provides additional material on individual doubtful text components and seek to increase understanding, interpret, or explain a specific fragment of text.
Structuring procedures	Filters out specific aspects of the researched material, to give a cross-section of the material according to pre-determined ordering criteria or to examine the material according to specific pre-determined criteria.

This research focuses on structuring procedures in the analysis interpretation. This is done by having the set of employer branding dimensions that act as the pre-determined criteria for the research. What is also interesting in this type of qualitative content analysis research project is the hidden meanings of the analysed material and what is the researcher able to find from them. (Schreier 2013, 16) Qualitative research as this is often descriptive

and built on socially constructed situations, which also explains why qualitative content analysis is flexible by nature. (Mayring 2014, 5; Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 139)

It is interesting to research employer branding in the context of social media as research on Internet is still somewhat new in business research and we are constantly discovering new aspects to research. Poynter (2010) points out in his book on social media research tools and techniques, that "the use of the internet is currently the most exciting and dynamically changing aspect of the market research". Even as this quote is now already a decade old the situation remains the same. The internet continues to provide us new and exciting aspects to study at it evolves and becomes more and more important in our daily lives. Internet research has largely concentrated on quantitative research and collecting vast amounts of quantitative survey data. Internet has made it possible to collect impressive amounts of data with less effort that has ever before been possible. (Poynter 2010, 1.) But at the same time researching the internet with qualitative methods needs more attention and new discoveries.

Laaksonen et al. (2013) suggest that the Internet has four possible roles in research: the tool, the source, the place, or the target. If the internet is the *tool* in the research it acts as the means to gather research material. If it is the *source,* it means that the research focuses on studying some event, phenomenon or interaction that is conveyed through the internet. When the internet is the *place* of research it is mostly related to ethnographic research. In that set up the researcher's personal presence, status and observation methods should be adjusted to be fit to the internet environment. Lastly, if the internet is the *target*, it means that the research focuses most on learning about the technical structure of it, its development or to learning more about a single service on the internet. In this research the internet, and social media to be more specific, is seen as the source of the research. This research focuses on the content that is found on two specific social media platforms from two companies' accounts. Thus, the research is not interested in for example the technical side of social media platforms, but on the phenomenon of employer branding that can be discovered from the two companies' social media accounts. Using social media as the source gives the research an interesting surrounding to study employer branding on.

With the help of qualitative content analysis this research seeks to gain more understanding on employer branding and how its dimensions manifest themselves

through social media. The subjects for the qualitative analysis were chosen in a way that they represent a similar industry and a field of business. This way their differences are also more easily comparable with each other. The choosing of the case companies is further explained in section 3.2.1.

3.2 Gathering of empirical materials

3.2.1 Choosing of companies

In qualitative research it's not about the number of companies that are being researched as the findings don't strive for statistical generalizations. Instead, it is crucial to focus on finding research subjects that have experience on the topic or work within a specific industry that is being studied. Thus, choosing of companies shouldn't be conducted randomly or without justifications but with intention and in a manner that makes sense for the purpose of the research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 73.) In this research the choosing of companies began by generally browsing different industries and topics that are current. The IT industry quickly rose to attention as it has been actively on the news lately given since the shortage of skilled workforce and it being a growing industry. Defining the industry to IT consulting came from the researcher's own interests, as she has priorly worked in the IT consulting industry. Partly due to own interests and the worldwide attraction the industry faces the focus point seemed like a good fit.

The chosen companies for the content analysis are Accenture and Gofore. These companies work in the consulting industry and are big well-respected and known international companies. They both have presence in Finland and have their own Finland region specific social media content. These two companies were chosen for the research because they represent two important players within their industry. According to many rankings across years, Accenture is seen as the, or one of the top IT strategy consulting companies of the world and regionally in the US, Europe, and Asia. It is also one of the world's biggest consulting companies. (Firsthand 2022; Management Consulted 2021.) Gofore on the other hand has won prized for being the 2nd best workplace in Europe and the 1st in Finland. (Gofore2022a) As we can see, both companies are acknowledged within their industry and crowd of employees they are trying to reach. What is interesting for this research is that even as both are well-known and desirable workplaces, they still do active employer branding and marketing across their channels. Because of this, it is

interesting to research their methods, showcased dimensions and how they approach employer branding.

Accenture is a global consulting company that has over 721 000 employees worldwide of which over 1100 are located in Finland. The company operates across 50 countries over 200 cities have Accenture locations. They appear to focus on large companies; thus, they work with 89 of the Fortune Global 100 companies. Accenture highlights that its values shape the culture of the organization and the define the character of the whole company. These values also act as the foundation on how each one of them acts and make decisions at Accenture. They also highlight the importance of ethics, corporate governance and acting with integrity in their work. (Accenture 2022a.) Their set core values are client value creation, respect for the individual, integrity, one global network, best people, and stewardship. (Accenture 2022b)

Gofore is a digital transformation consultancy that has over 1000 employees, located in twelve different offices in Finland, Germany, Estonia, and Spain. The 20-year-old Finnish company offers a wide selection of different digital services, such as service and business design, data and AI solutions, cloud and ICT-infra solutions, cyber security, change leadership and process development. Gofore aims to be the 'ally in digitalisation and change' and using its expertise to create impactful change for its customers. The company is listed in Nasdaq Helsinki. (Gofore 2022b.) They too have big names as their customers and say that hundreds of companies in more than 20 countries collaborate with Gofore to scale their businesses. These names include for example Volkswagen, ABB, Bosch and The Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle). (Gofore 2022c.) One of the most important values that Gofore has, is that the company is a great workplace for all. The company's culture is based on caring for one another, continuous improvement and believing that individuals know best when it comes to way and location of working. Gofore has noticed the importance of employees for its business and thus encourages them to learn continuously and offering them a variety of different opportunities to develop their skills and expertise, while being your 'true self'. (Gofore 2022b.)

Even as the sizes of the chosen companies vary a lot, they still are all important players on the industry and somewhat competitors with each other. Both of them compete to attract the best employees from the same talent pool and they offer similar job positions for these potential and current employees. For this research it was seen that two

companies are enough to conduct the qualitative research, as there are no specific guidelines for how many companies should be studied in a qualitative research like this. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 74) Like in many research projects, also this one faces limitations such as time and resources that limit the extensiveness of the research. Given the limitations, was concluded that two case companies would result in the best possible analysis.

3.2.2 Choosing of social media channels

Social media were chosen to be the medium for the qualitative content analysis because it is one of the most popular channels to promote the employer brand on the internet. Organizations use different social media channels actively and as one of the main ways of communication with their community. Using social media in employer branding has gained a great deal of attention during the recent years and it helps organizations be able to select possible from a wider range of applicants as majority of today's youth is active on social media. (Kaur 2013, 546-547.)

Companies tend to have a large variety of different social media channels, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest. Whereas some companies may have accounts in all of these, others might only engage in a couple of these or focus on just one or two specific ones, depending on their industry and marketing efforts.

As there are so many different social media networks, it would not suite the purpose of this qualitative research to study a large variety of them within one research. The choosing of social media networks began by familiarizing with different types of social networks and how they are used. Also, the fact that how companies tend to use these networks played a crucial part in choosing the networks. For example, in Pinterest 97% of searches are not brand related and users come to the site to browse, find new things, get inspired and to buy things. (Pinterest Business 2022) When thinking about employer branding and the aim of this study, networking sites Pinterest for example isn't necessarily the best fit as it is more about inspiration products, and not brand specific. Keeping this in mind, it was important to find social media networks that give the companies opportunities to present their employer brand, have the right audience and that both of the companies are active in.

After familiarising with different kinds of social media networks, Instagram and LinkedIn were chosen as the studied networks for this research. The social media sites two were chosen because they represent two very different types of social networks but are still highly relevant for all kinds of companies – including the case companies of this research. Including two different types of social media networks in the research could pose interesting findings of how companies present their employer branding in different medias and what employer branding dimensions can be seen in different channels. Both Gofore and Accenture have both Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network and has over 850 million members in more than 200 countries and territories. The mission of LinkedIn is to "connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful". The company was launched in 2003 has since in 2016 been bought by Microsoft. (LinkedIn 2022a) Approximately 60 percent of all users are between the ages of 25 and 34. This is somewhat explained by the fact that people within this age group are still starting out their professional careers and actively looking for new growth opportunities. (Hootsuite 2022) As LinkedIn is mainly a professional network its users also focus on professional content on their personal sites. According to LinkedIn (2021) people are 14 times more likely to share content from their own employers than any other type of content on their LinkedIn, thus making employees a crucial part of companies' LinkedIn activity.

Instagram is mainly a photo and video sharing social media app that was launched back in 2010. The app gained quick success as it was unlike any other social media network before and was then acquired by META (Facebook) in less than two years after the launch. (Investopedia 2022.) Its mission is to "capture and share the world's moments". (Mission Statement 2022) The primary focus of the network has been to feature photos and it still is the key element to a post. Recently Instagram has also been adding more features such as short videos with music and "stories" to compete with other social medias. (Investopedia 2022) The social network is popular among all kinds of companies, and it offers them great visibility and opportunities. According to Instagram (2022a) over 90 percent of all users "follow" at least one company on the platform and two thirds of survey responders say that they feel more connected to brands through Instagram. In addition, 50 percent of the respondents also share that they become more interested in a brand after they see the brand's ads on the app.

When it comes to employer branding and employer attractiveness, it is good to take into notice that there tend to be cross-cultural differences. (Berthon et al. 2005, 168) What works in the US might not work the same as it is in Finland. Due to this fact this study chooses to focus on slightly more regional social media channels of international companies. This can possibly make the cross-cultural differences smaller, since the content on these sites is aimed at a specific target audience.

Accenture has "Accenture Nordics" channel on LinkedIn that is shared between the Nordic countries Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark but with country and language specific targeting. (LinkedIn 2022) On Instagram the company has an account called "Accenturefi" which based on their account biography text covers life at Accenture Finland and thoughts about technology. (Instagram 2022b) Gofore on the other hand has only one LinkedIn page called "Gofore" and it is has content that is related to all operations in Europe. But a large portion of the content focuses on Finland and the Finnish audience. On Instagram the company has an account called "Goforegroup" that based on their biography text, seeks to introduce 'Goforeans' and their company culture. (Instagram 2022c) From now onwards in this research as Accenture or Gofore and their social media posts are discussed, the discussion is about the set channels that are mentioned above.

3.3 Analysis implementation

3.3.1 Starting point

People and companies tend to be quite active on social media sites and keep continuously posting on their accounts. There are many different variations of suggestions for how often companies should post on social media. The most common ones suggest that companies should post to LinkedIn at least once a day but no more than five times per day. For Instagram it is recommended to post between three to seven times per week. (Hootsuite 2021) According to an analysis conducted by the social media management platform Later, accounts that have between 1000 and 250 000 followers posting 14 or 20 per weeks delivers them the highest reach rate for posts. (Later 2021) As it can be gathered, companies tend to post to social media a lot. Because of the continuous nature of social media, it would not be reasonable or meaningful to study the entire content that has been posted by a company to their social media account across time. Instead, this

research will focus on a set period of postings made by the two companies in the two different networks.

The gathering of research material began in October 2022. Based on the background information it was chosen before conducting the analysis to use a two-month period for LinkedIn data gathering and six-month period for Instagram. At the starting point of the research project, the two-month period for LinkedIn and six-month period for Instagram are expected to have a sufficient number of posts as companies tend to post to social media actively. As company tend to post to Instagram less than to LinkedIn, a longer time-period was needed to gather a sufficient number of posts. The time period is targeted to be the most recent months of posted content, because it is seen as the most relevant to date. Social media has a fast turnaround and trends, themes and posts can change in a short period of time. What was a successful post a year ago might not work the same today. Because of this, it is crucial to research the most recent content there is available.

Table 2. Social media following stats in November 2022 (retrieved 14.10.2022)

Social media following	Accenture Nordics	Gofore
LinkedIn	32,916	20,159
Instagram	2,603	2,212

Table 2 presents the following amounts for both companies and social medias during the time of research material gathering. While gathering the material it was continuously being saved on Microsoft Excel software, including the text and the photos that the posts included. This research will mainly focus on the text of the post and not the pictures, emoticons or hashtags presented along with them.

As said before, this research is not based on a set research analysis procedure but will follow the qualitative content analysis method that Mayring has introduced in his work. Mayring (2014) highlights that there are things need to be taken into notice when conducting qualitative content analysis: embedding of the material within the communicative context, rule-bound systematic procedure, categorization, interpretation of results and examining the research reliability and validity. The embedding of the material within the communicative context is about what about it is interesting, what part of it is being analysed, who has made the material in question and why it has been made in the first place. The research material and the organizations who have made the materials are introduced in sections 3.2.1. and 3.2.2. Categorization is discussed further

in the next section, results interpretation process is introduced in section 3.3.3. and research reliability and validity are discussed in section 3.4.

3.3.2 Theory based categorizing and analysis

After choosing the social medias, companies and gathering prior theoretical contributions, a categorization needed to be done next. According to Mayring (2014) the categorization system is one of the most central points of qualitative content analysis. What is also important about it is that it contributes to the inter-subjectivity of the method. This type of specification will make it easier for others to possibly reconstruct a similar type of analysis. Next, we will go over the initial categorization and related classification rules that were set for the qualitative content analysis. The initial categorization can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Initial research material categorization guidelines

Top category	Subcategory	Definition	Classification rule
Employer branding	*Diversity*	Diversity both in workforce and job tasks.	Mentions mixed workforce in abilities or in culture. Or mentions diversity in tasks or job roles.
	Development value	Opportunities to develop and be recognized within the organization.	Mentions recognition, career-enhancing opportunities, fast tracks, training and learning or future goals.
	Work culture	Includes different attributes that a specific organization has. Refers to its policies and work conditions	Mentions the organization's beliefs, thoughts, attitudes or ideologies or the work-life balance.
	Social value	The working environment and the psychological benefits that come from belonging to an organization	Mentions aspects that makes the organization unique, social identity, belonging or the brand personality.
	Other	Something related to employer branding but is not included in any of the definitions above	Does not mention any of the first five subcategories' features at all.
Other	-	Something other that is not related to employer branding, or the definitions mentioned at all	Does not mention employer brand or its subcategories in any ways

As can be seen in Table 3, the categorization is formed from the prior theoretical contributions and the theoretical framework that was formed based on prior theory. For the top category of employer branding, we will specifically look for subcategories of diversity, development value, work culture and social value. For the sake of the categorization 'Other' employer branding subcategory was added in case other employer branding dimensions, as introduced in Figure 4, would show. In addition, another top category of 'Other' was added, since it is expected that other content in addition to employer branding related content will show as well. However, the main aim of this analysis is to analyse at the employer branding related content.

Mayring (2014) suggests that when 10-50% of the material has been analysed, a revision phase is recommended. This means that keeping in mind the material that has been already analysed, the categorization rules should be looked at once more and possibly changed based on what has been found.

In this research this revision phase was also conducted, and the categorization ended up being altered based on it. After about 40% of the material was analysed, it was found that CSR, an employer branding dimension briefly introduced in section 2.3, was highly visible in the analysed materials. CSR was not initially considered to be relevant for this qualitative content analysis but proved the researcher wrong in this case. Because of this realization it was seen as a justified edit to add the CSR dimension to the categorization table. The final categorization table can be seen below in Table 4.

Table 4. Final research material categorization guidelines

Top category	Subcategory	Definition	Classification rule
Employer branding	*Diversity*	Diversity both in workforce and job tasks.	Mentions mixed workforce in abilities or in culture. Or mentions diversity in tasks or job roles.
	Development value	Opportunities to develop and be recognized within the organization.	Mentions recognition, career-enhancing opportunities, fast tracks, training and learning or future goals.
	Work culture	Includes different attributes that a specific organization has. Refers to its policies and work conditions	Mentions the organization's beliefs, thoughts, attitudes or ideologies or the work-life balance.

	Social value	The working environment and the psychological benefits that come from belonging to an organization	Mentions aspects that makes the organization unique, social identity, belonging or the brand personality.
	CSR	Corporate social responsibility – the effect the organizations have on the society they are part of	Mentions aspects related to CSR efforts that the organization is doing or promoting.
	Other	Something related to employer branding but is not included in any of the definitions above	Does not mention any of the first five subcategories' features at all.
Other	-	Something other that is not related to employer branding, or the definitions mentioned at all	Does not mention employer brand or its subcategories in any ways

These categorization guidelines seen in Table 4 are the ones that guided the rest of the research material categorization and recategorization of the material that had been possibly categorized as 'other employer branding' based on the initial categorization guidelines. These final categorizations lead us to results and the analysation of the results.

The categorization of the results was done with the help of the research material categorization guidelines seen on Table 4 and some additional subdimensions that were added for categorizing the results. These subdimensions are introduced and discussed further during the research results in Chapter 4. During the analysation the research material was gone through repeatedly and analysed with the help of the criteria and prior theoretical knowledge. The goal of qualitative analysis is to bring more clarity, with the help of structuring procedures in this research, and produce new knowledge and findings on the topic. (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 318) This research followed this goal as well and was kept in mind during the research project.

3.4   Quality of the research

When conducting a research project, it is highly crucial to also evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of the research. Traditionally the trustworthiness and quality of the research are examined with the help of validity, reliability, and objectivity. There is both internal validity and external validity. The internal validity covers the topic of how well the results described the researched phenomenon in question has the research focused on what it was supposed to research during the project. External validity covers how well

the results can be generalized. Reliability on the other hand is about repeatability of the research. The repeatability covers whether the research results would be able to be repeated or not. And lastly objectivity covers the issue of are there any biases in the results. These can result for example by the researcher's opinions, prejudices, or feelings. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 316; Lincoln & Guba 1985.) But what is important to take into notice regarding qualitative research projects is that these factors of validity, reliability, and objectivity have been criticised for how well they suit the qualitative setting. The factors have been facing criticism since they mainly fit the needs of quantitative research and do not fit the situation of qualitative research as they are. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 231.) Nonetheless, it is necessary to examine the trustworthiness of the research in some way. Alternative criteria that are seen to fit the qualitative research better include for example credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility covers the topics of general credibility and truth-value, meaning that the research findings offer interpretations of the research participants' original views in a credible form. As an evaluation criteria credibility is sort aiming for the same as internal validity in quantitative research. This truth-value is possible to be ensure with the help of pro-longed engagement, triangulation, and observation. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 232-233; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 143-144.)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) triangulation refers to using multiple different sources for data gathering. With triangulation the research is able to gain more extensive understanding on the researched phenomena and it can make it more credible. In this research project, the research material was gathered from two very different social media platforms, as explained in section 3.2.2, and from two different companies, as introduced in section 3.2.1. Having two different social media platforms can be seen as a form of triangulation and as an attempt to make the research more credible. In addition, the gathered research material was already in a text format and published by the organizations themselves. Thus, the research material is based on what the organizations have posted to their own social media channels. Also having two different companies seeks to add to the credibility as well. Even as the two companies work in the same industry, they are different in nature, as explained before. This difference in their nature aims to add to the research credibility as well.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) transferability covers the topic of how the research results and findings could possibly be transferred to another context that would have entirely other participants or for example, industries or organizations in the case of this research. With qualitative content analysis this poses some natural challenges, as the findings rely heavy on the interpretations of the researcher. To increase the research transferability Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest including a generous description of the research project and context. This way the reader has a better chance to gain understanding on how this could be possibly transferred to another context. To improve the transferability of this research, the Chapter 3 in total seeks to include a broad description of the research context and its different elements.

Dependability is about how credible the process of the research is. Whereas credibility was all about general credibility, dependability delves into the topic of how logic, traceable and detailed the process is. To improve the dependability of the research it is important to provide a careful and detailed description of the research design and data gathering. (Lincoln & Guba 1985.) These elements are documented and justified in Chapter 3 when talking about the research project to provide better insights of the process to the reader. By capturing the research process in a detailed manner Chapter 3 it is also easier for the reader to understand the logic of the results as presented in Chapter 4.

Finally, confirmability is about how convincing the research results are. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) it is important that there is a chain of evidence, so that the research results do not just appear out of thin air. In this research project the chain of evidence aimed to present as accurate image of the research project and results as possible. As the results in this research are affected by the researcher's interpretation, Chapters 4 and 5 focus on providing information as much as possible, so that the reader is able to follow the logic of the results. This is for example done with the help of the social media post quotes along the results, that aim to paint the picture of the employer dimensions seen on social media and how does the language appear in them.

Next, partly related to the topic of quality, in the next chapter we will take a closer look at the ethical aspects related to the research.

3.5 Ethical aspects

When conducting research, the ethical aspects related to the it should be taken into notice as well. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) suggest that trustworthiness and ethics should be kept in mind during the entire research process, instead of just focusing on them during the research material collection. It is important that the researcher makes sure to familiarize themselves with research ethic and good research procedure already prior to them starting the actual research project.

This research topic and case companies were chosen based on the researcher's own interests and justifications and was not made as an assignment to either of the case companies or to any other party either. The researcher has priorly worked for Accenture Finland as part of their marketing team but hasn't been working there for over a half a year when the empirical study was conducted. This prior employment can result to the researcher being more aware of what Accenture Finland is trying to achieve with their social media goals, the type of language they use or their style. As qualitative research and qualitative content analysis are interpretative and flexible by nature this former connection is also useful to take into notice.

The research material in question is public material that was gathered from the Internet, more specifically from the case companies' social media channels from LinkedIn and Instagram. This means all the material used in this research is publicly available for all and do not contain any material, personal data or details that would be additionally gathered, such as with the help of interviews. All research material used for the qualitative content analysis has been published by the companies themselves. This material was gathered between October and November of 2022 and then analysed as it is. The research material was gathered into Microsoft Word and Excel during the research. It is possible that the organizations have later made edits to these posts or deleted some but that has not been revised in this research material.

4 Results: Manifestation of the case companies' employer branding dimensions on social media

This chapter will go through the empirical findings with the help of the theoretical framework that was included in the research method. In this chapter we will only focus on the last research question 'How do the central dimensions of employer branding manifest themselves in the researched companies' social media channels?' as the prior two research questions are answered with the help of the theoretical chapters. These two will be further discussed in the conclusions in Chapter 5.

The results introduced below are the results of a qualitative social media content analysis that was conducted between October and November 2022. The gathered data included a total of 335 social media posts from LinkedIn and Instagram, from the chosen case companies Accenture and Gofore. Because of the quite differing nature of LinkedIn and Instagram as social media platforms they were analysed as different entities in this research. However, during the analysis it was seen that both channels had similar posts or about the same theme, but the wording changed between the channels.

4.1 Employer branding dimensions on LinkedIn

It was quickly noticed that the two companies posted a lot in LinkedIn. Accenture Nordics posted 89 posts in total to LinkedIn during the set research time period of 2 months and Gofore posted 99 times. What posed difficulties during the data gathering period was that LinkedIn doesn't show exact times or dates of when the post has been made. Instead, it will say '2 days ago' or '2 months' ago, which made it more difficult to estimate that the timeframe was the exact same for the two case companies. It was set so that the beginning of post gathering began where it first said '3 months' ago in the post.

The social media actions on LinkedIn from both companies support the general recommendations for LinkedIn behaviour that were introduced before in section 3.3.1. Most of the suggestions for posting suggest that companies should post to LinkedIn at least once a day but no more than five times per day. It seems that based on the research data, both Accenture Nordics -LinkedIn channel and Gofore -LinkedIn channel both post more than once a day in average. Accenture seems to be posting on average 1.48 posts per day and Gofore 1.65 times per day.

Table 5. All LinkedIn social media posts by Accenture and Gofore

Dimension	Accenture	% of all posts	Gofore	% of all posts	Total
Diversity	13	15%	16	16%	29
Development value	10	11%	16	16%	26
Work culture	17	19%	24	24%	41
Social value	24	27%	11	11%	35
CSR	16	18%	3	3%	19
Other employer branding	0	0%	0	0%	0
Strictly other content	9	10%	29	29%	38
Total	89	100%	99	100%	188

Categorizing the results was challenging at times as many of the social media posts were long and included elements of many different dimensions. It was decided that it was alright for one text to have multiple categories, so a category of 'strictly other content' was added, as can be seen in Table 5. This category presents the social media posts that didn't have any elements of employer branding or its dimensions. Later looking at the texts during the qualitative analysis all posts were categorised in a way which dimension suits that specific text the most. These categorizations can be seen in Table 5, including the number of posts for each dimension per company and their percentages of the case company's whole LinkedIn post amount. Based on the categorization results of the content analysis, the three most visible employer branding dimensions on LinkedIn were the following:

Table 6. Most visible employer branding dimensions on LinkedIn

Accenture	Gofore
1. Social value	1. Work culture
2. Work culture	2. Development value & Diversity
3. CSR	3. Social value

As seen in Table 6, for Accenture, social value was clearly the most visible dimension with 27% of all the post all together, still followed quite quickly by work culture 19% and CSR 18%. For Gofore work culture was visibly the most important with 33%, followed by development value and diversity in a shared place with both having 16%. As the two shared the second place, social value came up in the third place with 11%. Both companies have work culture and social value in their own top three dimensions. Then

looking at the combined totals of both companies work culture was in the first place with 22% of all posts, followed by social value 19% and diversity 15%.

4.2 Employer branding dimensions on Instagram

In the beginning of the analysis, it was quickly noticed that the case companies posted far less often to Instagram than they did to LinkedIn. Because of this, a longer time period was needed from which the data would be gathered. The chosen time period ended up being six months, and during that time @Accenturefi (Accenture Finland) account posted 75 times and @Goforegroup (Gofore) posted 72 times. For Instagram it was easier to gather posts from exact time periods as the social media shows exact dates of which the posts have been made.

As said, it was noticed that both Accenture and Gofore posted noticeably less to Instagram than they did to LinkedIn. The post amounts were still less than their comparison amounts in LinkedIn, even as for Instagram the data collection time frame was 4 months longer than for LinkedIn. During the research time frame Accenture posted 3,125 posts per week to Instagram on average and Gofore posted 3 posts per week. These amounts are in line with the majority of the recommendations of how often to post to Instagram, as the most common suggestion is to post between three to seven times per week. The split between different dimensions is the following:

Table 7. All Instagram social media posts by Accenture and Gofore

Dimension	Accenture	% of all posts	Gofore	% of all posts	Total
Diversity	11	15%	15	21%	26
Development value	3	4%	8	11%	11
Work culture	24	32%	24	33%	48
Social value	30	40%	15	21%	45
CSR	5	7%	6	8%	11
Other employer branding	0	0%	0	0%	0
Strictly other content	2	3%	4	6%	6
Total	75	100%	72	100%	147

Looking at the categorizations between LinkedIn and Instagram it can be seen that there are some distinct differences between the two social media channels. The categorizations

for Instagram are presented in Table 7, including the number of posts for each dimension per company and their percentages of the case company's whole Instagram post amount. Even as there are differences between the dimensions on the social media channels, the three most visible dimensions are still similar to the ones with LinkedIn, as can be seen when comparing Table 7 to Table 5.

Table 8. Most visible employer branding dimensions on Instagram

Accenture	Gofore
1. Social value	1. Work culture
2. Work culture	2. Social value
3. Diversity	3. Diversity

As seen in Table 8, Accenture's top three most visible dimensions are social value with 40%, work culture with 32% and diversity with 15% of all posts. Compared to the ones on LinkedIn, social value and work culture remain in the same places as they did on LinkedIn, but diversity is new. On LinkedIn diversity dimension was also 15% of the total post amount, but it wasn't enough to reach the top three, as CSR had a higher percentage of 18%. On Accenture's Instagram channel on the other hand, CSR has only 7% of the total post amount which is a significant difference compared to LinkedIn.

What is also interesting about the posts on Instagram is that in this channel the two companies have the same top three dimensions, just in different order, as presented in Table 8. Gofore's top dimensions are work culture with 33%, social value with 21% and diversity with 21% of all posts. Here as well the most visible dimension, work culture, remains in the same place as it did with LinkedIn posts, but the other top places differ. Development value didn't make it to the top three dimensions list and this time social value climbed over diversity.
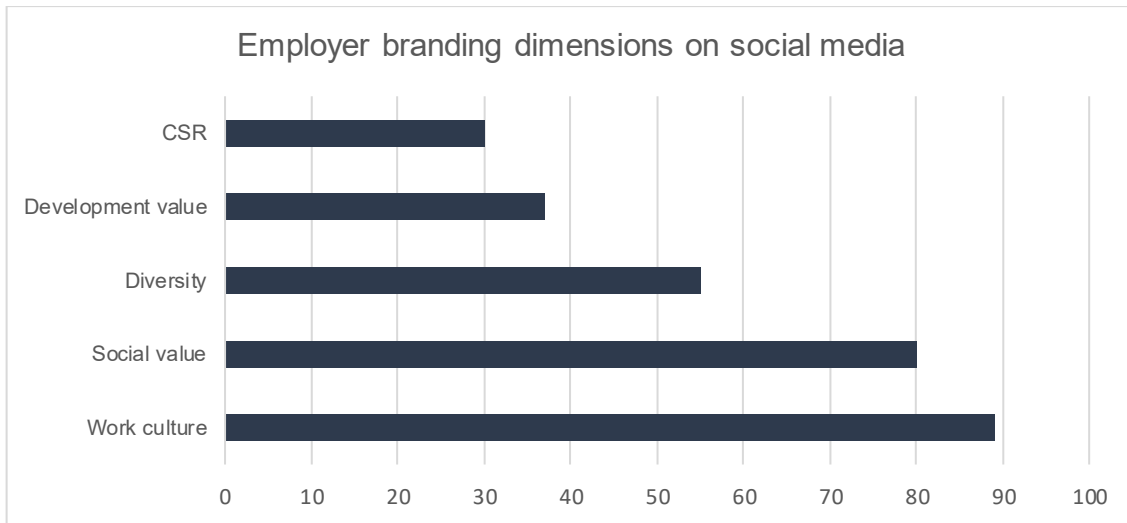
Figure 6. Employer branding dimension total amounts on social media from both companies and medias

Looking at the combined top three dimensions from both companies in one, as presented in Figure 6, it appears that work culture is the most visible dimension (89 posts) with 33% of the total post amount, followed by social value (80 posts) with 31% and diversity (55 posts) with 18%. This is the same top three dimensions that were in the combined top dimensions on LinkedIn. Based on this they appear to be the most visible employer branding dimensions on the chosen social medias in this empirical study. In addition to the top three, Accenture highlighted CSR content in its LinkedIn channel and Gofore highlighted its development opportunities in the company's LinkedIn channel. Next, we will further discuss these employer branding dimensions in their order of importance.

4.3 Work culture

Based on the results of the content analysis, work culture is the most visible employer branding dimension on social media. Work culture can be seen as a 'soft offering' for the employee since it mostly focuses on culture, instead of functional benefits like compensation. As discussed in section 2.3.3. work culture is something that is not as easily copied since it represents that specific organization's beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and ideologies. It helps differentiate the company from others and because of it is often used in for example recruitment campaigns to attract potential employees. Based on the empirical analysis, portraying the work culture in social media is also important. Work culture is a highly visible dimension in both Accenture's and Gofore's social media channels and all together the most visible dimension found in this research.

Table 9. Work culture dimension in social posts

Work culture	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	17	24	41
Instagram	24	24	48
total	41	48	89

As can be seen in Table 9, both companies posted a similar number of posts related to work culture and consistently through both social media channels. No matter which social media channel or case company, work culture was at least in the top two most visible dimensions. For Gofore it was the most visible dimension on both LinkedIn and Instagram and for Accenture it was the second most visible dimension both on LinkedIn and Instagram.

Work culture subdimensions

Table 10. Work culture subdimensions in social posts

WORK CULTURE	Accenture LinkedIn	Accenture Instagram	Gofore LinkedIn	Gofore Instagram	total
general	16	23	23	23	85
work-life balance	1	1	1	1	4
total	17	24	24	24	89

Looking at the subdimensions, presented in Table 10, work-life balance didn't show up to be that relevant as a subcategory. As discussed earlier in section 2.3, Tanwar and Kumar (2019) proposed work-life balance to be added as an employer branding dimension. But in this research the work-life balance didn't show up that much. In total there were only four posts that directly focused on work-life balance, which compared to the total number of work culture dimension posts, is not significant. Many of the posts were about the company's culture and what's it like working there, what kind of elements does the work environment consist of. These types of work culture characteristics and highlighting the work community were in a big part when it came to the posts.

What makes a good company culture?

About people, interaction, consideration, atmosphere, emotional intelligence, role models, trust, and safety. Our culture is also built from these.

At the center of our culture are people, and everyone gets to shine the brightest just by being themselves. Meet one of our cultural creators 💜 Rachel 💜 on the stories side

Get to know our culture, culture makers and open jobs on our career pages. 🙆

#accenturemoments #culturemakers

@Accenturefi Instagram account, this post has been translated from Finnish

It was visible that both case companies were highly motivated to promote their company culture and what's it like being part of it. The culture isn't just something that is communicated indirectly through different meanings and examples, but something that is actively communicated and explained in the social media posts. Both companies directly talked about their work culture in their posts and highlighted the importance of their people.

20 years at the forefront of digital change 🎉

We celebrate Gofore's 20th anniversary this year. What a growth story: a startup founded by 4 friends is today an impressive and international listed company with more than 1,000 experts. 🤩

Our Chair of the Board Timur Kärki says "We, the founders, are proud that Gofore is not a company that depends individual people, but a strong, self-directed culture community that not only grows and renews, but is also persistent and capable of change". ❤️

[…] Read the story of our company's eventful years: […]

#gofore20 #goforecrew

@Gofore LinkedIn account, this post has been translated from Finnish

The top five drivers for work culture; opportunities to learn and grown, belonging, organizational value, support for well-being and collaboration, introduced in section 2.3.3, were all visible within the 89 social media posts related to work culture. Opportunities to learn and grow can also be seen to fall under the development value and

organisational value is slightly part of the social value as well. Nonetheless, all of these drivers were noticeable among the posts. For example, in regard to support for well-being the posts mentioned support and awareness for mental health and the opportunities to work remotely from where the employee sees best.

Comparing the posts between Accenture and Gofore there weren't any major differences when it came to communicating work culture but both companies had their own themes. Both focused on highlighting the importance of an individual as a key part of their work culture and pointing out how compassion, courage, growth, and good atmosphere among the work community drive the work culture forward.

For themes, Accenture seemed to have a social media campaign focusing on company culture with the #culturemakers hashtag and posts related to employees that help build the work community. The posts focused especially on the emotional side of work culture with themes such as, building emotional intelligence, having compassion and courage within the work community. The content focused on how culture is something that is built together, where everyone is welcomed and what should be centred around the people.

When highlighting its work culture Gofore instead focused on growth and having a fun and enjoyable workplace. Many of the posts talked about how working at Gofore is fun and introduced different events or happenings that they have had to boost a fun atmosphere. In addition to having fun, they also focused on highlighting how their community is focused on growth and changing for the better together. They showcase how their work culture is built by individual people who together create growth and improvements.

4.4 Social value

Based on the results, social value is the second most visible dimension. As a dimension it is something that has priorly not been studied as much so for this research different kinds of elements were included to form a wider dimension of social value. Social value thus included the social value of belonging to an organization in general, social identity and brand personality. This combination of social value was expected to be visible in the employer branding social media posts, since it includes a lot of elements that are not easily copied by competitors or other companies within the industry. Based on previous

literature social value is an important dimension for employer branding in general and this research supports that view as well.

Table 11. Social value dimension in social posts

Social value	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	24	11	35
Instagram	30	15	45
total	54	26	80

As seen in Table 11, Accenture had more employer branding posts with the social value dimension than Gofore did. For Accenture social value was the most visible dimension in both social media channels, but for Gofore it was the second on Instagram and the third on LinkedIn. This partly explains why Accenture had more social value posts than Gofore did. There were also some differences between the subdimensions, which are next further discussed.

Social value subdimensions

Social value had two major subdimensions: social identity and brand personality. In addition to these two, during the research it was noticed that some posts just had the theme of social value in general and were difficult to divide into social identity or brand personality. Because of this a 'general' subdimension was added to the mix. These subdimensions and their posts amounts can be seen in Table 12. Unlike with the work culture dimensions, the social value posts seemed to divide between the different subdimensions and the subdimensions helped to further analyse the different aspects of the dimension.

Table 12. Social value subdimensions in social posts

SOCIAL VALUE	Accenture LinkedIn	Accenture Instagram	Gofore LinkedIn	Gofore Instagram	total
general	3	1	2	2	8
social identity	7	20	8	9	44
brand personality	14	9	1	4	28
total	24	30	11	15	80

As can be seen from Table 12, the smallest number of posts went to the general subcategory. These posts were mostly about belonging to a work community and how

belonging brings social value to the employees' life. They would for example highlight different non-work-related events that were held for employees to spend time together or different community aspects, such as running clubs, coding events and other things that being part of that community enables.

Regarding the other two subdimensions, social identity was the most visible subdimension for Accenture on Instagram and for Gofore in both social media channels. Accenture had more social value content on Instagram than it did on LinkedIn. Gofore had almost the same amount in both channels. Both Accenture and Gofore highlighted their social identity and what being an employee of theirs means in social meaning in their social media posts. For example, highlighting different awards or rankings like Gofore did in the post quoted below, they are able to showcase how they are considered successful and a noticeable organization among the IT sector in Finland.

> Wow! 🚀 Gofore's ranking in Universum's professional survey rose six places and we are 6th most attractive employer in IT sector in Finland 🌷🤩
>
> Our culture is based on continuous development and that is why we are really happy about this news! Thank you 🧡
>
> #goforecrew #universumranking #techjobs #finland
>
> *@Goforegroup Instagram account*

Both companies also highlighted individuals in social identity posts as well. As Maxwell and Knox (2009) said, the work community is an important part of an individual's social groups. An opportunity to be brought to attention as an individual in the employer's social media channels can also be very appealing to the employee – a chance to show their network that they are part of a specific work community and noticeable within that organization. Because of this, it seems that many of the social identity posts are beneficial for both the organization and the individual presented in the post.

> Our technology consultant Stella wrote on Talouselämä's blog what it really feels like to be a consultant: "My biggest fear was that all the fun in working life would end and life would start to resemble the movie Groundhog Day." Fortunately, this did not happen! 😁
>
> Read more about what makes working at Accenture versatile and challenging, and what Stella's job really entails.
>
> @*Accenture Nordics LinkedIn account*, this post has been translated from Finnish

This type of highlighting of individuals can boost that individual's social identity and value and possibly allure possible candidates when they see representations of people they can relate to or aspire to be. In addition to gaining social approval, both companies showcased how belonging to their organization can bring benefits to their employees and help them form their identities. This included for example talking about what it is like being a consultant in that specific company or how working there gives opportunities for future growth. These types of social identity aspects were highly visible in both companies both social media channels and thus support the previous literatures views on the topic. In addition, both Accenture and Gofore also used community hashtags such as #accenturemoments and #goforecrew in their posts that also employees can use in their own social media posts. But other than noting the hashtags, their meaning or variety wasn't explored further in this research.

The employer brand personality subdimension on the other hand was a bit more challenging to determine and detect from the social media posts. Brand personality was more visible on Accenture's channels than on Gofore's and especially on Accenture's LinkedIn channel. As introduced in section 2.3.4.2, brand personality characteristics are the set of human characteristics that can be associated with a specific brand. These types of characteristics are used in brand research for some time now but haven't been explored as much when it comes to employer branding. Previous research suggest that the dimension is important because it affects the perceived employer attractiveness. When the organization is able to promote personality features that match the employees or potential employees' personalities it can become more attractive in their eyes. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) introduced brand personality to the employer branding context with adding innovativeness, competence, and prestige to Aaker's previously introduced

brand personality traits. Looking at the social media posts by Accenture and Gofore all of these were somewhat visible in the brand personality subdimension posts.

"You're not born into a top performer; you develop into one" 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 ❤️

We gathered together the stories and thoughts of Gofore people about excellence - and how interesting insights, passion and multi-professional skills we came to. 🤩

[…] If you want to know more about the daily work of our experts and our customer projects, visit and click ➡ gofore.com/huippuosaajat/

#GoforeCrew #GoforeCulture

@*Gofore LinkedIn account,* this post has been translated from Finnish

Yet, when it comes to brand personality, the most visible theme with both companies seemed to be *thought leadership* and portraying the image of an organization that shapes the industry forward. Thought leadership is a relatively new aim for companies that is constantly becoming more important, especially in B2B marketing. This rising theme is further discussed in the conclusions, in Chapter 5.

4.5 Diversity

Based on the content analysis, diversity is the third most visible employer branding dimension with 55 related social media posts in total. Diversity is becoming more and more important on organisation's corporate agendas and this what somewhat visible from the social media analysis as well.

Table 13. Diversity dimension in social posts

Diversity	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	13	16	29
Instagram	11	15	26
total	24	31	55

As can be seen from Table 13, the diversity dimension was quite equally presented between companies and social media channels. It was the third most visible dimension for both companies on Instagram and on the shared second place with development value for Gofore on LinkedIn. According to the definition of Tanwar and Kumar (2019) diversity refers to a mixed workforce, including different aspects such as different

abilities, experiences, and strengths. In addition to people diversity, the diversity dimension also included task diversity, which is about diversity in job tasks and challenging roles. The subdimensions of people diversity and task diversity are further discussed next.

Diversity subdimensions

Table 14. Diversity subdimensions in social posts

DIVERSITY	Accenture LinkedIn	Accenture Instagram	Gofore LinkedIn	Gofore Instagram	total
people diversity	12	11	15	15	53
task diversity	1	0	1	0	2
total	13	11	16	15	55

As can be seen from Table 14, people diversity proved to be highly more visible than task diversity. Task diversity only had two mentions across the entire material of 335 social media post, making it not that relevant as a subdimension. Instead, people diversity was highly visible and included a lot of posts dedicated to it from both companies. Gofore has slightly more people diversity posts than Accenture does, but there doesn't seem to be any gaps between the social media channels on either of the companies.

Like with work culture and social value, the diversity dimension social media posts also seemed to focus on highlighting individuals and their role in the organization. Many of the people diversity posts from both companies introduced unique individuals that are part of the workforce.

> A consultant, surfer or firefighter? Identity doesn't have to be compartmentalized into just one mold!
>
> "I've never wanted to compartmentalize myself into a certain mold or title, I've been happy to be just Juuso from the beginning - consultant, surfer, ex-firefighter, adventurer and much more."
>
> Read on our blog about Juuso's wonderful and experience-rich career story 👨 🧑 🧑‍🎨 🧑‍💻 and how he now uses his experiences as a consultant at Accenture - link in bio 🔝 🆙 👆
>
> *@Accenturefi Instagram account*, this post has been translated from Finnish

For both companies the posts related to people diversity focused on different kinds of people and career paths. The posts introduced many kinds of people and paths to becoming an employee of the organization, highlighting that there isn't just one route or mold that one should fit in order to work there. Regards to people diversity, the case companies' posts were quite similar with each other, naturally the people's stories just changed.

> From sewer to lean master 🐢
>
> Katja Luumi's first encounters with agile processes come from an unforeseen place. She started her career in the textile world, where things were surprisingly lean. After that, going through various different roles, she has found a place to shine as an Agile Coach ✨
>
> Get to know Katja's story and check out our open positions from the link in our bio!
>
> #goforecrew #agilecoach #recruitment
>
> *@Goforegroup Instagram account*

What was also seen in the people diversity dimension is that in addition to talking about individuals, they talked about how their community is acknowledging and accepting of diversity as a community. These posts were about the ability of an employee to be oneself in the workplace and were especially linked to ongoing events in the world, such as the Pride movement or religion. Accenture had many posts about being Pride Helsinki's partner, especially on Instagram. Gofore had a post about how they are attending Manse Pride week in Tampere. Also, in these types of diversity posts the wording did not circle around diversity, instead it often mentioned inclusivity and an inclusive workplace.

4.6 Development value

Development value was the least visible employer branding dimension that was set in the initial first version of the framework for this research. But after adding the CSR dimension development value becomes the second last on the visibility rank with 37 social media posts in total. This dimension was in the shared second place with diversity for Gofore on LinkedIn, but other hand it did not show up in any other top three rankings. There were no set subdimensions for this dimension.

Table 15. Development value dimension in social posts

Development value	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	10	16	26
Instagram	3	8	11
total	13	24	37

As can be seen from Table 15, Gofore had more diversity dimension related posts than Accenture. Gofore also had more on LinkedIn than it did on Instagram. The same goes for Accenture as well, as it had only three posts related to it on Instagram but ten on LinkedIn. The posts related to development value included posts that were talking about development value for current employees and posts that were promoting development value and recruitment opportunities for potential employees as well.

> Our first Test Automation Academy was a hit!
>
> Our new colleagues participated in classroom teaching, did technical exercises, studied independently and by the end of the academy, started working in customer projects. During the academy, each participant had an experienced goforean as a mentor who supported them in growing their technical and consultative competence.
>
> […] Congrats! Some sparkling and cake for the occasion 🎂 🥂
>
> Is learning new things and challenging your current skills also your thing? Eagerness to learn is a key trait we look for in all our new hires.
>
> #goforecrew #testautomation #techcommunity
>
> *@Goforegroup Instagram account*

Both Accenture and Gofore had social media content that promoted how by being part of their organization an individual gets the opportunity to develop oneself while working there. These posts included language that highlighted interesting opportunities and the excitement of having these opportunities.

The application period for Accenture's spring 2023 internships is now open! 🚀👇

We are looking for enthusiastic types for our paid internship program, which offers opportunities for versatile projects, flexible working and an effective career start. You will be welcomed by a diverse and dynamic team that sees your unique background, ideas and skills as a welcome addition. 💥

Open positions can be found in technology, consulting, strategy, design, brands, information security and much more. Could any of these be right for you?

Apply no later than September 25, 2022 and join us next spring!

@Accenture Nordics LinkedIn account, this post has been translated from Finnish

Many of the development value posts aimed to potential employees highlighted the fact that the new employee has opportunities for development and growth from day one. This can be seen for example in the social media post by Accenture above. The post showcases in one post many different ways how the organization can provide development value to the individual. From both companies most of the development value posts aimed at potential employees were 'speaking' for students, recent graduates or people looking for technical roles, such as a software developer.

4.7   CSR

CSR was the surprising element of the employer branding dimensions in this research. This dimension wasn't originally added in the research framework because it was thought to be not as relevant or rather difficult to categorize when the CSR actions are related to employer branding efforts. However, during the analysis phase of the research project, it was found that CSR was a clearly visible employer branding dimension and that should be taken into notice and discussed further.

Table 16. CSR dimension in social posts

CSR	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	16	3	19
Instagram	5	6	11
total	21	9	30

As can be seen from Table 16, the CSR dimension was the most visible on Accenture's LinkedIn account, which covers over half of the combined number of CSR social media posts from both companies. Even as CSR has the lowest number of total posts when looking at the combined amount, it shares similar importance than development value does. Development value made it to the shared second most visible place with diversity for Gofore on LinkedIn and CSR made it to third most visible for Accenture on LinkedIn. But when looking at percentages, development value is 16% of the total number of Gofore's LinkedIn posts, but CSR is 18% of the total number of Accenture's LinkedIn posts. Thus, there is not much of a significant difference in their rankings when it comes to percentages.

Compared to Accenture, Gofore didn't have as many social media posts related to CSR, but the majority of the ones that it did have were on Instagram. Thus, there is a difference between the two companies when it comes to posting CSR-related content on what channel and how much of. For this newly added dimension, no subdimensions were added to be part of it.

> Studying tech, still a man's world - How can we change this? 😕 According to Technology Industries of Finland, the industry needs 130 000 new tech talents during the next 10 years. However, only a few women choose to study technology. Why is this and what can we do about it?
>
> Mimmit koodaa, Tekniikan akateemiset TEK, Women in Tech Finland and Accenture set out to find answers with a joint survey. With a total of 672 respondents, we got a great overview of the situation. ⬇️
>
> Read our latest blog summarizing some highlights from our study. […]
>
> @Accenture Nordics LinkedIn account

Even as Accenture and Gofore had some differing styles when it comes to posting CSR related content, there are also similarities found. In their CSR related social media posts, both Accenture and Gofore focused on inclusivity and promoting efforts that they are making that the world is more inclusive. Both focused especially on the tech industry and how it can be made more welcoming for all groups, especially women. The vast majority of CSR related posts circled around this theme in both companies' posts and on both social media channels. Analysing the CSR content, it was noticed that both companies seemed to have campaigns to promote these themes. Accenture had many posts about the survey conducted together with Mimmit koodaa, Tekniikan Akateemiset TEK and

Women in Tech Finland. Gofore also had multiple posts that focused on promoting the event with Plan Suomi, that discussed equality in tech and making the digital world safer for girls.

> Is there room for everyone in the digital world – and on whose terms is it created? We take a stand for an equal and safe digital world at Suomi Areena.
>
> 📣 On the stage we have our CEO Mikael Nylund and Advocacy Advisor Hanna Wendelin from @plansuomi. The event is hosted by Aini Räsänen from Gofore.
>
> 🚨 Plan's research has revealed that more than half of girls and young women have been harassed online. As a result of the harassment, many of the girls stop using digital platforms, participating in discussions and sharing their opinions.
>
> 🌍 A truly equal digital world requires diversity from development teams, sensitivity to the needs of different groups, and proactive legislation that takes into account not only the disadvantages but also the possibilities of digitalization.
>
> […]
>
> #suomiareena #ethicaldigital #tyttöjenpuolella #equalitytech
>
> @*Gofore LinkedIn account*, this post has been translated from Finnish

In addition to posts about inclusivity in technology, both companies also had posts regarding collaboration with student organizations or universities. These posts were about welcoming student groups to visit the offices, sponsoring their events or organizing different competitions for students or young people in general. They also promoted events where the students were able to come and see what it is like working in that specific organization and talking with its representatives about this topic.

4.8   Other dimensions and themes in social posts

Other than the added CSR dimensions, no other employer branding dimensions, presented in Figure 4, outside the chosen framework were visible in the social media posts by Accenture or Gofore. But both companies had posts that were not related to employer branding at all. These posts were categorized as 'strictly other' since they didn't include any elements of employer branding dimensions.

Table 17. Strictly other themed social posts

Strictly other	Accenture	Gofore	total
LinkedIn	9	29	38
Instagram	2	4	6
total	11	33	44

As can be seen from Table 17, a majority of these strictly other themed posts were from Gofore and especially on their LinkedIn channel. Most of these posts were related to business operations, such as reporting the quartal results, company acquisitions news or investor release related content. For Accenture the other content was mainly about new personnel or executive nominations or client operations related news. This other type of content is not analysed further on a deeper level since it is not included in the aim of this research.

In the next chapter, we will go over the conclusions of this research, take a closer look at the key findings and answer the research questions. The third research question is answered with the help of these empirical study results as presented in this chapter.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Key findings

This chapter aims to answer the research questions and present the key findings of this research and discussion related to these findings. First, the following section will answer the research questions with the help of the theory background and key empirical findings, and then move onto managerial and theoretical contributions. After this, the final part will present the research limitations and suggestions for further research proposals.

5.1.1 Employer brand, -branding, and its dimensions

This section will answer the first two research questions 1. *What are employer brand and employer branding?* and 2. *What are the central dimensions of employer branding?* with the help of the prior theoretical contributions that were earlier introduced in this research in Chapter 2. When answering these research questions, we will focus on the key theoretical aspects of the employer branding theory.

The employer brand

Employer brand and branding are highly important themes that are becoming more and more important for organizations no matter their size or what industry they operate in. The brand is what distinguishes an organisation from its competitors and the same goes for the employer brand. According to Ambler and Barrow (1996) employer brand is the "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". These two were the first ones to define the employer brand and the definition is still very much relevant to date. To add to this initial definition Moroko and Uncles (2008) later suggested that the employer brand can also be seen as a psychological contract between the employee and their employer. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) have also pointed out how the employer brand forms the organization's identity as an employer and this identity includes many distinct features such as value systems, policies, and behaviours that the organization has when it comes to motivating, attracting, and retaining employees.

Based on these somewhat famous definitions by these researchers, it seems that the employer brand is first and foremost something intangible and something that the employee perceives when being in contact with the organization. It includes many

different types of features so it can be difficult to define as a 'set' entity as the employer brand forms in contact with other people, both current and potential employees. During the years the employer brand has also been developing as a concept. Ambler and Barrow (1996) first introduced it as something that is related directly to employees and internal marketing, other researchers have later begun to suggest that the employer brand can also be seen as an external facing concept. Because of this widening of the concept and its rise in importance among organizations and industries, the employer brand is something that everyone should take into notice in their branding and recruitment efforts. John and Jagathy Raj (2020) argue that the employer brand is not just about the organization's identity anymore. It has become a key strategy for driving corporate success.

What seems to be crucial to remember is that the employer brand is part of the organization's whole personality. Because of this it should be consistent with the other personalities, such as the corporate brand and the consumer brand, that are witnessed by other stakeholders. Moroko and Uncles (2008) also argue that there are three characteristics to the employer brand that help make it a successful one 1. Being known and noticeable, 2. Being seen as relevant and resonant and 3. Being differentiated from direct competition. As we can see, these three elements are also similar to action points that make a consumer brand a successful one. These brands are oftentimes somewhat overlapping, and the stakeholders can be part of multiple different stakeholder groups simultaneously. (Ambler & Barrow 1996, 190.) Keeping this in mind, it is crucial to take it into notice when shaping the employer brand and planning employer branding strategy and actions. When communicating the employer brand, it is also crucial that it is portrayed in a truthful matter. This is further discussed in the managerial conclusions in section 5.2.

Employer branding

Branding is one of the core topics in marketing and what differentiates an organisation or a product from its competitors. Whereas it was initially created to differentiate tangible products, its scope has now broadened to cover all kinds of intangible items as well such as people, places, and organizations. Employer branding covers the actions by the organization that aim to strengthen the organizations employer brand. Sullivan (2004) defined the action as a long-term strategy that aims to manage perceptions and awareness of the target groups, which include employees, potential employees, and relevant stakeholders. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) argue that employer branding is the process

that helps the organization build a unique employer identity and differentiate its employer brand from its competitors.

It has been noticed among organizations that traditional marketing and branding techniques are no longer sufficient when trying to attract talented employees and new elements are needed to keep up with the game. Especially for organizations that rely on human talent, employer branding is an important asset when it comes to keeping up with the competition and driving corporate success. (John & Jagathy Raj 2020, 25: Tanwar & Kumar 2019, 801.) Employer branding can also create many other distinctive benefits such as increasing employer attractiveness, achieving an employer-of-choice status in the minds of employees and prospects and standing out as a unique employment provider. (Tanwar & Kumar 2019; Hoppe 2018; Backhaus & Tikoo 2004; Kissel & Büttgen 2015) When looking at employer branding activities, it is also crucial to look at the employer branding dimensions.

Central dimensions of employer branding

The different dimensions of employer branding played a big part in this research. They are a crucial part of employer branding efforts, and they were also included in two of the three research questions included in this research. The following Table 18 offers the key findings of the employer branding dimensions and briefly discusses how central they are.

Table 18. Key findings of all employer branding dimensions

Dimension	Definition	Introduced by	Centrality
Functional benefits	Activities related to development and other useful factors	Ambler & Barrow (1996)	2
Economic benefits	All material and monetary rewards, such as salary and incentives	Ambler & Barrow (1996)	3
Psychological benefits	feelings of belonging, purposefulness, and direction	Ambler & Barrow (1996)	1
Interest value	Interest in innovativeness and a exciting workplace	Berthon et al. (2005)	1
Social value	Attractiveness to a fun, happy workplace. Including also brand personality and social identity	Berthon et al. (2005), Highhouse et al. (2007), Kissel & Buttgen (2015), Rampl & Kenning (2014)	1
Development value	An organization that provides recognition and advancement opportunities	Berthon et al. (2005)	2

Application value	An organization that gives their employees a chance to apply what they have learned and teach others simultaneously	Berthon et al. (2005)	2
Work culture	Different organizational attributes that make the place unique. Includes beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and ideologies. Also includes work-life balance	Tanwar & Kumar (2019), Gomes & Neves (2011)	1
Diversity	Organization's mix of workforce, that brings a diversity of workforce and different experiences	Tanwar & Kumar (2019)	1
Ethics & CSR	The effects the organization has on its society	Tanwar & Kumar (2019)	2

As was introduced in Chapter 2 and can be seen from Table 18, there is a large variety of different kinds of dimensions related to employer branding. The importance or in other words the centrality, was determined by the researcher on the scale from one to three, based on what was discovered with the help of prior theoretical contributions. In this ranking meaning 1 = highly central, 2 = important and 3 = not as central. This ranking is only done with the help of prior theory, not with the help of the empirical study. The central dimensions that were researched with the help of the empirical study are next further discussed in section 5.1.2 where we also answer the final research question.

5.1.2 How do employer branding dimensions manifest themselves on social media?

This section will answer the last research question of this research 3. *How do the central dimensions of employer branding manifest themselves in the researched companies' social media channels?* This final research question is answered and discussed with the help of the conducted empirical study that included a qualitative content analysis in the form of a case study of Accenture's and Gofore's social media channels and seen employer branding dimensions. Both companies work within the IT consulting industry, and the human talent that their employees bring to the table thus can be seen as the primary competitive enabler of their businesses. (Biswas & Suar 2016, 57) Tanwar and Kumar (2019) argue that talented employees always have the luxury to choose where they want to be employed and organizations must compete for these desired employees. This is where employer branding also comes to play. The two claim that a strong employer

brand is more likely to attract talented people to come work for the organization. Because of this, it is natural that companies like Accenture and Gofore that depend on the skills of talented people, do their best to create a strong employer brand and attract these people by for example highlighting their different employer branding dimensions.

As social media has been growing its importance and presence, we are also starting to see more diverse ways people and organizations use it. Kissel and Büttgen (2015) highlighted in their paper how perceived organization attractiveness is a huge factor when it comes to application intentions and how this is especially important in social media. According to them organizations are now trying to differentiate themselves from others by highlighting their symbolic and unique features. This turned out to be true in this research as well and the conducted empirical study supports the claims of Kissel and Büttgen. Both Accenture and Gofore used their social media channels to mainly promote their unique environments and social value that bring something less concrete yet highly valuable to the table. As the majority of both companies' social media content was related to employer branding and its different dimensions, it shows that both companies take this action seriously. Even as both companies are already well-known and desirable workplaces, they both make a lot of effort in trying to persuade people and to showcase their work environment. Next well take once more a deeper dive into how these dimensions manifest themselves in the case companies' social medias and what can be figured from it.

Employer branding dimensions

As showcased in the research results previously, the most visible employer branding dimensions on the two companies' social media channels were work culture, social value, and diversity. What was interesting was the fact that other than the added CSR dimension, no other employer branding dimension outside of the theoretical framework came visible from the research material. The social media posts didn't for example have any mentions about economic benefits such as salary and incentives or interest value or the application value. What also stood out as interesting was that even as the top three dimensions between the two organizations and two social media channels were slightly different, the general top three of work culture, social value and diversity was easily noticeable and distinctive from the other dimensions. Based on their highlighted visibility I argue that in

this research the three are the most important dimensions when it comes to employer branding on social media.

Work culture

Social value

Employer branding on social media
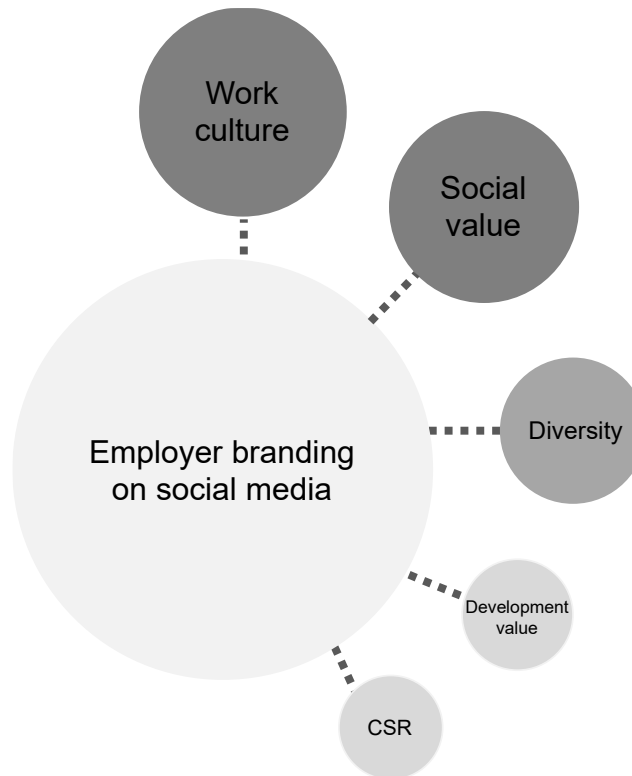
Diversity

Development value

CSR

Figure 7. How employer branding dimensions manifest themselves on social media

As can be seen from Figure 7, work culture was the most visible employer branding dimension and seemed to be the most important one when it came to communicating the employer brand. According to Tanwar and Kumar (2019) work culture represents the organization's ideologies, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs and this representation was also visible in both case companies' social media channels. Both companies directly and actively talked about their work culture, ways of working, and organizational ideologies in their posts and highlighted the importance of their people. This gave the idea that in the social media posts, they don't necessarily seek to explain what their set 'guidelines' of work culture are, but that the work culture grows and centres around the people that make the work community.

As both of these companies' businesses evolve highly around their skilled workforce it seems natural for them to highlight the importance of their people, when talking about work culture. As mentioned in the results, work culture can be seen as one of the 'soft' offerings that are related to the employer brand, since it mostly focuses on the culture and

the people instead of something more concrete and functional. In work culture related posts Accenture focused on employees building the community and emotional aspects such as having compassion in the workplace and being thoughtful among employees. They seemed to especially focus on the community side of work culture and creating meaningfulness through cocreation. Gofore on the other hand focused on growth and having a fun and enjoyable workplace. Given that Gofore started as a start-up and has since evolved into a big international company, it seems logical to promote the growth mindset that is in their nature. Smaller companies also tend to have the flexibility to create a workplace that is more fun and with a lower hierarchy.

What was also interesting was the fact that work-life balance barely showed up in the social media posts from either of the companies. The topic of creating work-life balance and a workplace where people do not feel burnt out is constantly highlighted and especially after the pandemic people are looking at their places of employment in a new light and pondering what they want out of their working conditions. (Forbes 2022) Because of this it was surprising that this was not seen in the social media posts as much.

Social value was the next most visible and important dimension. In this research, social value included additional subdimensions of brand personality and social identity. This type of combination of social value hasn't been researched before in the context of employer branding in social media but proved that subdimensions are important as well. As an entity the social value dimension was about feeling of belonging to a distinctive group and making oneself look better in the eyes of their social groups by belonging to this group. As discussed in section 2.3.4.1, social identity consciousness covers individual's concerns for gaining social approval by working in a specific organization. Based on the previous literature, this type of social identity can act as a way to enhance self-esteem and gaining acceptance within their social circle. (Younis & Hammad 2021; Maxwell & Knox 2009.) Both case companies posted social media content that helped push this agenda. It made the organization more appealing to a potential applicant but also highlighted it in a way that made it easy for the current employees to be proud of. And there is no wonder the two well-acknowledged organizations push this agenda on their social medias, as previous research such as from Sung and Kim (2010) argues that it is an efficient way to stand out from competitors in a symbolic level. As for brand personality, previous literature shows that employees find organizations more attractive if they are known and considered successful. It can also act as means to differentiate the

organization from its competitors and make it seem more attractive and this aspect could also be seen in this case study. (Aaker 1997, 347; Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219.) This aspect is discussed further in the 'thought leadership' section.

The third most important dimension was diversity, as in another aspect that focuses on soft values and something that makes the organization unique. With the diversity dimension the people diversity subdimension was far more visible than task diversity. Tanwar and Kumar (2019) argue that diversity refers to a mixed workforce that has a variety of all kinds of experiences, knowledge, strengths, and cultural diversity. These features that Tanwar and Kumar presented were highly visible in the diversity dimension related social media posts from both case companies. What was also linked to the diversity, same as to the work culture, was the heavy focus on individuals and how unique personalities make the workplace more diverse. This is discussed further below in the 'importance of individuality and inclusivity' section.

Based on how the employer branding dimensions manifested themselves in the case companies' social medias, the following four themes showed great importance for both Accenture and Gofore.

Focus on soft offerings

Previous research suggests that the employer brand attractiveness is not formed only with the help of appealing functional attributes, like salary or development opportunities but is also affected by brand personality traits and psychological benefits. (Rampl & Kenning 2014, 219) This research supports previous research's view on that personality and non-tangible benefits, such as work culture and social value are highly important to the employer brand and attractiveness. These types of 'soft' offerings proved to be highly visible and important when it came to employer branding on social media and 'hard' offerings such as salary, incentives and development opportunities were not as important when it came to employer branding content on social media.

However, what is also interesting is that these types of aspects, such as pay transparency, are constantly being talked about more and people are expecting organizations to communicate more openly what they offer in terms of salary and compensation. An increasing number of job applicants are expecting open salary information for the role in question and want to know it before even applying. This information will save both parties

time as a study conducted by Adzuma showed that 54% applicants have turned down a job offer after they have been told what the actual salary would be. (Cook 2022, 1.) But as most of these social media posts did not directly talk about recruitment or specific open positions it could be that this theme will not transfer to social media as much as it will to the actual recruitment listings or to the websites of organizations.

The importance of individuality and inclusivity

One of the major themes that was found through this research, was the high focus on individuality among employees and inclusivity within the work community. Many of the posts highlighted talented individuals within the company and how they unique personalities and lives are part of and warmly welcomed to the organization. The people profiles in these posts were quite versatile and seemed to emphasize how all kinds of individuals belong to the company.

It has been noticed that traditional marketing and branding techniques such as company brochures and websites do not seem to be sufficient enough when it comes to prospective candidates that are looking for a job. Kaur (2013) argues that nowadays they are interested in hearing a more personal perspective from the organization and from its real employees. Employer branding in social media is a way to stand out of the crowd of competitors and attract talented employees by bringing something unique to the table. Backhaus and Tikoo (2005) argue that companies seek to differentiate themselves from competitors by highlighting their personal characteristics and the unique aspects of their offerings as an employer. However, based on this research, when it came to diversity and culture, both companies seemed to heavily focus on the personal characteristics of their people and not necessary the company's. If relied heavily on the personalities of the people, it can pose difficulties down the road if for example these people switch to another company or that the company personality comes blurry in the mix of multiple different individual personalities. Yet, as organizations like this rely heavily on their people in creating success it seems natural to highlight them. Also, Jonsen et al. (2021) point out that having a diverse workforce gives the organization the opportunity to create change and nourish the human potential of their workforce.

What was also interesting related to individuality and diversity was the wording used around it. Both companies, but especially Accenture, used the term inclusivity instead of

diversity. Thus, the wording seems to have partly changed from having different people and personalities to having a group that is inclusive for all no matter what.

Thought leadership content

Thought leadership content turned out to be an important part of the brand personality in the social value dimension that was presented in this research. According to Barry and Gironda (2019) companies seek to establish thought leadership by distributing digital content through which they are sharing their cutting-edge knowledge and insights relevant to the industry. Social media plays a big role in this and is one of the major channels where thought leadership content is being shared. Because the topic is still relatively new, academic research on this topic is still scarce. (Magno & Cassia 2020, 437.)

Comparing this thought leadership content made by the case companies to the personality traits by Lievens and Highhouse they can be seen to match competence and innovativeness. With their thought leadership content both Accenture and Gofore are trying to portray the image of acting in the forefront of the industry and sharing new insights. This was done with the help of company podcasts that focused on sharing the thought leadership agenda. Accenture has the 'Technology paths' (*Teknologiapolkuja*) podcast that focuses on technology industry and different women and their career paths and thoughts on technology. Gofore on the other hand has the 'Recording podcast' that this season focuses on ethics within the business world and technology field. Especially Accenture had a lot of posts that promoted the podcast, which partly explains the company's increased visibility for this subdimension. Both podcasts had guests attending from outside the organizations, so the episodes weren't only trying to push that organization's agenda but to have room for discussion and alternative views as well.

It is challenging to categorize whether this type of thought leadership content is just branding or employer branding as well. By providing knowledge to the organization's audience, it can be recognized as the expert on that field of knowledge, and it can build trust towards them. (Barry & Gironda 2018, 124) Based on this content analysis and how the podcasts are promoted, it can be seen as employer branding because it helps make the organization more attractive in the eyes of potential employees and possibly differentiates it from its competitors when it comes to the recruitment market.

Maxwell and Knox (2009) argue that features that current employees find important are employment factors, organizational success, construed external image and product attributes. They found that in the eyes of current employees the employer brand is more attractive if the organization is perceived as successful and its external image is attractive. In this way especially, thought leadership and brand personality related content can be seen as a useful factor in the employer branding agenda as it can make the organization look more appealing.

The rise of CSR

Finally, one of the very surprising themes that arose during this research was the sudden rise of employer branding related corporate social responsibility (CSR) content. This dimension was left out of the theoretical framework because it was thought that it would not be significant. However, given how many times it showed up in the social media content, it is useful to take a closer look at it. Tanwar and Kumar (2019) define the CSR employer branding dimension as the effects that the organization has on the society that within it operates. If the company succeeds in these efforts, it can possibly also attract new employees as well.

One possibility why the importance of CSR was larger than expected could be the shift in the workforce caused by Generation Z, and their how they value meaningful workplaces more than the previous generations. According to Popaitoon (2022), the Gen Z workforce places significant emphasis on having purpose and meaningfulness and that this can be driven with the help of aligning their values with their organization's values. If the employees or potential ones see that the organization is posting CSR related content that resonates with their values, they might become more attracted to that company. Also mirroring to the social identity dimension, it might be a way to them to promote themselves in their social groups by belonging to an organization that actively takes these measures. It was highly noticeable that both Accenture and Gofore promoted this type of content, especially when it came to women in the world of tech and making the industry more inclusive.

5.2   Managerial implications

As this research was conducted as a qualitative content analysis there aren't generalizable managerial conclusions that can be offered to fit other situations outside of this research. However, the findings on this research will most likely offer some food for thought especially for the marketing teams operating in the IT consulting industry in Finland or in the Nordics. Also, for Accenture and Gofore, the following managerial conclusions are good to take into notice when planning future employer branding strategy and activities on social media: 1. standing out from competitors and 2. portraying an accurate image.

As concluded in this research standing out from competitors with the help of employer branding is done the easiest and smartest with the help of the soft dimensions, aka the dimensions that help the organization stand out by being unique and something that is not easily copied by others. However, it was noticed that both Accenture and Gofore use very similar types of employer branding dimensions and themes on their posts. The who companies come from very different backgrounds but still have quite similar social media post types. For example, many can highlight an open work atmosphere and team building events, but does that truly make the organization stand out from its other competitors these days? When multiple organizations promote themselves in a similar way it might be so that in the eyes of the potential applicant, they all start to appear the same. Based on this research, I suggest that the marketing teams take a closer look of what makes their organizations unique and focus on highlighting these specific features, instead of the more general 'nice to have' ones. Based the empirical study and findings, it is useful to look at these related to the dimensions of work culture, social value, and diversity.

Also, when it comes to employer branding one of the key factors to keep in mind is portraying a truthful and accurate image. Previous research like from Foster et al. (2010) highlights how this way the employer branding efforts will create the desired outcomes. Only by being truthful it can fulfil the 'psychological contract' between the employer and employee. I propose that the marketing teams creating the employer branding content for social media need to be extra cautious in the creation process, truthful about their culture and not make it too polished.

5.3 Theoretical contribution

This research discussed employer branding, its dimensions and how do they manifest themselves in social media. Many researchers have already noticed the importance of employer branding for organizations and emphasized the need to research this topic more. (Ambler & Barrow 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo 2004; Lievens & Highhouse; Biswas & Suar 2016, 57) This can be seen especially as the field is changing due to the increased use of social media as a means to promote it. (Kissel & Buttgen 2015; Tanwar & Kumar 2019; Kaur 2013)

There are many different approaches introduced in the literature when it comes to employer branding, especially related to its dimensions (Ambler & Barrow 1996; Berthon et al. 2005; Tanwar & Kumar 2019) and how it can be used in different channels such as in social media (Kaur 2013; Maxwell & Knox 2009; Mičík & Mičudová 2018; Magno & Cassia 2020). This research did not find any new dimensions for employer branding, but it strengthened the views on what dimensions are of importance and the role of social media. This research supports the prior literatures view on that soft, unique, at not easily copied aspects of the employer brand are highly crucial and that social media is an important tool when it comes to promoting it.

The research on employer branding social media is still scarce and requires more attention and insights. This research contributes to the employer branding literature by offering more in-depth knowledge on how employer branding dimensions manifest themselves on social media and how the two IT consulting case companies seem to promote them. Moreover, there is no previous research project that has focused on studying the employer branding dimensions on social media like this, especially from the point of the social value. As discussed in section 1.2, there is only little research on how organizations try to highlight their social and brand value. The social value combination of this research that included brand personality and social identity had not been used before in a context like this, so this research provided new insights on how this wider definition of social value manifests in social media.

5.4 Research limitations and further research proposals

Like any other research, also this one faces limitations that should be taken into notice. As this research project was carried out in the form of a case study, it obviously does not offer findings that can be directly generalized into a larger population of organizations. Because of this, the findings cannot be transferred as they are to fit another situation or organization's social media actions. Also, as the research only included material from two companies and two social media, it is hardly possible to make the results fit for the entire IT industry in Finland or for other social medias outside the scope of this research. The social media posts analysed in this research were also aimed mostly for the Finnish or Nordic audience and thus the findings could be different from other regional or global social media channels.

The qualitative content analysis also poses its own limitations. With this method the results are highly affected by the researchers views and interpretation on the researched text material. As this research only had one researcher, it relies on only one person's interpretation on this topic. Other matters that affect the research are the time limitations and the size of the research material entity. This research had a specific timeline and deadline of within the research had to be completed, which also affected the decision making during the research project. Also, as the time periods of which the social media posts were collected from pose limitations to the research. LinkedIn had only a period of two months and Instagram had six months. These time periods seemed to include time bound social media content campaigns. Perhaps with a longer period it the research would be able to detect how different employer branding campaigns communicate with each other and whether they have similarities in content or themes. However, with qualitative content analysis the size of the researched material is not the key element of the research, which justifies why for this research these timelines were chosen and seemed fit.

As research on employer branding dimensions and their manifestation on social media is still scarce more research is needed and welcomed. Looking at this research and its limitations, it would be interesting to conduct a wider research that would look at a longer time period of social media postings and from multiple different companies to see if the results would have similarities with the results of this research. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar research with another industry than the IT or consulting industry. Also, when thinking about the possible research results it could be interesting to research

companies that are smaller or not as well-known. Even as the case companies in this research are very different in size, they are still both well-known and reputable within their industry and this must act in their benefit somehow. Researching a not as known organization could create interesting findings on how these types of organizations communicate their employer brand in social media.

Another path that further research should focus on is more in-depth qualitative research in the form of interviews with different relevant stakeholders. This could be conducted for example by interviewing the marketing teams of the case companies and analysing what they say about the employer branding dimensions and their importance. This way it would be possible to analyse whether the qualitative social media content analysis and what the marketing team say about their priorities are in sync with each other or tell the same story. Another interesting perspective would be to interview the current and potential employees and research how do they feel about the posted social media content and how do they feel connected to it. As employer branding can be seen as a psychological contract between the employer and the (potential) employee, it would be highly interesting to research how this other side of the party sees this theme. This could offer more in-depth findings that could possibly help the organizations in shaping their employer branding actions.

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