

**COMMUNICATING EMPLOYER BRAND FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF THREE CAREER WEBPAGES.**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>A report by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland states that Finland has not been remarkably attractive so far among the experts looking to migrate (March 15, 2021). According to the Ministry's press conference from the same day, for example, especially the Finnish game development scene needs more coders and other experts. This collective case study builds an overview about communication of an employer brand through career webpages of three game development companies. How do these focus companies promote their employer brand on their own career webpages and how do the choices reflect the social discourse? How is Finland represented as a place for working and living in the communication of these companies that need to find experts from outside Finnish borders?</p> <p>In the beginning of the thesis, I will discuss the current trends in the context of international recruitment, as well as give a brief overview about the conceptual framework of the organizational and employer branding research. The theoretical background of the study is based on the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens &amp; Highhouse, 2003) which is used for categorizing the values of attractiveness as an employer. The data set consisted of three webpages, found only in English language and not in Finnish. The pages are dedicated to specifically present the career opportunities the companies offer for (potential) employees with multimodal communication content (text, images, videos). After the data collection, the data was categorized utilizing the variables of the website content (factors of interest, social value, economic value, development value, application value) (Vasavada-Oza &amp; Bhattacharjee, 2016). After the initial analysis stage, I decided to add a category for the factors of localization value for their salient presence in the data, using the method of qualitative content analysis.</p> <p>The results indicate that the content sets up an image of what kind of an employee would fit the company and what kind of a lifestyle they could be living if they join the organization. 1) The employee would be living in a country that offers many benefits for people on different stages of life. Also, the employee does not have to take care of the immigration process alone, but the employer helps. 2) The employee would join a company that cares about the community's wellbeing and team spirit. 3) The content involves the initial passion for games that the employees have and requires the employee to be personally motivated to learn new things independently, although the employer also offers opportunities for it. The representation of the country of living includes stereotypical elements which could even be related to banal nationalism but mixed with a global identity.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Suomen työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön tiedotteessa (15.3.2021) todetaan, että Suomi ei ole tähän asti näyttänyt erityisen houkuttelevana työperäisen maahanmuuton kohdemaana erityisosaajien keskuudessa. Aiheeseen liittyneessä tiedotustilaisuudessa myös mainittiin, että erityisesti suomalainen peliala tarvitsee lisää osaajia, muun muassa koodareita. Tämä kollektiivinen tapaustutkimus antaa yleiskuvan työnantajabrändin viestimisestä kolmen pelialan yrityksen urasivuilla. Miten nämä kohdeyritykset mainostavat työnantajabrändiään omilla verkkosivuillaan ja mitä viestinnän sisältö kertoo laajemmista diskursseista yhteiskunnallisella tasolla? Millainen on Suomen representaatio työ- ja asumispaikkana viestinnässä yrityksillä, joiden täytyy löytää erityisosaajia kansainvälisiltä markkinoilta?</p> <p>Tutkimuksen alkupuolella esittelen tämänhetkisiä trendejä kansainvälisen rekrytoinnin kontekstissa, sekä annan lyhyen yleiskuvan organisaation ja työnantajabrändin tutkimuksen konsepteista. Tutkimuksen teoria pohjautuu Lievensin ja Highhousen (2003) viitekehykseen, (engl. <i>Instrumental-symbolic framework</i>), jota käytetään työnantajabrändeissä esiteltävien houkutteluun tarkoitettujen arvojen kategorisoimiseen. Aineisto koostui kolmesta verkkosivusta, joista löytyi vain englannin kieliversio eikä lainkaan suomea. Sivujen tarkoitus on esittää yritysten tarjoamia uramahdollisuuksia (potentiaalisille) työntekijöille multimodaalisella viestinnän sisällöllä (teksti, kuvat, videot). Aineistonkeruun jälkeen aineisto kategorisoitiin käyttäen verkkosivujen sisällön muuttujia (kiinnostavuus, sosiaaliset arvot, taloudelliset arvot, kehityksen arvot, sovel-lusarvot) (Vasavada-Oza ja Bhattacharjee, 2016). Ensimmäisen analyysivaiheen jälkeen päätin vielä lisätä kategorian lokalisaaion arvojen muuttujille niiden merkittävyyden myötä aineiston osana, käyttäen metdina laadullista sisältöanalyysia .</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat, että sisältö muodostaa mielikuvan siitä millainen työntekijä sopisi yritykseen and millainen hänen elämäntyyliensä olisi, jos olisi siellä töissä. 1) Työntekijä asuisi maassa, joka tarjoaa paljon hyötyjä ihmisille eri elämänvaiheissa. Lisäksi työntekijän ei tarvitse huolehtia maahanmuuttoprosessista yksin, vaan työnantaja auttaa sen kanssa. 2) Työntekijä liittyisi yritykseen, joka välittää yhteisönsä hyvinvoinnista ja tiimihengestä. 3) Sisällöstä ilmenee työntekijöiden alustava intohimo pelejä kohtaan ja diskurssista välittyy tarve työntekijän henkilökohtaiseen motivaatioon oppia uusia asioita itsenäisesti, vaikkakin työnantaja tarjoaa mahdollisuudet sitä varten. Asuinmaan representaation todettiin sisältävän stereotyyppisiä elementtejä, jotka jossain määrin täyttävät banaalin nationalismin tunnusmerkit, yhdistettynä globaaliin identiteettiin.</p>	
Asiasanat: työnantajabrändi, globalisaatio, työperäinen maahanmuutto, peliala, verkkosivuanalyysi, banaali nationalismi	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

A press conference by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, held on March 15, 2021, stated that Finland has not been remarkably attractive so far among the experts looking to migrate. According to the speech, especially the Finnish game development scene needs more coders and other experts. It is mentioned that a game development company will even be leading international recruitment pilots. This collective case study builds an overview about communication of an employer brand through career webpages of three game development companies. Not only will I analyze the employer brand these companies communicate but also discuss how Finland is represented as an essential aspect of the employer branding and how do the findings reflect the social discourse.

Global mobility and workforce diversity increases, business environments transform, and new skills are required to keep up with the technological development (Whysall et al., 2019). The mismatch between the development of global markets and global workforce creates a problem in the labor market. Nagpal (2012, p. 2) reasoned that the global business circumstances are converging, but the global workforce of 3 billion people is not. He explained that the specific problems are usually regional: in some areas the workforce ages rapidly, or in places with young ambitious people the infrastructure or education could limit the number of potential candidates. In this research, however, I will be focusing on the possible problematics that could at least in some cases be eased by utilizing communication and marketing tools suitably, that is, social and cultural issues. Nagpal (2012, p. 2) calls them language and cultural barriers that could create obstacles in finding the right talent, but I prefer not to utilize the term “barrier”. I argue that it creates an unnecessary idea of an obstacle that requires overcoming.

McDonnell (2011) predicted that talent management was becoming one of the most important challenges that organizations would face in 2010s and that the “War for Talent” would not be ending in the near future. Ideologically, he was not wrong.

Some people might consider the term “War for Talent” outdated in 2021 but the core challenge still lies there; the organizations still need to keep up with the work-life trends to remain as desired employers. I argue that it is important to study this phenomenon from multiple angles, since not only the issue is multidimensional and covers many sectors, but it has also become one of the most important issues to face within organizations and societies.

It is important to acknowledge the increasing pressure to not only communicate about the products and services the organizations offer, but also the need to communicate and be transparent about the organizational values, like social responsibility. According to Kumari and Saini (2018), the war for talent has driven some organizations to compete even more strongly for talented employees than for consumers. They add that the organizations increasingly focus on developing their employer branding. But like mentioned, the issue is multilateral. When the aim is to attract employees from international markets, the job seeker could not only be looking at the organizational culture if they would fit there but also the whole region where they could be moving. Especially if the case is that Finland is not perceived as an attractive country to move in for work, like the ministry stated, the whole concept of an employer brand should be stretched into covering the local environment of living.

## **1.1 Context of the Thesis**

Although it has been stated that Finland does not seem to be highly attractive among some specialists, it does not mean that Finland would be lacking immigration – vice versa. Finland also gets its share of the migration flows in (and out), and Rilla et al. (2018, p. 2) argue that it reflects the intensified globalization process. In the publication by Honkatukia et al. (2021), which is mostly hypothetic discussion and building different scenarios, their talent-based scenario suggests that the working-age population of Finland could be receiving additional 5,000 immigrants more per year in comparison to the basic scenario which suggests an annual increase of 15,000 in work population by immigration (meaning that the increase would be 20,000), if this kind of clustering is decided. The talent-based scenario takes explicitly into account the range of occupations needed, more specifically the need for experts in the high technology industries.

Rilla et al. (2018, p. 5) suggest that Finnish actors should pay attention to “soft issues”, including local and regional networks, culture, and factors affecting the quality of life because they are beneficial in attracting both domestic and international talents. To add to the discussion about the localization, I cannot only discuss about Finland in general but also about its capital area, i.e., Helsinki and the surrounding region,



because the specific region is in salient in the data set. Finland's capital region is becoming internationalized by looking at its population. All the three focus companies also have at least one office/studio in the capital area of Finland and even though the need for labor immigration would be an issue of the whole nation, in the case of these companies, the immigration is directed mostly in the capital area, and not only in the game development sector. In 2019, roughly every fourth job applicant in Helsinki spoke other than Finnish or Swedish as their first language but according to predictions by the city of Helsinki, the number will rise and in 2030 it will be already every third applicant whose first language is foreign (Remes, 2019, July 19). This does not suggest that they are all necessarily (labor) immigrants, but it does suggest that at least multilingual communication, e.g., on websites, is increasingly important. If the suggestion is to pay attention to, for example, local culture and the quality of life, these are hypothesized to be salient in the employer brand communication as well. Like Rilla et al. (2018, p. 5) argue, despite of the argument that "everything is becoming virtual" (which has most likely even been emphasized during COVID-19), physical location will continue to matter for the people – because we are humans.

Sometimes referred to as "Industry 4.0", the fourth industrial revolution has taken the work environments, demographics, and trends to highly different levels and customs from what they were only a decade ago. The pace of the development also affects the recruitment and the overall work labor markets, and in many industries has led to problems to find the right people to join organizations. Tyszko and Sheets (as cited in Whysall et al., 2019, p. 120), for example, argue that in the United States, some employers do not have time to wait for others to find a solution for more efficient way to recruit new team members, but instead they need to take a lead in exploring new approaches. This is what even the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland have applied in one of their strategies to recruit more international experts: a game development company will be leading some of their pilots. Therefore this thesis situates also in the context of Industry 4.0 which requires exploratory actors to find new strategies. Also, the data set's context is the work environment, team demographics, and employment benefits within companies that are constantly developing new products and updating existing ones. In this collective case study, I will perceive the three focus companies as "pioneers" of exploring new solutions for international employer branding.

## **1.2 Aim and Structure of the Thesis**

This study will look through three employers that are "natives" of the fourth industrial revolution: game development companies. It will analyze how the employer

branding of the companies and the interplay of global and local are communicated on their websites. These organizations that have risen high during the revolution might be a step ahead in knowing what the candidates need and want and how to attract the candidates to even move to another country to get the job. It is beneficial to understand what kind of communication decisions they have made to approach these candidates, for organization's contribution in social discourses could be taken into consideration more in future research.

The reason for specifically choosing to analyze the webpages is that the company website plays its most important role in the beginning of the recruitment (Puncheva-Michelotti et al., 2018) and because organizations' websites are valuable communication platforms. This is where an employer offers information about their career offerings, but since organizations' own websites are owned media, they have the control to form their brand message as they like and possibly even the image of the company. As a media platform it is in fact quite unique in comparison to, for example, social media. Although social media accounts and pages are the organizations' own channels, the reactions and comment sections are somewhat uncontrollable. The more "traditional" media such as newspapers and television either cost the companies to advertise or are not (fully) controllable. Websites are quite accessible for most companies to build, even without a lot of resources, and they are also easy to benchmark at least content-wise. This means that it could lead to taking similar communicational approaches across many different organizations. This thesis takes one approach of many to understand an external communicational part of the phenomenon of "war for talent" and branding an organization as international. How do societal trends come through on brand communication content and what implications can we find from there?

The aim of the study is to build an overview and understanding about communication of an employer brand through webpages for presenting career opportunities, specifically in three companies that have office(s) at least in Finland but recruit employees on a global level. The research questions of this study are:

RQ1: How do these focus companies promote their employer brand on their own career webpages and how do the choices reflect the societal discourse?

RQ2: How is the physical and cultural location of the workplace represented?

This thesis consists of five chapters. I will begin with the literature review that discusses some of the current (research) trends within recruitment and work-life. The chapter 2 will explain some of the concepts that need to be clarified to understand the discourse on the webpage content. Additionally, I will further discuss the already mentioned concepts of "war for talent" and what is in fact the role of communication through websites. Following the discussion of talent acquisition and work-life, we will move on to discuss the concepts utilized in earlier research regarding employer (and

diversity) branding, organizational communication, and the conceptual framework of values, i.e., instrumental-symbolic framework. Chapter 3 defines the methodology of the study, comprising the presentation of the data set, how it was collected, and what is the research design. The variables of the website content which have a big role in the study will be listed and defined. In chapter 4, we will move on to the findings of the study utilizing the variables of the website content. I will also discuss these findings and what do they reveal about the current situation of employer branding communication in the websites of Finnish game development companies. Chapter 5 concludes the main findings, limitations of the study, and what can we take from here for further research.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will go through relevant literature on recruitment and work-life, organizational identity, and employer branding research mainly from the past decade in the fields of communication, marketing, psychology, and human resources. Although branding is mainly a topic discussed in marketing research, the employer branding communication can be researched using other approaches as well, for example ones from psychology research, or communication research. Information about the organization's image and symbolic values are closely related to job applicants' perceptions of how they would fit in the company. This is the reason why Oikarinen and Saraniemi (2016) suggest that more focus is needed in categorizing human-related issues as broader categories of symbolic attributes in e-recruitment communication. They argue that person's (or as they call, human's) role is a key in the context of employer branding (2016, p. 200) which suggests that there is more room for humanistic approaches in the research of employer branding.

Small amount of organizational research has been conducted on how organizations (re)construct societal discourses about work (Meisenbach & Feldner, 2019, p. 404). The different concepts and terms used for them have only recently been defined in purpose of stabilization but the practical usage of concepts still lacks investigation. I will be presenting the key concepts that are relevant for this thesis to understand in research literature focusing on work-life, recruitment processes and employer branding. Then, I will present more closely what kinds of trends has the research found to be popular within the practical use of employer branding, with the special focus on international recruitment.

## 2.1 Key Concepts

In this section, I will present previous literature and concepts that are relevant to the topic of this research. First, I will present the phenomenon of war for talent, following with the definition of the term “talent”. It is an abstract concept that means many things in different contexts and for different people and organizations. Following that, I move to discuss the concepts of organizational identification, identity, and image.

### 2.1.1 The war on talent.

“War for talent” is a term first presented in research literature in 2001 by Michaels et al. It pictured the time of the late 1990s when companies would offer large bonuses and raises to fill their empty vacancies. The recruiters were continuously and actively seeking for new employees but also trying to retain the existing ones (Michaels et al., 2001, p. 1). The economic situation of the United States and Europe at the time was in a high peak.

McDonnell (2011) suggested that the term “war for talent” has possibly been replaced by the term “war on talent” after the global financial crisis in 2007-2008 and the restructuring and downsizing that followed it within organizations. This has led the trend in talent management to focus more on identifying and positioning the talent effectively instead of aiming to increase the quantity of the workforce. However, McDonnell (2011) stated that the shortage of critical skills still existed during the global financial crisis a decade ago even though the unemployment rates were high, and he also argued that in 2010s, talent management was becoming one of the most important challenges in organizations despite of financial instabilities.

Today, the war(s) on talent is not as localized as it was 20 years ago but instead it has become a broader and more global issue. According to Mishra and Kumar (2019), today the purpose of the re-direction of the employer brand towards a more global one is ultimately to serve the “global needs”. They mention this global transformation to not only affect the processes but also the people in the organization. According to PwC’s Talent Trends 2019 report, even 79% of CEOs interviewed in more than 90 territories around the world were “extremely” or “somewhat” concerned about the availability of right skills. “Right skills” are defined as a sufficient talent base for the digital world (Kane et al., 2017). Harris and Schwartz (2020) mention that new skills like, UX design, cybersecurity, and data science have become highly demanded in such a short time that workers and the whole labor market are having a hard time keeping up with the pace needed to educate themselves sufficiently and constantly. However, in a digital business research project conducted by MIT Sloan Management Review and consulting firm Deloitte LLP (2016) the results of what companies needed from their

employees were somewhat surprising. Many of the 3,700 executives, managers, and analysts that responded to the survey thought that skills other than technical capacities, such as forward thinking, transformative vision, and orientation for change, were in effect as much as or even more important for having sufficient ability to manage in a digital work environment. A company that wants to keep up with newest trends and on-going transformation needs employees that are motivated to do that as well. In this case, for example change-orientation would be one of the values that the organization's employer brand should emphasize and communicate.

In terms of talent attraction and retention, organizations that have positive employer brands and innovative approaches in HR practices, are more likely to achieve a competitive advantage (Kucherov & Zamulin, 2016). A recent consensus within the research on employer branding suggests that the concept of employer branding is ultimately utilized for differentiating an organization from its competitors by building a community where people feel appreciated (Jonsen et al., 2019), among other ways to show respect towards the employees. In this context, the competitors are defined as other companies and organizations that are looking to employ people who have similar competencies. This consensus presented by Jonsen et al. (2019) views employer branding to see much further than advertising, and to cover the whole process of building a workplace culture of wellbeing. The differentiation by branding is especially important in markets where the product, or in the case of employer branding, the job offerings and descriptions are similar, and the potential employees possess similar talent (Hoppe, 2018). Companies are thriving to build more unique and differentiating employer identities in which e-recruitment practices offer opportunities (Mishra & Kumar, 2019). The data set of this study that consists of contents on webpages are examples of these e-recruitment practices. I argue that the efficient use of employer branding for differentiation is highly relevant for companies recruiting internationally, for example because their target audience spreads on the global level, instead of only in Finland. It might in some individual job seekers' cases multiply the competition as well since they could be looking for jobs in multiple countries.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the concept of talent and the implications its lack of theoretical foundations and conceptual development in literature possibly lead to. I argue that this discussion is important for this literature review since we can find the usage of the term in the data set as well.

### *The concept of talent.*

The term "talent" comes up in many occasions when discussed about work-related issues, such as, talent management and talent acquisition. However, the term is an abstract concept that does not indicate to an individual person otherwise than in practical use. Preece et al. (2011) suggest that the lack of a theoretical and conceptual

development could be resulting partly from the fact that most of the human resource management literature on the topic is conducted by practitioners or consultants. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 292) link the argument to the typical research focus of 'how' instead of 'who' is considered talented and 'why'. The authors categorized several different approaches to usage of the term "talent" from academic articles. Talent in their listing was seen in object approaches as characteristics of people: natural ability, mastery, commitment, and fit. From the subject approach (talent = people), they found both inclusive and exclusive approaches. An inclusive subject approach comprises all group members to have talent whereas the exclusive subject approach sees only some individuals either as already talented or as "rising talents".

Because of this missing conceptual development within a field that generally leads to practical decisions, the differing usage of the term could lead to misunderstandings both within the organization and outside, for example in employer branding communication. For example, if an employing organization states on their website that it is "looking for talent", this could be perceived in numerous ways by the person reading the message. Exaggerating the issue, the thought process could sound like this: Are they searching for a child prodigy or is it enough that I only have a suitable education for the position?

I will present two previous attempts to define the concept of talent. Tansley's paper (2011) argues that we should have more of a balanced perception that talent is both innate as well as learned object. For example, "creativity", that is perceived as an innate personality trait, should be considered as talent but also, we need to recognize the influence of the environment building our capabilities to be creative. Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) created a simple formula that is based on the general talent discussions: Talent = competence x commitment x contribution. In this formula, the "competence" represents this balanced perception of talent that Tansley argues for. The authors however add the concepts of commitment and contribution to the notion. They say that even if one is highly competent but not committed, they might not be sufficiently motivated to work as hard or put in as much effort for the benefit of the company as they could. The concept of contribution is related to the concept of motivation as well, just from a different perspective. I find this formula an improved understanding of how multilayered concept talent is in the context of work. However, I find that if this kind of formula is something that is constructed in organizations' employer branding processes, it could end up setting a norm for the society-level discourse in which the workplace is privileged over anything else (Meisenbach & Feldner, 2019, p. 407). The ideal talent is 1) competent enough for the workplace, 2) committed (solely) for the workplace, and 3) contributes to the issues in the workplace. It all revolves around the workplace, not the individual.

### 2.1.2 Organizational identification and identity.

One of the most-known theories within social sciences regarding the concept of identity is the social identity theory (SIT), first introduced by Tajfel (1978) and later developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). It proposes that individuals self-categorize to belong or to not belong to different groups, like in a group of professionals (Treppe & Loy, 2017, p. 1). This social categorization, on-going evaluation of groups, and valuation of group memberships for understanding of “self”, constitute an individual’s social identity. The SIT has previously been used especially in applied psychology studies about work life for investigating, e.g., how job seekers perceive an employer’s diversity cues on recruitment websites (Walker et al., 2012), and what are the effects of openness and appreciation toward diversity on patterns of cultural and organizational identity (Hofhuis et al., 2011). Although this thesis will not be taking the approach from the job seeker’s or employee’s point of view like the mentioned articles, it was important to present the theory for two reasons: 1) We need to keep in mind that an individual is going through a continuous self-categorization and (e)valuation process about in which group they see themselves as members (even if they would not yet be technical members), and 2) the social identity theory is the foundation for organizational identification (OID).

Briefly explained, organizational identification (OID) refers to the relationship between an organization and its employees. Xie et al. (2014) found out that an attractive external image (i.e., reputation) not only has a positive impact on current employees’ organizational identification, but they also affect positively the organizational identification of possible applicants. This might lead to job pursuit intentions and information search. The previous idea that an organization’s identity would remain the same through time has been challenged by communication scholars (Browning & Boys, 2015, p. 170). For example, the interaction between in-group members, like employees, and external individuals shapes organizational identity (Gilstrap & Smith, 2016, p. 447) and creates an on-going process. Ju and Shoham (2017, p. 208) offer critical discussion about the problematics of seeing identification as a static concept. 1) Especially in large companies or corporations, a new-comer or even a long-time employee is unlikely to know all other members of the organization. All they might ever care about is their current close team members, that can also shift regularly. 2) Because OID is a communication-based concept, employee’s feelings about the organization are likely to change even daily, depending on the interactions they have with other members of the organization, i.e., according to the social context. Therefore, the authors argue for the usage of the structurational model of identification (SMI). In the structurational model of identification (SMI), identity was conceptualized to be (re)constructed through communication that allows and enables the employee to identify or disidentify with the organization (Scott et al., 1998, as cited in Sias, 2017, p. 336).



The identity construction happens in intrapersonal communication (i.e., cognitively structured relationships); whereas identification is the one enacted (Piercy & Carr, 2020, p. 4).

In brand management research, organizational identity constructs of the organization's values, history, and philosophy (Elving et al., 2012). Identity is a symbolic, collective interpretation of what the organization is and wants to be, described by its employees, and it is a starting point for employer branding (Matuska and Sałek-Imińska, 2014). The attractive parts of the organizational identity (e.g., employees' comfort, respect, trust, loyalty) are typically used for employer branding. When the company's identity is well-branded, it could offer an advantage in the war on talent (Elving et al., 2012).

The organizational identity research has debated and aimed to explain how the concept of organizational identity differs from other similar concepts, like corporate image and reputation (He & Brown, 2013). Xie et al. (2014) separate organizational identity from organizational reputation describing that organizational identity consists of stereotypical characteristics that the organization's members use to describe their employer which is not the case in organizational reputation. Moreover, the authors mention that reputation defines the prestige and status of the organization whereas the perceived organizational identity refers to the organizational characteristics, perceived by the group members. They also argue that when an individual's self-identity is like their perceived organizational identity it is easier for the employee to express themselves within the organization. Lievens and Slaughter (2016) say that the key difference between identity and employer image is that identity is the concept that employees perceive as the core characteristics. The authors say that however, an image is a description of how an outsider sees the organization.

### **2.1.3 Organizational image.**

The terms organizational image and reputation have been used in past research in an inconsistent manner without clear definition that are accepted by everyone. According to Gilpin (2010), sometimes the definitions of the terms have not even been similar, but instead contradictory, regardless of the discipline in question. Nekmat et al. (2014) introduced an explanation of the difference between image and reputation: They see organizational image as "a snapshot view of an organization's reputation" at the given time when it is perceived (2014, p. 279). This means for example that if a potential employee were asked if they wanted to apply for a job in a company at that time, their decision could be impacted by the current organizational image they have.

### *Employer image.*

Organizational image management research includes all studies focusing on, as the term itself says, image or impression of organizations that have various stakeholders (such as employees), regardless of the organization's *raison d'être* (Nekmat et al., 2014). The brand image is influenced by the service the customers get, the media attention the brand has, what kind of an image the organization gives working as a partner company, and also, what this thesis will discuss, what kind of an employer the organization is and could be. The concept of an employer image offers a more defined understanding on the topic we are discussing. According to Lievens and Slaughter (2016, p. 409), the core factors in employer image include that the image is firstly, perceived by individuals (it is not a public opinion). Second, it could fluctuate, and it covers only specific elements of the organization (not the overall impression). Gilpin (2010) calls image construction an on-going social process. Within this process, the organization continuously adapts and responds to changes that the organization notices in the operating environment, such as trends. Lastly, it is constructed in intrapersonal communication (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p. 409). Employer brand image is beneficial for potential job applicants, but also for the recruiters working on the organization's side (Carlini et al., 2019). The employer image is only part of the multi-dimensional construct of organizational image (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). This outlines the other aspects of the organizational image, such as "would one purchase a product from them" and concentrates specifically on the questions: "Would one apply for a job there?" or "What kind of a person would like to work there?". For example, if an applicant finds their future employer's CSR operations and policies as an important factor for applying, according to Carlini et al. (2019), an applicant receives signals from the company's corporate social performance, and these signals affect the perception of organizational attractiveness in the applicant's mind.

The vast amount of employer branding research has identified numerous different dimensions to brand personality and image. In the early stages of recruitment, the possible applicants do not receive complete information about the employer. Therefore, they utilize job and organizational characteristics to form an image of what it would be like to work in that organization (Elving et al., 2012). According to Davies et al. (2018), the most significant personality characteristics are "warmth" versus "competence" which come from the stereotype content model (SCM). The SCM, developed by Fiske et al. (2002), is a map for introducing four stereotypes in which different socio-economic groups in intergroup communication might get placed in, according to their perceived warmth and competence. Anitha and Madhavkumar (2012) found out in their study that out of these two, the "competent employer brand personality" was more attracting in the eyes of the potential applicant and future employees. On the contrary, Rampl and Kenning (2012) found out that the competence trait was not

identified as a significant predictor of employer brand trust or affect. These are just examples of differentiating results on the effect of competence personality trait, and Rampf and Keaning (2012) suggest that the impact of competence trait could be tied to the industry or functions in hand. Adding to this assumption, I argue that although the stereotype content model gives tools for understanding and measuring intergroup (conflict) communication (e.g., Brambilla et al., 2012), I find its importance in contemporary research of intergroup communication somewhat outdated. It is hard to see benefits of having academically formulated presumptions about groups, even if the stereotypes would take part in the conflict or communication.

## **2.2 Values and Employer Branding in Depth**

Kucherov and Zamulin (2016) argue that employer branding is one of the most popular ways to manage highly qualified talent in the conditions of “war on talent”. Even though it was not initially formed for a situation as globalized as today (employer branding was first presented already in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow), its relevance started to increase when this so-called war begun (Sengupta et al., 2015). According to Sengupta et al. (2015), organizations, irrespective of their sizes, and practitioners that are engaged in the war on talent have directed their attention towards employer branding and what tools it may offer for gaining an advantage. The key tools of the brand building are values.

The definitions of organizational values often have a positive tone to them, although they are perceived to have an opposite “counterpart” (Hoelscher et al., 2016, p. 484). In Keyton’s (2011, p. 23) definition, organizational values are strategies, goals, or qualities that are perceived ideal or desirable and, as a result, create guidelines for organizational behavior. In previous communication studies, they have been treated as one component of organizational culture (e.g., Hoelscher et al., 2016). Gilstrap and Smith (2016, p. 447) suggest that when a group member recognizes organizational identity as part of their individual definition of self, it results to a stronger sense of connection to the organization. What makes study and analysis of values relevant also in the stage that precedes joining the organizational culture (recruitment, employer branding, job seeking) is that it has been suggested that organization’s externally communicated values could have an effect on the organizational identification of an out-group member as well (Xie et al., 2014). An out-group member in this sense is defined as a person who has not (yet) been hired to work for the organization. Looking outside of communication research, in brand management research, organization’s values are a component of organizational identity (Elving et al., 2012) which is perceived as the basis of employer branding.

In cases when the tasks and salaries in job positions between organizations that seek for new employees do not have significant differences, the symbolic values (first introduced by Lievens and Highhouse, 2003) take up more role. Symbolic values represent the reputational and social values the organization offers, for example how the employees are treated by the organization. This is what employer branding is mainly used for: differentiating the organization from other organizations (Jonsen et al., 2019) by enhancing the symbolic values the company has to offer for its employees. Based on multiple studies (Evans et al, 2011; Kim & Park, 2011; Kumari & Saini, 2018), the symbolic values may have a positive effect on job seeker's perception about an employer.

However, Kumari and Saini (2018) found out in their study that instrumental variables are more important than the symbolic ones, although they both affect the perception positively. Instrumental factors in their study were mentioned to provide economic value to employees such as pay, benefits, location, advancement opportunities, etc. Their study examined the effect of career growth opportunities, work-life benefits and corporate social responsibility reputation on the perceived attractiveness of an organization as an employer and the job pursuit intention of job seekers. The research design was purely experimental; the researchers came up with fictitious organizations and the respondents (the sample consisted of final year university students in engineering and management studies) were asked to imagine themselves as job seekers. The emphasis of career growth opportunities within the "new" generation's dream workplace becomes highly visible. This result, however, can be criticized for not arising from a naturally occurring situation.

### **2.2.1 Employer branding.**

Employer branding represents one method that organizations use for acquiring new employees and for keeping the already existing employees at the company (Carlini et al., 2019). The basic assumption is that employer brand should reflect the organizational identity (Elving et al., 2012). Therefore, employer branding process starts with the analyzing of the organization's values, culture, competition, HR, strengths, brand image, and trends (Chhabra & Sharma, 2012). This process develops a strategic tool used by organizations for marketing what they offer as an employer and what are their values (Sengupta et al., 2015). Also, the visibility of the benefits offered by the employer plays an important role (Elving et al., 2012).

However, the strategy and the tools for creating the employer brand vary according to the target group. Even though the target audience of the employer brand marketing consist most of the time of the job seekers, the employer brand perceptions are also formed by other stakeholders as well (Carlini et al., 2019). These other stakeholders include the company's current employees, external companies who offer B2B-

services for the company, and any other person who is somehow connected to the company, like consumers. It is important to notice that employees, current or potential ones, might not behave as a homogeneous group towards an employer brand, just like customers might not act similarly towards a brand (Davies et al., 2018).

Employer branding is based on the domain of marketing research for its tight relevance with the concept of branding (Sengupta et al., 2015). Employer branding offers a framework for forming an in-depth understanding of how current and potential employees engage, for example, with the organization's corporate social responsibility (CSR) brand (Mory et al., 2015), or with the overall image the audience perceives of the employer. It has been proven that recruitment based on the employer brand tools is more efficient than the traditional ways of recruitment (Elving et al., 2012) that do not emphasize the organization's symbolic values.

Figure 1 presents the employer brand 'wheel' which was proposed in the first academic book about employer branding (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). It shows how many elements were considered to affect the employer brand image during the first steps of creating the concept, and how much the concept has transformed from its development phase. When this book was published, there were only a handful of companies that had obtained the terminology (Mosley, 2014, p. 217) but nowadays the concept is applied more widely. This has enabled the concept to find its current form that aims at creating a work environment that highlights wellbeing and open communication and appreciation towards organization's members.

I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter that the hypothesis is that employer brand aims to reflect the organizational identity. In the next chapter, I will go through the literature on how organizational identity has been researched in relation the concept of employer brand.

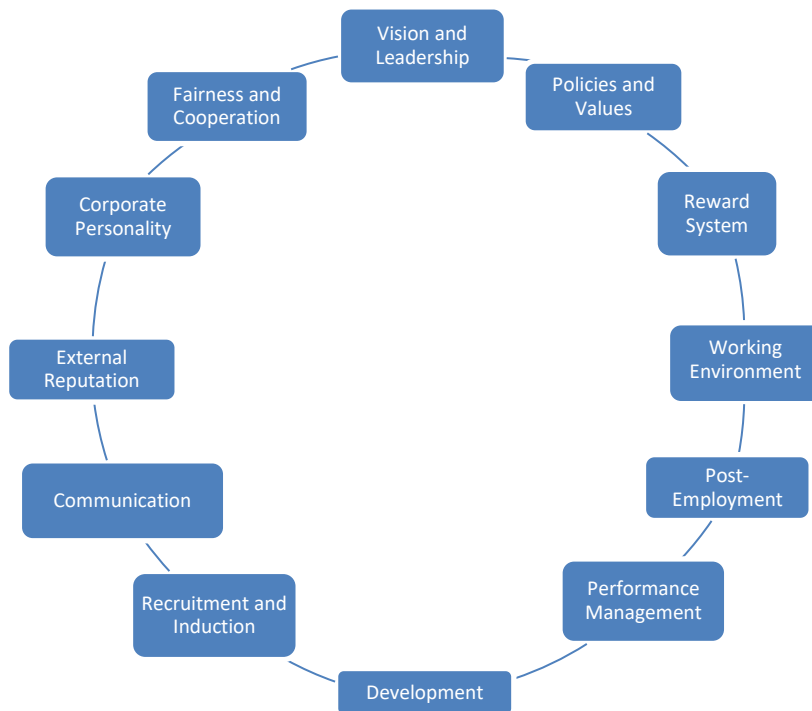


Figure 1 Employer Brand 'Wheel' (Barrow & Mosley, 2005)

***Company websites' role in online recruitment and employer branding.***

In this study, online recruitment (i.e., e-recruitment, internet recruiting) is defined as formal sourcing of job information online (Kapse et al., 2012). Organizations do still utilize traditional mass media channels in search for employees (for example newspapers' recruitment pages), but the vast amount of the recruiting has switched online. This is a result of the increasing role of the internet for information search (Marler & Parry, 2016). In the early stages of online recruitment processes, the company website plays its most important role (Puncheva-Michelotti et al., 2018). This is where an employer offers information about their career offerings, possibly hoping to find new talent to join their organization. Also, during this stage, a job seeker or someone who is interested about the career possibilities in this given company, has found themselves browsing the career webpage of the company, and building an image in their mind of what it would be like to work there.

If the employer branding in the initial stage of the recruitment process (like in this study, the career webpage) is not attractive from the perception of the right talent, the potential employees will be self-selecting themselves from the process (i.e., leaving the process). Theories of self-selection hypothesize that minority job seekers can identify when and where discrimination will take place (Pager & Pedulla, 2015, p. 1010). This implies that minority job seekers would seek for more detailed in-depth information about the employer than members of majority groups. However, Pager and

Pedulla (2015) argue that in practice the discrimination is often difficult to identify or predict. Therefore, the employers can only give as detailed information as possible about their social values in their websites to ensure that the potential employee wants to continue the process forward from that stage.

Xie et al. (2014) propose that organizational identification processes could work as mediators of the impact of symbolic attributes of an employer brand. The results of their study reveal that because potential applicants are not yet members of the organization, they most likely construct their organizational identification based on cognitive foundations (e.g., information about the company from its communication platforms, like websites which are on the focus of this thesis research).

Cober et al. (2004) compared career webpages to the traditional media and mentioned that websites have numerous more possibilities to give “a much richer experience than traditional materials” (2004, p. 624). The possibilities to integrate sounds, videos, animations, and interaction, and not only textual content, allows the companies to present themselves as employers in variously unique ways. It is good to remember that the companies’ own websites are under their own surveillance, therefore it is one of the only platforms where the company has the power to decide how its message is conveyed (Vasavada-Oza & Bhattacharjee, 2016). This makes the platform therefore a suitable piece of research data for analysing the content within employer brand communication.

### *CSR employer brand.*

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) represents the organization’s aim to develop and implement policies and practices that address ecological, economic, and social sustainability (Carlini et al., 2019). CSR information alone is not an efficient element in employee attraction but as a part of the employer brand it can enhance even significantly the interest towards an employer (Puncheva-Michelotti et al., 2018). However, we cannot confuse CSR employer branding with acting accordingly with it. Carlini et al. (2019) argue that sometimes organizations might promote CSR just for the sake of it looking good in the eyes of the stakeholders. This leads to CSR programme(s) being somewhat superficial, especially if they only seek to advertise the CSR but not implement it in the organization’s functioning. Research says that the CSR employer brand plays an increasingly bigger role (Carlini et al., 2019). Jones et al. (2014) suggest that job seekers expect to feel proud to be involved career-wise with an organization that performs well in corporate social responsibility.

Along with the increase of understanding of the possibilities that have and will come with globalization, the aspect cross-culturalism in the process of building a socially responsible employer brand should be explored more in depth (Barrena-Martínez et al., 2017). According to Barrena-Martínez et al. (2017), questions like “should

a multinational company aspire to build a glocal identity in each country or city they employ people?” have arisen. Glocalization – a word constructed of globalization and local (Roudometof, 2016, p. 1) – is a concept that aims to explain the multidimensional (Drori et al., 2014) nature of global “meeting” with local (explanation highly simplified). The authors say that a glocal identity in the case of building a CSR employer brand would appear as the company acting on local issues but still maintaining its global identity. However, for this collective case study, the cases could also work vice versa: the local identity is aimed to maintain, the global identity possibly pursued. These kinds of questions are not unambiguous and require well thought practical implications on all levels of the corporation’s decision making.

This need for further research on employer branding targeting a cross-cultural or global audience has been recognized in earlier research. Barrena-Martínez et al. (2017) link it with the ideal application of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in employer branding, that is, if the company is looking to create a socially responsible employer brand. What is somewhat still debatable is that does CSR employer branding cover diversity branding, or should they be considered as a separate framework? I will cover the concept of diversity branding literature in the next chapter.

### *Diversity branding.*

There are multiple ways to define diversity, but most of the definitions focus on various dimensions, such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, education, or work status (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). This approach of creating socio-economic dimensions/categories under the concept of diversity has been critiqued. For example, Iso-talus and Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2018, p. 452) suggest that the categories are loaded with contextually varying cultural meanings and therefore, are not politically or ethically neutral. The utilization of the term “diversity” within corporate discourse (i.e., diversity policies) has been critiqued for example to neoliberally objectify the concept (Urciuoli, 2016, p. 35). In four big American corporates’ diversity policy statements, Urciuoli (2016) found that diversity is utilized as an element of human capital. It can be imagined as something experienced or as skills, knowledge, and understanding. According to the author, when imagined, it contributes to a company's outcome within the discourse in the policy statements (2016, p. 36). Also, relating to the earlier discussion about the concept of talent, Urciuoli (2016) argues that when diversity is associated, for example, with talent, it is further validated by its capacity to generate good performance and outcomes. This could be an outcome of previous suggestions that organizations should intentionally build diverse environments for the sake of creativity, innovation, and motivation (Matuska and Sałek-Imińska, 2014) and to present a diverse set of employees on their websites (Walker et al., 2009) or testimonials for diversity in employer branding (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Although Avery and



McKay (2006) suggest in their research paper that the positive images that these diversity cues have been claimed to form could be dependent on the individuals' levels of ethnic identity, orientation on social dominance, or on other groups. This means that in the end, it is highly contextual to what extent individuals appreciate cues for diversity. Isotalus and Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2018, p. 452) additionally suggest that the economic or business perspective of diversity management that leaves equivalent value and justice out of the discourse neglects the fact that this argued increase of performance by diversity is closely connected with the corporation's ethical goals. As a society we could try to move towards the appreciation of employees as individuals that all have their own background and culture instead of appreciating individuals as representants of different socio-economic groups.

Jonsen et al. (2019) argue that HR professionals see diversity and inclusion as two different concepts, and that according to them, diversity is a precondition that might be followed by inclusion, but not necessarily. This means that in practice of HR, diversity is not a characteristic that directly would lead to an inclusive atmosphere, but it is required for acquiring inclusion. When discussing organization's diversity branding on websites, the terms of diversity and inclusion can have different practices behind them: other organizations focus on increasing demographic diversity, whereas others want to work on the inclusion within the community (Jonsen et al., 2019). For example, for increasing the demographic diversity, some organizations utilize "occupational branding" (McDonald & Kuhn, 2014) for fixing the imbalance of genders working in specific fields. Like in the argument of Carlini et al. (2019) presented previously, the brand communications might not reflect the practice. In McDonald and Kuhn's (2014) study of how women in IT industry perceive their work in comparison to how these images were branded had contradictions in them. Mainly, the results indicated that the women's positive feelings were highlighted in the branding, but the negative feelings did not make it for the public to hear.

### **2.2.2 Instrumental-Symbolic Framework**

The instrumental-symbolic framework originally introduced by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) was created for the purpose of categorizing the values of attractiveness as an employer. It differs from the previously presented stereotype content model by not aiming to form stereotypes of the brand personalities but to categorize the values and variables that organizations appear to offer from the side of the employee.

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) came up with three dimensions of benefits for an employee: functional, experiential, and symbolic values. These dimensions were mostly transferred from the previous research on brand identity in the field of marketing into the field of recruitment research. Like a customer would wonder if the

product fits with their values and needs, the possible applicant wonders if the job and organization fit with their values and needs.

Instrumental attributes represent the job seeker's image about tangible attributes that have economic value (e.g., location, pay, benefits, or advancement opportunities). Mostly previous research has utilized inductive methods for studying instrumental attributes because the instrumental attributes associated with employer image are likely to differ across jobs and organizations (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p. 411). The symbolic variables have been defined as more intangible attributes (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p. 411) and to represent the organization's "personality traits" in the image of an employee or a job seeker. However, the personality traits have more variety than the warm/competent map that the stereotype content model offers.

Nolan et al. (2013, p. 301) introduced the meanings of the instrumental and symbolic dimensions in more depth while explaining how they utilized the framework in their own study and what were the sub-categories that these attributes involve (Figure 2). The instrumental information given by the company in a job advertisement is utilized as a tool by the possible applicant to form an understanding of their person-job fit. The authors explain that person-job fit, or in other words the instrumental variables, can be categorized in two dimensions: 1) demands-abilities fit, which measures the correspondence between the position's requirements and the applicant's abilities, and 2) needs-supplies fit, which measures the correspondence between the needs of the applicant (for example, a sufficient salary) and what the company offers for the employment. According to the description of Nolan et al. (2013), person-organization (P-O) fit then again refers to the symbolic dimension of employer values (Figure 3). P-O fit is the measure of how much the applicant's personality matches with the potential employer organization's values. I argue that this idea of measuring a person's fit with an organization could, however, end up having as fluctuating results across time as would in studying organizational identification or image because a person is on an on-going process of constructing their self and evaluating the fit within groups. However, the modelling gives tools for the organizations to contemplate their communication of values from the perspective of the job seeker.

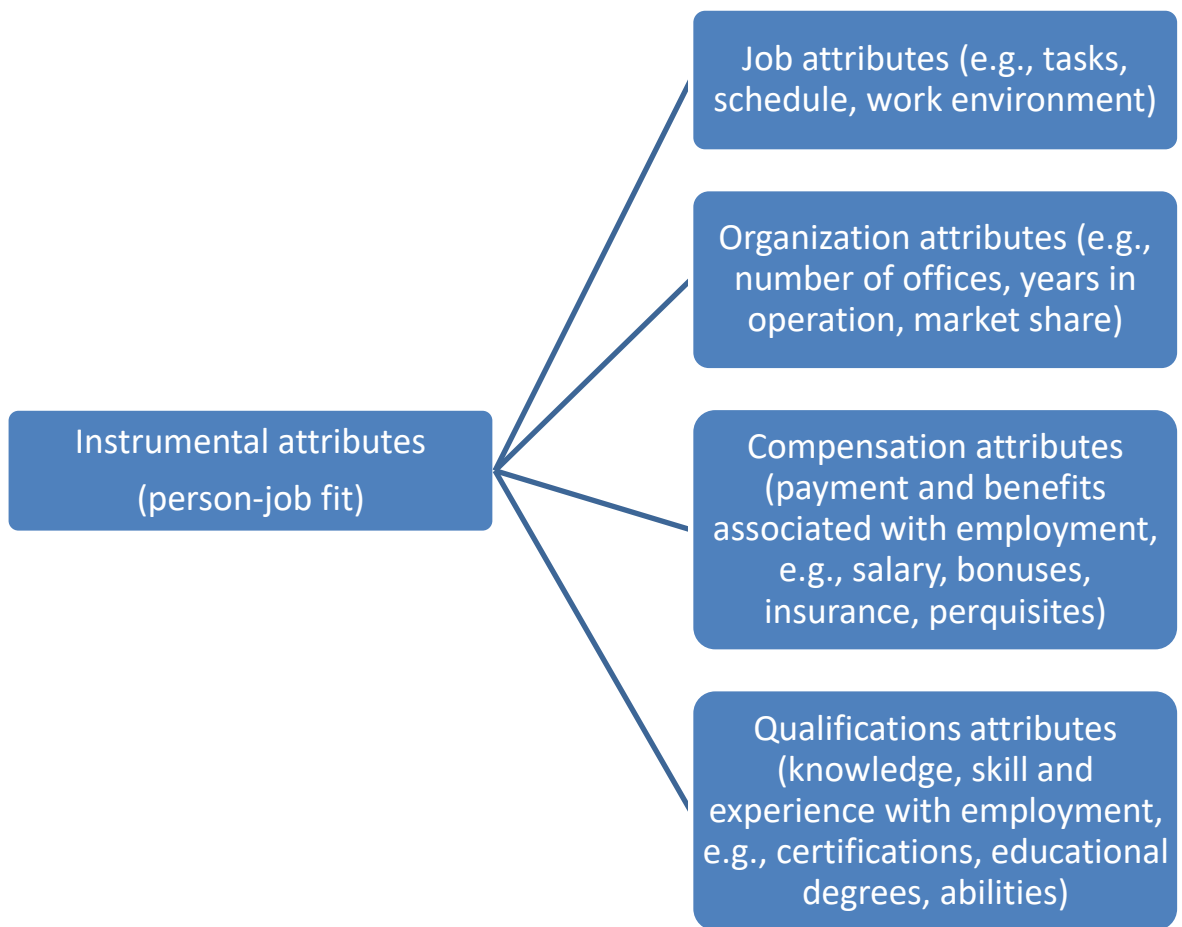


Figure 2 Instrumental attributes (based on Nolan et al., 2013)

<b>Symbolic attributes (person-organization fit)</b>	Commitment
	Customer service
	Dominance
	Excellence
	Expertise
	Family-oriented
	Fun
	Innovation
	Integrity
	Leadership
	Personal achievement
	Personal care
	Safety
	Teamwork
	Uniqueness

Figure 3 Symbolic attributes (based on Nolan et al., 2013)

Oikarinen and Saraniemi (2016) conducted a study on the role of humour in job advertisements, and they chose to utilize the instrumental-symbolic framework as a basis to reformulate their own framework for defining and categorizing the key concepts in their study. Although, when Nolan et al. (2013) had categorized the demands-abilities fit to be part of the instrumental variables, Oikarinen and Saraniemi place the qualifications and requirements fit within the symbolic attributes. They argue that the role of applicant's personal characteristics should be emphasized. They say that the qualifications of the applicant, such as knowledge, abilities, and experience can work as a key in employer branding since the possible applicant's perceptions of the P-O fit are often mostly related to those. This framework of Oikarinen and Saraniemi (2016) was not chosen to use in this thesis, because job advertisements' *raison d'être* is to introduce specific open work positions and the qualifications needed for applying for it. Career webpages do not seek to present (only) specific open positions but to communicate the whole employer brand, not only for applicants but also for existing employees, for students working in the field in the future, and for other stakeholders who are interested to know, for example, how the company takes care of its employees. Oikarinen and Saraniemi's framework has only been tested for a different kind of text type than the ones under analysis in this thesis and therefore it felt like its foci does not meet with the thesis' foci. However, I find that the authors' approach to understand the symbolic values in instrumental variables is an important realization.

As I discussed earlier, the symbolic attributes form the basis of the employer branding content. The instrumental attributes have a more important role in discourses about specific jobs, such as job ads. Also, the instrumental attributes all have a symbolic value as well: what kinds of benefits the organization offers for its employees shows their valuation towards the people. Although, if an organization (for example, a non-profit) is not able to offer its employees or volunteer workers big benefits, this does not mean that it would not appreciate people working for them. Therefore, the instrumental attributes should be a tool for making sense of what matters for the individual: how much value do the economic benefits have for them in relation to the symbolic attributes?

The framework can be criticized for seeing economic benefits as something that is not related with the "brand personality". It is also debatable why the framework has been utilized for studying employer branding, when some researchers see the employer branding to constitute solely of symbolic attributes (which would cover the economic benefits). However, I find that the concepts and terminology of the instrumental-symbolic framework are useful for conducting a study that focuses on texts that communicate the employer brand. I will not be utilizing the framework as it is because of its definitions of which I have conflicting thoughts. However, representing

the framework supports the understanding of the categorization of the data according to the variables which helps to notice the patterns within the discourse.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

This literature review has presented a wide range of concepts that appear in the literature discussing recruitment and employer branding. This chapter will offer a summary on the topics discussed to help make sense of this web of concepts and critique towards them. To hopefully ease the reader's journey, I have divided the concepts roughly into the ones that are examined from the side of the organization and others examined from the side of an individual.

### **2.3.1 Organizational point of view**

I started the literature review by explaining the phenomenon of "war on talent" which has been noticed to some extent in media discourses as well. It represents the problem of not finding enough or the right people to hire which is what some specific companies face, locally and globally. In human resource literature, employer branding has been suggested as a tool for organizations to compete more efficiently (Kucherov & Zamulin, 2016). Adding to the discussion about the concept of war on talent, I picked up the concept of "talent" and reviewed how it has been discussed in previous literature. It was found that the previous human resources literature is lacking a conceptual development for the topic (Preece et al., 2011) which Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 292) finds to be related to the typical aim to find practical solutions from the organizations' side instead of taking an approach that considers the individuals.

Employer branding is a tool utilized by marketing and recruitment professionals for communicating the organization's values and policies as an employer. The aim with employer branding is often to build a more positive image and in a long run, a better reputation for the organization in the feelings of its current and potential new employees. I discussed that for example companies' websites can have an important role especially in the early stage of the job seeker's identification and image construction processes and because they are communication platforms where the organization has control over the content, it is beneficial to be utilized efficiently. I also briefly presented trends within the employer branding field and offered some critical discussion that has happened among academic scholars. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) employer branding aims to develop policies that address ecological, economic, and social sustainability. Carlini et al. (2019) argued it sometimes to be implemented only for the sake of it looking good in the eyes of the stakeholders which could lead to superficial results—meaning that the practice lacks or is even non-existent. The

superficiality can sometimes also be seen in diversity branding which according to the approach is either part of CSR employer branding or a tool of its own. Diverse workforce has been suggested to lead to more positive outcomes in innovation and business, although by some researchers these results should not be generalized (Avery & McKay, 2006). However, Urciuoli (2016) does present the idea already as generalized at least within the American corporate policies. Diversity and its good management are represented as a subjective asset for the organization that helps it to perform better results, but its over-simplified definitions and losing the ethical goals under the cover of business and economic perspectives could need a radically new approach (Isotalus & Kakkuri-Knuuttila, 2018, p. 452).

In the end of the chapter 2.2, I gave an overview about the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) which has been utilized as basis in multiple studies of employer branding. It has been critiqued, reformed, and applied in different ways, but I found it to have an influence on this thesis' methodology so it was beneficial to present.

### **2.3.2 Individual's perspective**

Organizational identification and identity construction were found to have different definitions and until now, it is difficult to find a clear understanding for how the identity and identification processes work during the phase of job seeking. Mostly, the literature explains the processes to happen during an employment. The structural model of identification (CMI) and the majority of brand/HR management research discuss identification in the context of the relation of an employee and their employing organization. Before being hired, the process would be construction of an organization's image, not identification (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). However, for example, a marketing research paper (Xie et al., 2015) mentions that the organizational identification process would begin already in the job seeking phase. I must challenge the idea of identification process beginning only when an individual is hired for the organization and argue that it can already begin during the phase of hearing about an organization hiring new people if the job seeker starts to contemplate whether they would fit the organization. I propose that the argument that Lievens and Slaughter offer for the outsider constructing an image of the employer could be processed in parallel with the identity construction; the person could have an image about the organization as an employer, they might be aware of its reputation but at the same time, they could be processing how they would fit there. This process has also been recognized in recruitment literature as the concept of P-O fit (Nolan et al., 2013) that bases on the perceptions of the job seeker portraying their values with the values of instrumental-symbolic framework.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The study aims at understanding the employer brand created by an organization as an internationally attractive employer. It finds and analyzes the messages sent by organizations through the webpages at the time of the data collection. The objective of the study was to find out what are the ways the companies try to communicate their employer brand and what are the elements that communicate the positive attitude towards employing workforce internationally. Additionally, I seek to investigate how the location of the workplace is represented in the content. I categorize the data set according to the variables of career website content which have been used previously for analyzing similar data, and that are somewhat based on the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). This helps to find possible patterns in the content. However, in qualitative study methods, the interpretation of texts is the ideal result (Stake, 1995, p. 8), and therefore finding the variables and the possible patterns is not the main purpose, but the analysis of the content.

The knowledge gathered during the literature review supports the analysis and I will especially be focusing on discussing the trends or concepts discussed previously. Additionally, the representation of Finland (and/or Nordic countries) became another aspect of investigation for the realization of the importance of location. The research data was analyzed through the following questions:

- What are the ways in which the companies try to communicate their employer brand and how do the choices reflect the societal discourse?
- How is the physical and cultural location of the workplace represented?

#### **3.1 Research Design and Method**

In this thesis research, I used a collective case study method. A case study's core purpose is not to understand all similar cases, although it helps in preparation of

generalizations to choose a case that is likely to represent other cases as well (Stake, 1996, p. 4). When an author chooses to investigate multiple different cases separately, the cases will have important coordination between each other (Stake, 1995, p. 3) but as it is still a qualitative study method, it does not aim to generalize.

I chose to analyze the data by using a mixed methodology that was based on qualitative content analysis. The terminology and concepts discussed in the literature review were utilized for supporting the process as well. The form of the data played an important role when choosing the method. The data consists not only of textual content but also of visual aspects, such as images and short video clips (without audio). The visual elements (images, videos, video thumbnails) were transcribed into text form to describe and discuss what the purpose and influence of them is. In general, the data under research of (qualitative) content analysis can be in any form of recorded communication, i.e., transcripts of interviews/discourses, videos, written documents in general, etc. (Klenke, 2015; Kohlbacher, 2006) and therefore it is also suitable for analyzing web pages. Content analysis has been previously utilized for similar studies (e.g., Jonsen et al., 2017; Vasavada-Oza & Bhattacharjee, 2016). However, in these given studies the number of webpages was large, so they were conducted purely as quantitative studies. Therefore, the results offer generalizations and are fully based on the coding of the data. Because the amount of content in the three webpages analyzed for this research was not massive, it was possible to conduct a qualitative analysis on the data. This decision required some modifications for the purpose of this thesis in reasoning and presenting the findings.

### **3.1.1 Process of analysis.**

The qualitative content analysis is defined as any reduction and pursuing to understand the data that consists of qualitative material and any aim to identify the core patterns and meanings within the data (Patton, 2002, p. 453). It is an inductive study method and grounds in the examination of topics and themes in the data (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2010, p. 2). However, for this thesis research I decided to apply previously utilized variables of website content for the categorization process because a similar research question has been answered using the variables. After the deductive categorization of the data set, I moved on inductive reasoning to find out which themes and categories emerge from the data through my own examination and comparison (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2010, p. 3) in addition to the preset variables.

For the deductive qualitative application, I needed to have previously formulated and defined coding rules for the analysis (Mayring, 2000). These definitions are represented as a list in the next chapter. As suitable for a collective case study, I conducted the categorization separately for every page. I listed the paragraphs, or sentences under their categories, bolding the parts that are relevant to the category. Some



of the paragraphs or sentences were suitable in multiple categories for having multiple issues covered in one message. After I had done the categorization, I looked through the data that was not added in any of the prior categories. In every case, I found similar content that were not suitable for the prior categories and decided to add a category named "Factors of localization value". These factors allow me to respond to the second research question about the representation of the workplace's location. For the presentation and discussion of the analysis, I have decided to utilize the categories as the structure. I aim to relate the findings with the concepts discussed in the literature review.

### **3.1.2 Variables of the website content.**

Before I start to categorize the content, it is necessary to determine what we are looking for and how can instrumental and symbolic values be found in the content. Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee's (2016) study of three Indian IT companies' websites provides a suitable starting point for the search of employer brand variables presented in companies' websites. In their study, they analyzed how the companies promote their own organizational brands as desirable employers through their own websites. Since the employer brand is in the core of this thesis as well, I decided that the given study's research design would be of help in answering the research question of this study.

According to Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee (2016), when studying websites, the information found can be split into two categories: design and content. Website design includes variables such as colors, font sizes, other graphics, navigation bars, special effects (according to authors, this means videos), and URLs. When making the transcription for this thesis, I took notes of background photos and images, images that were graphically designed, the separation of headings and body texts, and the videos and their operation mode (start automatically or clicking, loop or start-to-end). The navigation bars were not taken into consideration since the data consists of webpages that are focused on presenting the career options and not of complete websites. The colors that were found in the webpages were in clear accordance with the companies' brand colors, and after some consideration I decided that they do not have a heavy weight on this specific study because they do not offer any value propositions. Other multimodal content (photos, videos, symbols) offers more signs of the work and community culture that the companies offer for their employees.

The website content variables formed by Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee (2016) were utilized for the primary categorization of the data in this thesis research. What was anticipated is that these variables would probably not fit perfectly with all the information found in the data set, therefore the "leftover" data was analyzed inductively afterwards so no piece of content would be missed.

The website content variables for the framework of the analysis are:

- Factors of interest
- Exciting work environment.
- Novel work practices.
- Promotes innovation, risk taking and experimentation and not emphasizing being careful.
- Firm attributes - size, growth rate, profitability.
  
- Factors of Social Value
- Work environment that is fun and happy.
- Good collegial relationships and team atmosphere.
- Promotes diversity within the organization, values diverse populations as employees.
- Promotes collaboration.
- Promotes sharing of information and praises good performance.
- Provides work-life balance.
- Factors of Economic Value
- Provides above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities.
- Factors of Development Value
- Provides recognition, self-worth, and confidence.
- Career-enhancing experience and springboard to future employment.
- Promotes achievement, being action-oriented and result-oriented.
- Sets high expectations.
- Application Value
- Provides opportunity for employees to apply what they have learned.
- Teaches others in an environment that is more customer-oriented and humanitarian.
- Additional Variables
- Creating awareness about fraudulent recruitment practices.
- Reaching out to students

## 3.2 Presentation of the Data

Career web pages of three Finland-based game development companies were set as the research data. According to Stake (1995, p. 5), it is best to pick only a few cases for a collective case study although it is possible that there could be numerous cases to choose from that fit the criteria. This leads to the question of which ones to choose: “Which career webpages will help me to understand the international employer branding messages in Finnish game development companies?”, instead of asking “What are the Finnish game development companies?” (modified from Stake’s questions, 1995, p. 5).

The data set includes the multimodal content found within these pages. By multimodal I mean the texts that are written on given pages, as well as the photos and possible automatically playing videos and video thumbnails. Pages and information behind links from the given pages, and videos that one needs to click to view, were not considered in the data to keep the data set as appropriately manageable in relation to the length and extent of the research process.

### 3.2.1 Choosing the data set.

For narrowing down which employers’ webpages would be using the type of content that I want to analyze in this collective case study, some framing needed to be done. The most obvious start for looking was to start by looking at the companies that have grown during the fourth industrial revolution (i.e., Industry 4.0). In the Finnish employer scene, there are numerous big and small companies and start-ups that fit this description. Therefore, some other aspect that narrows down the scope but also ties it together is important to have. I had to define and find companies in Finland that have or aspire to become international when it comes to work communities. The choice of language in the company’s website was the starting point for framing.

To ensure to have the right kind of research data, it was important that the organizations’ target audience of the employer brand communication should seem international instead of directed only into Finnish citizens. The businesses that I chose to analyze have been established in Finland but at least during the time of this research, do not have anything written in Finnish in their career webpages. The use of English creates a communication platform that is suitable for an international audience. However, the choice of language does not necessarily make communication international on its own. These webpages include also other cues in the content that clarify the employer branding to be directed towards an international audience. This communicational choice seems to have a relation with the problem discussed earlier about the need of experts especially in the Finnish game development industry. As already

uttered, the Finnish game development companies could be perceived as pioneers in the exploration of new ways for recruitment, and accordingly with the locational issue discussed here, especially how to efficiently attract international professional in Finland. These three specific companies also have developed games that are known and spread widely internationally. This makes them a valid source for understanding what the possible future trends in international employer branding communicated through websites in Finnish companies are currently.

An employer that fits the scope of a globalized work community in Finland is likely to have English as their common language rather than Finnish. Finland's first official language is Finnish and second is Swedish. Therefore, if a Finland-based company chooses not to use either of these as the language on their website, it communicates that their audience can be elsewhere than only in Finland. The monolingual websites were found to be built for Finland-based companies that operate in the game development industry. It is possible, and probable, that there are English-dominated webpages in other industries' companies in Finland as well, but this framing for the game development industry is clear and the companies chosen within the scope have arguably similar communication practices in their career webpages. Next up, these three companies will briefly be presented.

### **3.2.2 Background of the focus companies.**

Before presenting the companies, I will clarify that the author conducting the study did not have a significant relationship with these companies in advance. I only knew the companies by name and some games that they have developed but have not played them, nor followed them in the media platforms. When analyzing the data set, there are possible references to the companies' games or other activity in the webpages that were therefore not understood. This puts the author in a similar position as a person browsing the website, possibly interested to work for the company, but not (yet) familiar with the products they create which may not be the typical position if many of their employees already have played their games and maybe consider it "a dream" to work there. However, I do not find this problematic in this study since the approach is to find out the general elements of today's employer branding discourse and representations of the workplace location. In this collective case study, it is important to emphasize that I did not focus on comparing these companies, therefore, the companies' names were not highlighted for presenting the results and the discussion to ensure that the focus of this collective case study collects the elements together instead of compares them. I have added the companies' names only in the direct examples, and wherever it is suitable.

The first company whose career page was chosen as a piece of data is Rovio that is specialized in game development. Its most-known mobile game "Angry Birds" was

released in 2009. According to their website during the time of gathering the data, there were over 450 employees with 47 nationalities, most of them working in Finland. The rest of the locations are in six different countries around the world.

Another company that was chosen for the research scope is also a mobile game developer called Supercell. Since its founding in 2010, it has come out with five different games until this research data was analyzed. At the time of gathering the research data, there company had around 330 employees with over 30 nationalities altogether in four offices. Besides Helsinki, the company is also located in three big cities in different parts of the world.

The third company chosen for this study is the oldest and smallest of the three companies, Remedy Entertainment, established in 1995. Unlike the other two, its video games are more story-driven action games, and not for mobile gaming. The team had 270 employees and over 25 nationalities when the data was being gathered, and its only office is in the capital area of Finland.

### **3.2.3 Data collection.**

The data set was gathered on January 15, 2021. I decided to save the content on all the web pages on the same day and not return multiple times during the analysis project. This was made to assure the possibility to analyze the pages as wholes and to see the big picture correctly at least from that one momentary moment. Websites can be updated frequently, even daily if needed, so there is always a risk that some parts of the pages end up analyzed but then they are changed before the study has been completely conducted. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the time and the year of when the data was gathered when reading this thesis.

The overall data consists of 1631 words (including headers and link texts), 16 photographs, eight video thumbnails, three images representing video game characters, and 16 graphic symbols representing different employee benefits. There are also multiple links that bring to other pages. The content was transcribed into text-only form, with detailed explanations of the imagery and highlighting the positions of photographs, images, links, and headings. Next, the texts were sorted into categories and joint together in the end to conclude the results for the manuscript.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will present the main findings of the study and discuss them in relation to the topics presented in the literature review. I will give examples to offer more profound understanding on the discourse, but for the sake of possible copyright issues I have decided not to include graphic examples, although, their support for understanding the multimodal discourse would be beneficial. I will utilize the variables of the website content to construct the presentation of the findings and utilize subsections to discuss them more in depth.

### **4.1 The role of Instrumental Variables**

In the variables of the website content that were used for categorizing the data we can find a separation of the instrumental variables and the symbolic values introduced in the instrumental-symbolic framework. The instrumental variables are represented by the factors of economic value (salary, benefits, e.g.) and partly by the factors of interest (work environment and organization attributes). Also, an added factor of localization value partly fits the definition of an instrumental variable since there are descriptions of Helsinki/ Finland/ Nordic country as a functional place to work in. However, it will be discussed in a separate chapter for its unique nature of not only having instrumental value but also symbolic value and therefore it was added as its own value.

Overall, the instrumental variables are not in the focus in the variables of the website content (framed by Vasavada-Oza & Bhattacharjee, 2016) or as specifically important parts of an employer brand representation. As mentioned earlier, typically the employer brand is used for differentiating the organizational image from others' (Jonsen et al., 2019) by enhancing the symbolic values the company has to offer for its employees. There is only one factor (the economic value) that solely consists of the instrumental variables, and besides the factor of interest, the other factors cover

symbolic values. This is already an indication of the fact that employer branding is utilized more heavily to communicate the organization's work culture, social environment, and the valuation of employees, as argued by Sengupta et al. (2015).

#### **4.1.1 Differences in Representation of Economic Benefits.**

The economic value, such as salary, compensations, and promotional opportunities are not in the center of attention in the data set. It was hard to find any similarities for presenting the factors of economic value. One case revealed that the company secures work permits and relocation support for the employees and their families who come to work in the office from abroad. However, I argue that the relocation support is also a social value, meaning a symbolic value, especially if the support given is more psychological/social than economical.

One example found in the case of Remedy Entertainment mentions that "competitive" benefits and compensation are offered, therefore bringing the idea of competitive job markets on the table. Some of the promises are presented with positive adjectives that present the company to be generous and that the benefits are larger than average. Many of these benefits are visually emphasized with symbols supporting the claims. Here are some example arguments, communicated in the form of a grid:

Talent development and long-career rewards

Extensive health and leisure insurances

These are accompanied by a symbol presenting a diamond; possibly symbolizing the talent development assimilated to cutting a diamond. The insurances are represented by a shield and a checkmark, symbolizing security. A third instrumental benefit mentioned is:

Superb private healthcare

There are multiple possible reasons for a company to not present their economic values. One, which is a likely one, is that the instrumental variables are sometimes referred to as the person-job (P-J) fit (Nolan et al., 2013). This means that, if not all, at least many of the instrumental variables are related to the job position's description, instead of to what it is like to work in the organization (except the organization attributes, like size and growth rate). Therefore, they are factors that would be introduced in job advertisement or posting, instead of attributes that apply to the whole organization as an employer.

Another reason for the lack of presence of instrumental variables in career webpages, I argue, is that the organization does not want to be viewed as an employer that shows its valuation towards its employees through money and other benefits. It

does not mean that the compensations would not be competitive or above average, but it means that the company can offer other benefits, such as social, to its employees as well. Lifting the company's social values on the limelight and to be part of its employer brand would appeal to possible employees that want to have opportunities to grow and develop further in their job, as well as who want to feel proud working in the company and to maintain a satisfactory quality of life outside of work too. It is also good to keep up the discussion of which benefits are considered economic values, and which are social values, or are some benefits considered to be both instrumental and symbolic?

#### **4.1.2 Instrumental Variables with Symbolic Dimensions**

As said, it is not the salary or insurance that are emphasized in the content for the employees in the career webpages discussed. However, "Relocation support" is mentioned as one of benefits, for example, enforced with a symbol representing the globe and two map location symbols situated in different parts of the planet. An example argument from the case of Rovio states:

From securing a work permit and finding the right housing, to opening bank account, we provide immigration and relocation support for our employees and their families coming from abroad.

This benefit was found to be both an instrumental and a symbolic variable. When the company helps the employee to sort out a lot of effort like paperwork that is included in the immigration process, it not only shows the valuation toward the employee but also saves effort from the employee and therefore could be an instrumental benefit. Although, this argument does not clarify if the relocation support brings financial benefits for the employee. For example, are the costs of these relocation actions paid by who? Nevertheless, this benefit weighs more as a symbolic value. Including the support for the employee's closed-ones shows family-orientation. This whole process of supporting employees to relocate in a new country is also an important sign for a person thinking about applying that it does not become an obstacle if they live in another country than where the studio exists. If one has the skills and the interest to apply, all the practical arrangements will be taken care of by the employer.

A similar benefit, which is almost an assumption of the future employee's country of origin not being in Finland, is the example argument of Remedy Entertainment that promises "Company-paid annual travel to your homeland". This is amplified with an image of an airplane. Even though this does not have a similar meaning like the previous argument of support for relocation, it has similar mix of instrumental and symbolic meanings; the company shows its understanding that the employee will likely want to travel to visit the country they see as their "homeland" but also the



employee gets economic value out of this for not having to pay their travel on free time. Another promise for relocation services was found in the case of Remedy Entertainment that states: “Turnkey relocation services”.

These specific examples of instrumental variables that also have symbolic dimensions presented in the chapter, are a clear signification that the companies are looking for employees from outside Finland. Using the terms such as “homeland” and “immigration” exclude people that already live in Finland or feel like Finland is their home although they would be living in another country. I argue that these terminological choices construct an image of the ideal employee to be someone who moves to Finland for the first time. Especially the term “homeland” is highly subjective, since one could feel like Finland becomes their home country after they move in.

## **4.2 Conclusion of the instrumental variables.**

To conclude the chapter about the role of instrumental variables in the data set, I will make some remarks that came across related to this category. Firstly, instrumental variables are not as salient as symbolic values in this data set. Even though one company uses a total of eight (8) different instrumental variables as an argument for why one would like to work there, these arguments do not take a big role of the overall content in the employer brand communication happening in the webpage. They are represented mostly without any further explanations or relation to the overall organization’s culture, and in the same level as symbolic benefits. In addition to this, it is undeniable that the instrumental variables do not appear nearly at all in the rest of the webpages, or if there are, they are not solely instrumental variables but symbolic as well.

I argue that some of the instrumental variables, especially the ones which include the assumption that the employee will relocate to work from another country, can also be placed in the category of symbolic values. The reason for this is that they have a connotation of care for the employees’ and their families’ possible relocation-based stress and homesickness. The economic benefit given therefore is not a conventional salary that an employee should get for the work they have done. It is an act of appreciation for making a big life change and moving to a new country to help the company. I also found that these given variables are represented using terminology that excludes audience living in Finland or feel Finland as their home country. This excludes these people also from the imagined ideal employee that the pages construct.

## 4.3 Symbolic Values

Now that I have gone through the instrumental variables, I will move towards the symbolic values. Since the instrumental variables were argued not to have great significance in the data set or generally in employer branding, I can say that the symbolic values have a big role. Next, I will go through the symbolic values by using the website content categories and discuss what kinds of meanings they have in more of a societal level.

### 4.3.1 Innovation as an important factor of interest.

As stated earlier, there are two types of interest factors: instrumental and symbolic. The work environment and the firm attributes are instrumental variables; the novelty and innovativeness in work practices and the attitude toward risk-taking are symbolic values. I found out in the collective case study that innovation is the most important factor of interest valued by these specific companies in their employer branding on websites. The rest of the factors of interest are not as salient. New/ modern work practices are visible only in the photographs, presenting employees utilizing clearly modern technological devices. The size and growth rate of the work community is expressed but it is not highlighted that the communities are big. The profitability or otherwise positive (or negative) sales do not come through directly at all in the career pages. One of the companies expresses the size of the work community to be big but describes the work culture to follow customs of a small company. Another case calls its projects to be “exciting” and the end products as “innovative”. It tells the size of the work team but does not give any connotations or explanations for the number of people working there.

#### *Novel work practices.*

The factor of novel work practices is somewhat vague, and to be able to utilize it efficiently in the categorization, it had to be decided what kind of content could fit in this category. The decision was that only direct arguments about novelty/modernity/futuristic work practices should be put in here. The reason is that none of the work practices that the companies presented in their webpages could have been considered “old” or “outdated”. By this, I mean that in fact all the content could go into the category of “novel work practices”, from the newest technological devices to the independently decided working hours and everything in between. The business of Industry 4.0 companies is based on novelty, and therefore, extremely difficult to clearly distinct what does not belong in this category if this would be approached through indirect signals as well.

There were no direct messages in the content of the webpages that the companies argue to work in a “new” way. I hypothesize that the “novelty” is thought to come through automatically through the images and descriptions of the work practices that it does not have to be specified that it is “novel”. Also, the overall image (some could call it a stereotype) of the whole game development industry might point in the direction that the communities are fast-paced developers that are continuously looking to the future and experimenting new things, hence, the novel work practices are also assumed to be part of the communities. The values of innovation, experimentation, and risk taking that would be considered to go under the concept of “novel work practices” were emphasized in some parts of the data set. Therefore, I argue that the novelty is brought upfront by using these indirect terms, instead of directly calling themselves “modern”.

### *Innovation, risk taking, and experimentation.*

The term “innovation” was mentioned three (3) times in different kinds of inflected forms: Remedy Entertainment argues to “create innovative world-class games” and Rovio has a whole text section dedicated for innovation, explaining that diversity allows the community to innovate. The ideology behind this argument will be discussed further in the chapter specified for diversity branding. The argument is emphasized with a photograph of employees discussing around a table, demonstrating a moment of discussing ideas. They brand their community of employees as confident, brave, and eager to experiment:

We’re comfortable with our skills and not afraid to experiment, try new things, take chances, and express ourselves.

This text example features an image of an employee drawing on a touch screen. The employee has a happy facial expression. I argue that this piece of content enhances the idea that individuals can use their work time for drafting ideas and sketching. It could be viewed as a counterargument to the discussion about work-life balance and motivation at work which will be covered further in this thesis. This time used for experimenting is pictured as something the employee enjoys and this emphasizes that the employees love what they do and are passionate about developing new ideas. The value of experimentation adds to the previously mentioned image of the companies as pioneers, and how the culture of experimentation would follow through the whole company’s functions.

### *Valuing small company culture.*

An interesting factor that the companies describe to admire, or value is to remain “a small company culture”, although, the companies are relatively big businesses and

operating in multiple different countries. Still, the companies express that they strive to maintain the culture of a small company.

When it comes to making the best possible games, we believe in the power of small. (Supercell)

We are a globally recognized company with over 400 employees, yet we maintain a “small company” working culture where everyone is expected to take initiative in their own projects and direct their own career development. (Rovio)

The companies claim to hold on to the typical culture in SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) which briefly explained are usually companies of less than 250 employees, therefore, smaller than the ones we are discussing. One example says that small teams are the way to make “the best possible games”. Another example goes into the matter a bit more deeply by explaining that in this kind of culture, “everyone is expected to take initiative in their own projects and direct their own career development”. Here we can notice the different approaches on the same value. One company does not define the concept of a small company culture but brings it out as a tool or a way for the community to reach its goals whereas another explains what to expect for the potential applicant when it comes to the culture but does not give a reason for why it is important for the employees to take initiative and direct their career development. The latter example offers a lot of responsibility for the employee to contribute to the company’s performance, but I argue that the viewpoint of the representation (the use of ‘we’) does not put the organization in the position of power over its employees. The argumentation quite elaborately builds an idea that the power is shared among the whole community.

In the end, neither of these statements reveal why the small company culture is the most efficient way for them to work but relying on previous research that will be presented next, I argue that it is highly relevant to the value of innovation and risk-taking, discussed in the previous chapter. Gonzalez-Loureiro et al. (2017, p. 1909) point out that “hitting the right objective on the first try when innovating is especially crucial for SMEs”. Small companies might not have big resources (money, time, human resources) to direct to innovation and experimentation. The time and money they use for product or service development should lead to success but when one cannot be sure that it does, the company must take a risk. But in the case of smaller companies, the freedom to innovate and try new things is also up to less people than in big companies. In the case of SMEs, the bigger responsibility could lead to more excitement to experiment and come up with ideas. At least that is how these companies in hand suggest by their content. The content gives an image that they pursue a similar working culture in their big organizations, although in their context the pressure of succeeding “on the first try” would not necessarily be there.

### 4.3.2 Social values dominating the content.

Social value is a broad concept and has been utilized in a variety of ways in previous research. In this framework for categorizing the website content I used for analyzing the data, the social value is an umbrella concept that has sub-concepts of team spirit, work environment, diversity, work-life balance, and cooperation. Carlini et al. (2019) explain the social value to be separate from value of diversity but they both go under the category of corporate social responsibility branding. Schlager et al. (2011) argued that the company's social value is the most important attribute in attracting potential employees. In their definition, the social value includes factors like a respectful environment, people-first attitude, and friendly relationships between colleagues. However, it was decided to go with this definition of Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee because a) the thesis does not focus on CSR employer branding and b) we do not see a remarkable difference in results whether the diversity value is as a subcategory of social values or as its own category. The results will still be discussed in the same extent. Also, we found that the definition of social values by Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee is the most suitable for this thesis because it offers the clearest framing for looking which parts in the content would fit under the category.

Social values were clearly the most emphasized category in these three webpages. All the aspects that were mentioned as signs of social values (fun and happy work environment, good collegial relationships, and team atmosphere, valuing diversity, promoting collaboration, sharing of information, praising of good performance, and providing work-life balance) are salient within the data set. The social values come through in the text parts that highlight a) diversity, b) internationalization, and c) work-life balance, team atmosphere and collaboration. Happiness and motivation are represented as a necessity for making great end-products. Teams are not described as homogeneous entities but instead as groups of individuals with different backgrounds, sharing the organization's culture. In addition, there are employee testimonials praising the team spirit and the work-life balance in the company, and the team is referred to be family-like.

#### *Diversity branding.*

The use of terms "diversity" or "diverse" in diversity policies or management has been criticized to have a meaning as a beneficial asset for the company's outcome, as discussed during the literature review. I found an example for this in one of the cases, but also another way to utilize the term "diverse" stroke an interest in me. Remedy Entertainment calls the team "diverse" in the same sentence as presenting the size and the number of different nationalities in the company, but I found no meaning for what the term in fact means for the company. I was left with assuming that because it is

stated before explaining the number of people and nationalities, that it: a) supports the argument of having numerous different kinds of people within the organization, and b) it refers to having multiple nationalities within the organization, at least to some extent. Nevertheless, I prefer not to emphasize the fact that the term is not explained open, but instead the fact that it was utilized as a (marketing) tool as itself, with leaving the sense-making for the person reading it. The use of diversity as a marketing tool in educational institutes has been critiqued previously by Dervin (2017), and I find this example to have interesting similarities although the context is different. Dervin (2017, p. 280) suggests that in the context of institutes that rely on funding, demonstration of welcoming diversity can boost the organization's reputation among, for example, the actors who decide who gets funding. I suggest that the demonstration of diversity within employer branding content could be utilized in a similar way, but instead to enhance the reputation or image among job seekers and other stakeholders, like customers. Now, like in this example, sometimes the demonstration might be as blunt as this one, and come across as saying: "We are diverse." The end. Although, like Carlini et al. (2019) stated, if the realization of the policies does not match the branding, it could end up costly for the reputation.

The Rovio's career page includes a whole section dedicated for diversity, titled "Diversity and innovation". This section mixes two factors of the employer branding content on websites: the social value, and the factor of interest. The content implies that the diversity of work community is an ideal characteristic in a company to excel in innovation. In some cases, the photos feature people of different genders, ages, and ethnicities. They also show the employees either interacting with each other in work-related issues or just overall enjoying time together, but in some photos, working alone as well. It gives the impression that the communities are as diverse as uttered in the content.

— — We believe diversity is the key to making the best games and entertainment for global audiences, allowing us to innovate by transforming existing ideas by adding our continuously evolving knowledge.

Previously, I discussed and argued that the small company culture would be key to innovation according to the content found on the data set. In this example, the value of diversity is added to these key characteristics for a company that performs innovatively well. This example follows the discussion provided by Urciuoli (2016) that suggests the application of the term "diversity" within discourse to have a position of benefit for the company. In this example, it is not only beneficial but one of the core requirements for a better performance.

### *Motivating employees at work and outside of work.*

Work-life balance is an abstract concept that defines how a person working balances and desires to balance their life between the job and the free-time. In practice, this often means the flexibility of work hours or place. However, the literature on the topic reveals that it also covers widely issues like stress that result from the (dis)balance of life and job, and/or from the level of satisfaction the employees perceive. In all the cases, I was able to find that the companies want to send a positive message about their work environment, but also to communicate the importance of work-life balance. One example declares:

In order to bring out the best of their talent and turn it into phenomenal games, people need to be happy and motivated. — (Remedy Entertainment)

The company lists multiple different benefits of how the company takes care of its employees. On the same grid are also listed the instrumental benefits which gives an appearance that these benefits have same amount of importance from the company's side. It is left to the reader to decide which ones have more value for them. The grid includes: 1) "Healthy work-life balance and five weeks of paid holidays", together with a symbol for a deck chair and a sunshade 2) "Getting (anti) social", accompanied with a symbol for beer bottles hit together 3) "Company-paid annual travel to your homeland", over a symbol for an airplane 4) "Personal sports and culture allowance", with a symbol for a bowling ball and a tenpin. In the first example, the promise of a five-week holiday is an instrumental variable, but promising "a healthy work-life balance" is a symbolic one. The adjective "healthy" is to some extent an abstract concept that possibly consists of these other promises made in the grid. The company does also communicate strongly about its stance on work-life balance outside the grid, for example:

Our teams work hard, but the time after hours is just as important, which is why we make sure you get your time off.

Time at the studio doesn't have to be all work and no play. If you feel like it, you can take part in our movie and game nights, wellbeing afternoons or any of the various social activities [our] employees organize with the support of the company.

Gyanchandani (2017) conducted a qualitative study on the work-life balance of software professionals working in Pune city, India. The results of their case study indicated parallel issues discussed in the previous paragraphs; lack of time for family, friends, and own hobbies, and in addition mentions the influence of teamwork for the dis/satisfaction at work. These results are not surprisingly the ones that are replied with the statements in the given example: they are likely to be in the top of the mind of a job seeker who is already aware of the possible negative aspects in a workplace.

The fact that the work-life balance is emphasized in the body text that describes the general idea of what it is like to work for the company, gives the impression that the wellbeing and social life have a big role in the company's values. Mentioning that the employees are also actively arranging social activities and the company supports them increases the idea of a community where people collectively want to enjoy their time together and bond, which increases the satisfaction of teamwork.

In Rovio's webpage, there were some clear visual messages in addition to textual communication on the topic of motivating employees with a good work-life balance. For example, there is a photo of multiple people leaning on a pool table. They are smiling which signifies happiness and relaxed atmosphere. This also communicates that the office might have some equipment for hobbies and free-time activities which make the work environment more comfortable and pleasant.

A text example was also found in the company's webpage. The company has a section headed: "Wellbeing benefits". The body text in this section goes:

We strive for a great work-life balance, with active hobby groups for everything from board games to our own house band. We have flexible work hours, and offer the possibility for remote work as well.

The company states that it holds a good work-life balance as its goal. The text gives examples of community based free-time activities for different personal interests. Also, the flexibility of work hours and place are a good benefit for people who value the work-life balance. Supercell communicates their social values mainly via employee testimonials. There is a direct statement about the work-life balance, uttered by an employee titled to work as a game designer:

" – – The acknowledgement of the importance of work-life balance creates opportunities for fun times with really good colleagues."

The importance of communicational behaviour for the perceptions of a positive work-life balance has been acknowledged in research aiming for practical solutions for example by Lingard et al. (2012). The authors also mention that "the cultural conditions of the country where the organization is located" would require attention as well. I add to this argument that the communication in the "work-life strategy", or the work-life balance in the communication strategy, should also comprehend the employer branding communication. This is beneficial for the job seekers to perceive the policies either as fitting or not for them. Also, as discussed earlier in this thesis, the location of the organization remains to have a meaning in this "virtual era", and it also influences the work-life balance of employees. This adds to the argument that it is beneficial to include discourse about the location in the employer branding communication, for when an employee moves to another country for a job, the importance of



the life outside of work is undoubtable. The issue of location will be discussed in its separate chapter.

#### **4.4 Emphasis on Development in the Beginning of Professional Career**

The development value consists of all the factors that provide acts of confidence towards the employee, and how the organization pushes its employees to achieve and get results in their work. It also considers the value the employee gets out of working there for their future career. All the three companies had a different approach for this value, so they need to be presented separately. The development value is most visible in the context of traineeships and employees in the beginning of their careers in the field. The values of setting high expectations and being result-oriented are mainly expressed as the value of people working there and not as pressure coming from the company's side.

Case Remedy Entertainment: "Talent development and long career rewards" are placed on the same level or importance in content as the other benefits, accompanied with a symbol for a shining diamond. It discusses talent development as one of their benefits. They express their interest to hire not only experienced professionals but also people who want to gain more experience and skills. Overall, in the data set, there is argumentation that the possibility for development is great because of the chance to work with the best professionals. In this context, it is arguable that the diamond represents the talent in people. Basing on these two elements, in the case of this company the development value seems to be connected to the person's perceived talent and how it will be polished. Therefore, the talent is a precondition in the start of development. In this case, the definition of "talent" takes an object approach, referring to the characteristics of people: natural ability, mastery, commitment, and fit (Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013). I find that this example of the use of term "talent" does not place the company above else, although it was discussed previously that its usage might.

Case Rovio: The career development opportunities come through in two ways: 1) in a story about an employee who has turned their passion into a career 2) in the description of the company's traineeship possibilities that are described to be outstanding because of the excellent individuals working there. This section is also emphasized with a photo presenting a guidance moment. The high expectations come through while describing the ideal candidate to work in the community: someone who can deliver outstanding results consistently. The company relates the career enhancement directly to the game development industry, meaning that it proposes the employee to become a professional in the specific industry if they end up working for the

company, for example in the traineeship section. The corporation does not utilize the term “talent” like the previous one, but the concept of a skilled applicant is included in the content.

Have you ever dreamt of making games for a living? Your first step towards a fulfilling career in the games industry starts here. Build up your skills by directly working with some of the best people in the craft.

Rovio also describes the development possibilities through an employee testimonial. The story about an employee who “turned their lifelong passion for art into a career in games”, moving from abroad to Finland for this pursue, tells an example of an employee whose dreams came true working for the company. This story also connects the employment at the company directly to the gaming industry. Based on these two examples given, this company’s development value means development within the gaming industry. According to this value proposition, the ideal potential applicant is described to be specifically interested, or even dreaming, to work in the gaming industry. The concept of a talented applicant is not as salient or relevant as in the case of the previous company.

According to Łacka-Badura’s definition, (2018) employee testimonials have a persuasive and promotional nature, in the form of multimodal texts of different lengths. What makes them complex text pieces to study is that the testimonials are designed to appear to be natural narratives, but instead they are in fact blends of corporate and individuals’ voices that aim to influence both their perceived authenticity and the values the organization wants to communicate (Maagaard, 2014). This suggests that the discourse under analysis here cannot be researched as a message coming directly from the employee, even if it would be. The values and culture of an organization are represented by individual employees in the testimonials and are meant to tell stories, experiences, and qualities of the talent that already exists in the company (Maagaard, 2014).

Case Supercell: The company does not otherwise discuss its development value except by describing their result-orientation, strive for achievement, and self-worth, again, utilizing employee testimonials for communicating these high expectations. This creates an idea that the potential applicant should be oriented to reach their goals as a prerequisite to be able to succeed working in the company. The high expectations and confidence provided are expressed from the side of the employees, more precisely on three (3) employee testimonials. The value of (career) development is emphasized in a link button that takes the browser to another page talking about the application process.

I love that I get to work on the games that I love with some of the best, most thoughtful people I’ve ever worked with. — — Because we’re constantly pushing ourselves, we’re constantly learning which makes work very fulfilling to me.

– – I feel respect and trusted. The acknowledgement of the importance of work-life balance creates opportunities for fun times with really good colleagues.

The second paragraph in the example emphasizes especially the factor of recognition and self-worth that employees receive working for the company. The employee testimonial connects this feeling of worthiness to the motivation to do the best they can. However, this example does not give out the source of recognition – meaning that one does not know if it comes from the corporation or the work team discussed.

The demand to keep one's knowledge and skills constantly updated because of the industry's nature comes through the general discourse in the data set. This is connected to the application value quite strongly: the companies push their employees to grow as professionals and expect them to independently apply their learning on the work they do. Although only one company concretely promises to offer skill training and courses for the employees, the other companies leave the development and its application on a vague level in these pages. But it also seems to be necessary that the employees are self-driven to learn and attend the training.

Want to take part in courses, training, or attend an industry conference? Our industries demand that we never stop learning – – (Rovio)

Therefore, the development value for the game development industry is a two-way value: the organization promises to offer the chance to develop skills and professionalism, but the requirement is that the employees should initially have the motivation to progress. It is arguable that the development value not only benefits the employees in their careers but also the organizations for maintaining their competitive position in the market. This is the reason why the development value is more important specifically in the employer branding of game development industry companies than, for example, instrumental variables that are more related to the employees' motivation and coping with workload. However, as discussed in the literature review, the demand of self-development coming from the side of the organization could end up putting the company above all else, when it is applied in the general discourse of the whole industry which leads to the imagined ideal employee to be committed and contributing for the company.

## **4.5 Inclusion of Players in the Corporate Functions**

Although the data set consists of content that is mostly aimed towards an audience that is interested to work in the companies, not towards customers, there are still some elements about the customer-orientation of the organizations. As mentioned before,

the employer brand perceptions are also formed by other stakeholders as well (Carlini et al., 2019), like the company's current employees, external companies who offer B2B-services for the company, and any other person who is somehow connected to the company, like consumers. The hypothesis is that this is at least one reason why the content of the data set takes the players into account in this context.

The presence of the companies' customers (in this case, people who play their games) are also mentioned in a positive tone. It brings out the humanitarian side of a company, especially in the description of end products: games that spread joy and entertainment to the players around the world. The employees have the freedom to do what they see is best for their players and the company. The companies describe that their communities are passionate about what they do, and their goal is to create products that bring joy and positive energy for their users, i.e., players of the games. Together with the propositions of "doing the best for their players", there are also propositions of the community bringing positivity to each other and the organizations, so these utterances seem to be on the same level – the players and employees are as important.

We craft joy for a living, with a team of highly skilled and passionate people who want to spread the delight of games. With tailor-made gaming experiences, and entertainment to last for a lifetime, we bring smile to millions of our players, and the people behind our games, every day. (Rovio)

In Vasavada-Oza & Bhattacharjee's (2016) study, they found that the three Indian IT companies presented their employer brands as, for example, humanitarian by talking about their social initiatives. In this data set compiled of three Finnish companies' employer branding in the career webpages, any cues for social initiatives were not found. However, some of them do express the opportunities for employees to apply their learned knowledge. The practical application of utilizing what has been learnt in the courses and skill training is on the shoulders of employees. The employees themselves are told to set their expectations high which leads to pushing oneself to grow and learn constantly. The necessity to continuously develop skills is reasoned as a demand of the industry they are working in and as a necessity for making the best games for international distribution.

To conclude the application value, it is a category that is closely in connection with the development value. The dominant discourse on the subject suggests that the employees oversee both, self-development as well as the application of what they have learned. As stated previously, these focus companies do not advertise their possible social initiatives in their career pages. But the surrounding local areas are salient in the pages, although with a different approach. The next chapter will discuss this presence of localization in these pages.

## 4.6 Additional Factors of Localization Value

Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee (2016) added two additional factors during the process of coding the data since there were some factors that would not fit any of the existing factors. First, they noticed that the companies would spread awareness of fraudulent recruitment practices. This type of content was not found in the cases of the Finland-based companies. However, some of the companies in this case study were transparent on how their recruitment process works and what are its stages.

The second additional factor that Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee (2016) included was the act of reaching out to students. This was also not visible in the data of our case study in hand, but all the companies did express their openness to hire trainees and people in the beginning of their careers within gaming industry. But none of the companies specified that these interns or people excited to gain skills should necessarily be students.

While categorizing the data into the given factors, a factor was found in all the companies' career pages that were not included in the variables of Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee: that is the localization of the global company. In all three pages, a section or some references could be found that indicated the company to be situated in if not in Helsinki area, at least in the Nordic countries. These indications had positive tones, expressing either the physically good qualities of living in a Nordic city, such as the good public transportation systems, or more abstract things, like "Nordic values". Therefore, a new factor referred here as "factors of localization value" is added in the analysis for this case study particularly since it takes an evident aspect in the career pages of these three Finland-based companies.

In the website content categorization introduced by Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee (2016), there was not a substitute category for this, and no other category included this kind of content of presenting the local area where the job is physically located. Possibly the case is that this is a trend in employer branding content that has occurred during the last five years in between these studies. In addition to this, Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee's focus companies were in India, and these are based in Finland so the aspect of the region could have an effect. I decided that adding the factors of localization value is necessary for analyzing this specific data set because they are salient during the whole content of the data set, but they are not presented directly as part of, for example, work-life balance.

There are two types of factors of localization value. In addition to the physical aspect of where the workplace is situated, there was also an example representing "the Nordic values" which is an abstract concept. At the same time, it relates to the physical location, where the company was founded, and the workplace culture. Next, I will

present examples of these different factors of localization value and discuss the meaning of them as part of the website content.

#### 4.6.1 Factor of physical localization value.

By physical factor in this I mean all pieces of content that describe the area or the city where the workplace(s) is situated in geographically. In the data set, the physical location of the workplaces was included in the content of all the companies. This part of content was found in multimodal forms (text, video, photos).

Possibly the most emphasized factor regarding the benefits of the areas where the offices are in is the transportation possibilities and infrastructure. For example, the good public transportation network of the Finnish capital region is portrayed as a benefit for commuting in the workplace: “ — — We’re located in Finland’s capital region of Helsinki, easily accessible with public transportation.” In one of the employee testimonials, there is an employee riding a bike but wearing winter clothing which gives the impression that some people ride the bike all around the year, at least in Helsinki where this piece of content was created. Additionally, there is also one example of describing Helsinki as a city where one can also walk in many places. I found this piece of text to almost sound like a tourism advertising:

##### LIVING IN HELSINKI

Enjoy easy commutes, lots of personal space and enchanting neighborhoods.  
Helsinki is a walkable city with tons to offer! FIGURE OUT IF YOU’D ENJOY  
LIFE UP NORTH >> (Supercell)

In the background of this text piece, there is a skyline over buildings in Helsinki. The buildings show an old part of Helsinki that has many colorful buildings. It emphasizes the argument that there are “enchanting neighborhoods” (and the feeling of reading a travel advertisement).

In a loop video placed behind page header of Rovio, two cities of business were blended in the piece of content: Helsinki and Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. There is an employee drawing the Helsinki Cathedral, and then some short videos of, for example, the busy Stockholm city square. However, it is questionable how familiar these two central places are for someone who does not know the cities well or has never visited them. The author of this study knows both cities well and therefore recognized the elements but cannot put themselves in the eyes of someone who is not familiar with them.

Something that unites both cities and was salient in this video is the element of water. It could be viewed as a representation of the Baltic sea, considering the locational context. This is more of an abstract presentation of the area where the employee would be living and therefore possibly gives even a better understanding of what to

expect about the surrounding nature. Also, in one of the descriptions about living in Finland, there is a background image of some natural water, with a blue sky and green forests in the background. Finland is known for having a big number of lakes, forests, and pure nature. The scenery that the company has chosen in the webpage is quite a generic view of the Finnish natural landscape.

The following description of Finland concludes well the theme that has carried throughout the employer brand communication discussed earlier, meaning the theme of emphasizing benefits that would interest specifically people working in the game industry – such as the speed, price, and functionality of the internet.

Welcome to Finland

A place where internet is fast, unlimited, affordable and reliable. A safe and clean country that provides exceptional quality of life, free education and drinkable tap water. A metropolitan area that is the hub for tech and start-up scene, international travel and quirky festivals. Let us introduce you to Finland and Helsinki. (Remedy Entertainment)

#### **4.6.2 Factor of cultural localization value.**

Although one would think that utilizing the country or the area of where the workplace is located would be connected to the benefits what the area has to offer, there were also found some more abstract arguments on why the employers are proudly presenting their location. There was an example in case Rovio of the notion of “Nordic values” which is utilized to represent the social values within the work community. This concept is presented as a subcategory of wellbeing benefits and is explained to contain a positive work-life balance, such as flexibility in work hours and location, and some other factors of social value too.

Wellbeing benefits

Nordic values are strong with us. We strive for a great work-life balance, with active hobby groups for everything from board games to our own house band. We have flexible work hours, and offer the possibility for remote work as well.

The content in the example suggests that in the Nordic countries, the options to have a pleasant work-life balance for employees are good if the employers acquire these “Nordic values” and that work communities also tend to spend time with each other during or outside of work hours. Utilizing the term “values” in relation with a region brings an interesting contrast to the other content on the page that emphasizes the key position of diversity for a better performance. If the values presented in the discourse represent the values that the whole organization would admit of having, is it possible that all the individuals working there have acquired the Nordic identity? Or if we say that this discourse is spoken by “a local”, would they relate to being

“international”? Nevertheless, the discourse creates a multidimensional glocal identity for the company for it aspires to be international and to remain Nordic in parallel. This example focuses specifically on the Nordic work culture but there are even more examples for emphasis on the Nordic societies’ cultural aspects that are salient outside of workplaces as well. I found these factors to highlight the stereotypes that can be related to Finland especially. However, I would add in this argument that these stereotypes presented might not be stereotypically Finnish around the world.

For example, if an employee who moves in Finland to work has a family that they bring along, this situation is covered in an example as well. “Family friendly Finland” is listed as a benefit for working for one of the companies. The argument is enhanced with a baby buggy to show that Finland is a good place for raising kids. Although, the adjective “family friendly” is highly abstract and does not explain further how the nation is pleasant for families. If an individual is not familiar with the Finnish childcare or educational systems, or the generally safe atmosphere for children, the statement could end up sounding strange and not have a beneficial meaning for the person reading it. Nevertheless, this is one of the big signs that the company looks for employees abroad and would like them to stay possibly for a long period of time.

There are also more humoristic cues about the Nordic lifestyle – or at least humoristic in some people’s opinion. There were multiple different multimodal pieces of content presenting the sauna. In one page, even two images placed in the background of the text content presented the sauna: one photo of a sauna pail and ladle, another of a sauna bench and towels. In the loop video that was discussed earlier, there are people of different ethnicities sitting together in a sauna and discussing happily. It is an interesting aspect to show when the content is about the employer brand, but I argue that it is related to advertising the Nordic work-life balance and work communities spending time together outside of work. Moreover, I must argue that relating sauna with a presentation of a workplace takes these companies a step away from the global image pursued. Although for Finns, probably for many citizens of other Nordic countries, and for people around the world who have some relationship with Finnish people or with the country, know about the peculiar and long tradition of Finnish sauna culture. However, to use the tradition as something that could attract people internationally is a sign of assuming that it would be known among all who are interested about the company. There is a great chance that it comes across as confusing or, in worst case, scary that one would need to sit in a sauna with other people. The culture-related humor does not only cover the sauna. One example argues that Helsinki is perfect for someone who does not prefer crowds, by uttering the city to have “ – – lots of personal space – – ” which is a surprising thing to emphasize, but surely works for some potential employees as an attraction. This is again a possibly confusing stereotype coming from the local side of the identity constructed here: Is it a globally



known “fact” that Finnish people want to keep a distance to each other on the bus stop? In fact, is it even a fact or just a stereotype that has somehow ended up on the table of discussion about how could we represent Finland as a good place to work?

## 5 CONCLUSION

In this thesis research, I pursued to understand how some Finnish game development companies that are known to recruit employees from outside Finland, advertise their employer brand in their career webpages. The data set consisted of three webpages, found only in English language and not in Finnish. The pages are dedicated to specifically present the career opportunities the companies offer for (potential) employees with multimodal communication content (text, images, videos).

For carrying out the study process and analyzing the content, I utilized qualitative content analysis. After the data collection, the data was coded utilizing the variables of the website content (Vasavada-Oza & Bhattacharjee, 2016). These variables are 1) factors of interest, 2) factors of social value, 3) factors of economic value, 4) factors of development value, 5) application value, and 6) additional factors. I found examples of the first five values, but not the additional factors that were found in Vasavada-Oza and Bhattacharjee's study. Instead, I added the value of localization that was found in the content of this data set which was then sub-coded in physical and cultural factors.

The research questions of this study were:

RQ1: How do these focus companies promote their employer brand on their own career webpages and how do the choices reflect the societal discourse?

RQ2: How is the physical and cultural location of the workplace represented?

The instrumental variables are not as represented in the career pages as symbolic values. I argue that some of the instrumental variables, for example, which include the assumption that the employee will relocate to work from another country, can also be placed in the category of symbolic values. The economic value is salient to some extent, but mostly these benefits could also be put under the category of symbolic values that are related to supporting the employees moving from abroad. The economic

benefit given is not a conventional salary that an employee should get for the work they have done. It is an act of appreciation for moving to a new country and it could also be a necessity for the employee to be able to even come. The content points strongly to the direction that the employees come from different countries to work in the same place or have different nationalities – the employees who move to work from abroad are not an “addition” but instead form the community. This argument is also supported by the factors of localization value that were created for this specific analysis.

In these case studies, element of innovation was found to be the most important factor of interest to present for the audience of these companies. Based on the content including the elements of interest, a “small company culture” is utilized as a term for describing the promotion of innovation, and especially risk-taking, although these employers are not SMEs. I argue that this is also a way to point out that working for that organization requires courage and willingness to try out new things and it emphasizes the stereotype that this is not the case in some “traditional” big organizations, i.e., in big companies, risk-taking is not as common. The study results also highlight the importance of motivation in valuing the employees’ wellbeing and satisfaction, for the companies emphasize different activities that they offer for their employees, or that they support activities that the employees arrange.

The social value seems to be an important part of the employer branding on websites, since all the factors are covered on the data set. In one example, diversity was found to have a key position for the better performance of the company. This has previously been critically discussed (Urciuoli, 2016) as something that is pursued by corporations to gain an advantage. Also, the reason for the blunt application of “diverse” in one of the cases was argued to be related to the idea presented by Dervin (2017) that the marketing diversity is sometimes only made for the purpose of gaining a better reputation.

I added the localization value for this study as an additional category because the companies’ location is highly present in the data set. The category of “factors of localization value” is meant to describe the sections and references that indicate the company to situate (at least, originally) in someplace in the Nordic countries. These indications had positive tones, expressing either the physically good qualities of living in a Nordic city, such as the good public transportation systems, or qualities related to the cultural aspects, like “Nordic values”. The content about the location was mainly involved around Finland, and Helsinki area, but some other office locations are mentioned as well. Overall, the presentation of Finland is positive, and sometimes even humoristic. Also, what was found interesting, is that there were not only arguments about how good of a city to live in is Helsinki (e.g., public transportation), but also about the abstract and cultural elements of Finland as a nation (e.g., sauna, family-

friendliness). This is an interesting example of glocalization. Although the companies are pursuing an employer brand that promotes international atmosphere in teams and emphasize how their games are played globally, the pages have direct indications of the lifestyle in Finnish capital area. Among these cases, the “local” is represented only from a beneficial viewpoint, which is not surprising considering the discourse is constructed for branding purposes. However, I must address the banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) that comes through the communication throughout the factors of localization value. Banal nationalism is a term referring to mundane representations of a nation that build a shared feeling of togetherness, as a nation. Even if organizations or corporations such as the ones under analysis here would not consciously aim at increasing the image of their country of origin (because it does not have weight on the sales of their products), in the context of employer branding and international recruiting the national identity of the organization is more likely to come through via banal nationalism. The banal nationalism in this sense works the same way as any other aspect of employer branding – its purpose is to increase the appearance as an attractive choice.

To conclude, in the employer branding of the company websites, the pages do not limit to explaining what working is like for the companies. The content goes beyond the work hours and sets up an idea of what kind of an employee would fit the company and what kind of a lifestyle they could be living. 1) The employee would be living in a country that offers many benefits for people on different stages of life. Also, the employee does not have to take care of the immigration process alone, but the employer helps – again, in all stages of the process. 2) The employee would join a work community that cares about the community’s wellbeing and team spirit, for example, by offering a healthy work-life balance and free-time activities. 3) The discussion involves the initial passion for games that the employees (should) have and requires the employee to be motivated to learn new things independently, although the employer offers opportunities for it.

## **5.1 Limitations and Future Research**

This study has its limitations for I decided to utilize a pre-formulated list of categories for the first part of the analysis. I only analyzed the discourse separately what would not fit any of the other categories which increases the chance of possibly not creating supplementary categories for some other factors that would have arisen from the content that was put in the ready-set categories. The presentation of results according to the categories ended up limiting the possible discussion on a more general level since the number of findings that had to be presented was relatively large. For further

research, I would suggest concentrating solely to a specific topic within webpages, and possibly take a larger number of cases to study it. Especially the factors of localization and their representations of a nation would be interesting to learn more about, and to find out if this is something that is related to a) the region, b) the industry, or c) something else?

This collective case study was conducted by analyzing only three webpages. A collective case study can have its problematics, especially for reporting the findings. It should be separated from a comparative case study, but in practice the reporting could end up in a similar form. The aim is to look for patterns or issues that arise from the case studies that have been conducted separately, but because the number of cases is not large, the patterns cannot be generalized. From a reader's point of view it could look like a comparison, especially if the findings are in clear contrast. I suggest that for further research, a larger data set could be beneficial. Although, this type of a website content analysis is often conducted as a quantitative nature when the number of webpages is big. Quantitative research gives an idea of what are the larger trends, possibly on the global level. However, in areas like specific cities, the number of companies related to a specific field are necessarily not large. If the research on employer branding that is directed to an international audience would cover companies of one regional location but multiple industries, we could get a general idea on what elements unite the branding (like, the localization value created for this study) and that could be utilized as a framework for developing the regional attraction in the eyes of potential employees. As mentioned previously in this thesis, further research on employer branding targeting a cross-cultural or global audience has been recognized already in previous research, and I continue with giving this suggestion. There is still a lot of space for researching employer branding that spreads to a global audience and the gap will continue to spread when these mentioned trends and terminology keep developing.

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