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Employee Advocacy on Social Media

The role of management in enhancing employee advocacy

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Abstract

In recent years, employee advocacy has become a growing trend all over the world, especially now that social media offers new dimensions. The employee advocacy phenomenon is finally starting to gain attention in Finland as well, but businesses have yet to harness the full potential.

The research focused on the managerial perspective of the phenomenon. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in the Finnish context, focusing on social media. The objective was to create solutions for managers to support and carry out employee advocacy.

The research approach was qualitative and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Five people in managerial positions, from five different industries, were interviewed in person. The main three topics that the interviews covered were benefits and challenges of employee advocacy, social media, and managers' role in developing employee advocacy.

The results indicate that the phenomenon is not significant in Finland yet. However, all interviewees were familiar with the topic and in each company participating in the research, employee advocacy is carried out at some level. The results show that in order for employee advocacy to succeed, both the employer's and employees' contribution is crucial. The core of employee advocacy is employee satisfaction, so the main focus of management should be on increasing employees' satisfaction at the workplace and that, in return, will support employee advocacy. Providing tools, training, and rewards was also considered important when building employee advocacy. The research revealed that many businesses have not taken advantage of employees as a marketing asset due to lack of resources, such as time and money.

Keywords/tags (subjects)
Marketing, social media, brand ambassador, brand advocacy, employee advocacy, employee brand advocacy, brand evangelism

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Tiivistelmä

Työntekijälähettilyys on viime vuosina ollut ympäri maailman kasvava puheenaihe, etenkin sosiaalisen median mahdollistaessa sille täysin uuden ulottuvuuden. Kyseinen ilmiö on vihdoin alkanut saada huomiota myös Suomessa, vaikka edelleenkään kaikki eivät hyödynnä työntekijälähettilyyden täyttä potentiaalia liiketoiminnassaan.

Tutkimus keskittyi tarkastelemaan ilmiötä työnantajan ja johdon näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli muodostaa selkeämpi kuva ilmiöstä Suomessa ja erityisesti sosiaalisessa mediassa. Käytännön tavoitteena oli luoda esimiehille ratkaisuja työntekijälähettilyyden tukemiseen ja toteuttamiseen.

Tutkimuksen toteutustapa oli kvalitatiivinen, eli laadullinen tutkimus. Aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla viittä esimiesasemassa työskentelevää henkilöä puolistrukturoidussa yksilöhaastattelussa. Kaikki haastateltavat tulivat eri toimialoilta. Haastatteluissa läpikäytiin muun muassa työntekijälähettilyyden edut ja haitat, sosiaalinen media ja liikkeenjohdon rooli työntekijälähettilyyden kehittämisessä.

Tulokset osoittivat, että työntekijälähettilyys on Suomessa vielä melko tuntematon käsite. Kaikki haastateltavat kuitenkin ymmärsivät, mistä työntekijälähettilyydessä on kyse, ja jokaisessa tutkimukseen osallistuneessa yrityksessä harjoitetaan työntekijälähettilyyttä. Tuloksien mukaan työntekijälähettilyys onnistuu vain, jos sekä työnantaja että työntekijät panostavat sen toteutukseen. Työntekijälähettilyyden keskiössä on työntekijöiden tyytyväisyys, joten mikäli työnantajan tavoite on voimistaa työntekijälähettilyyttä yrityksessä, painopiste tulisi olla tyytyväisyyden lisäämisessä. Tutkimus paljasti myös, että usealle yritykselle ongelmana on resurssien, kuten ajan tai rahan, puute, minkä vuoksi työntekijälähettilyyteen investoiminen on harvoin yrityksen keskeisimpiä prioriteettejä.

Avainsanat (asiasanat)
Markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, brändilähettilyys, työntekijälähettilyys

Muut tiedot

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1 Introduction

New digital technologies have enabled the transformation of marketing environment. Traditional marketing has turned into digital marketing and one of the key strategies of marketing in this digital era is social media marketing.

Social media is the easiest way for companies to communicate with their customers. It allows two-way communications between the parties, and has significantly increased engagement and advocacy among consumers. Companies are able to build communities that support their brand and result in higher levels of customer loyalty.

Even though customer loyalty is highly desirable these days, many companies are yet to realize the marketing potential that lies within their employees – employees can be a significant marketing asset. Recently sites such as Hootsuite, LinkedIn, and Inc. have forecasted that employee advocacy will be a growing trend in 2017 (Clark 2016; Mulvey 2015; Holmes 2016).

Employee advocacy has become one of the most topical matters in the marketing world this year – even though some argue that it is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but social media has definitely added new dimensions to it (Wasyluk 2015). Since the phenomenon started to gain attention all over the world in the last few years, it is finally beginning to blossom in Finland as well. However, only few companies are utilizing the full advantage that employee advocacy has to offer. In Finland, companies such as Valio and Sinerbychoff are the forerunners embracing employee advocacy (Työntekijälähettilyys puhutti #Somecoffee'lla, 2016).

Even though employee advocacy is on everyone's lips, there is very little prior research about the topic. The phenomenon is widely covered in blogs, magazines, and opinion pieces, yet academic literature and research of the subject seems to be marginal. There are lots of studies about leadership (e.g. Bass & Riggio 2006), organizational culture (e.g. McGregor & Doshi 2015), internal branding (e.g. Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng 2010; Punjaisri & Wilson 2007), and brand advocacy (e.g. Rusticus 2006), which are all factors that contribute to employee advocacy. Employee advocacy is also briefly mentioned in some prior studies (e.g. Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak 2009; Yeh 2014) but there is no extensive research about the subject so far.

Simply, employee advocacy means that employees are willing to share the company's values and communications with their personal social networks. Employee advocacy can happen through word-of-mouth, but currently the whole phenomenon has been transformed by social media, because it enables much wider reach of communications. Therefore, this research focuses on the more recent phenomenon of employee advocacy implemented through social media.

This thesis looks at the phenomenon from the managerial perspective. It aims to determine the problems that employers and management level staff have with employee advocacy and tries to define ways in which executives could improve and support employee advocacy.

1.1 Motivation for the Research

Since the subject is very new and there is no previous research done from this point of view, this research introduces employee advocacy to professionals who are aware of neither the phenomenon nor its benefits. This study highlights the importance of employees and encourages companies to harness employees' potential as marketers by offering organizations relevant information and solutions for carrying out employee advocacy. This study caters for almost any industry, since the interviewees all came from different fields of expertise, and the phenomenon is relevant in any industry. The results of this research are useful for many parts of an organization: the marketing department, the human resources department, the CEO, and even the employees themselves.

For the specific companies that participated in the interviews, this research offers solutions for executing employee advocacy inside their own organization. It helps the managers to get more familiar with the phenomenon and understand both the benefits and risks of employee advocacy. The literature review, as well as the research results, offer the managers some insight on what is the role of management in successful implementation of employee advocacy.

The author chose the subject of this thesis according to her personal interests. Employee advocacy combines both marketing and human resources management, which are the two main fields that the author is strongly interested in. The author's studies are focused on HRM and marketing, and she is planning on doing her specialization in the field of marketing. In the future, the author sees herself employed on either of these two fields, and since employee advocacy is going to be an important matter in every organization in the future, this thesis may help with employment. Therefore, the relevance for her further studies and future career is significant.

1.2 Research Questions

The research problem is how managers can empower employees in ways that support the development of employee advocacy. To solve that problem, two research questions were formulated:

1. How management sees employee advocacy?
2. How managers can support employee advocacy?

In addition to the first question, two sub-questions were generated in order to open up the main question a bit further. Firstly, what benefits managers think employee advocacy has? Secondly, what challenges managers see in executing employee advocacy?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis begins with a theoretical knowledge base. The literature review introduces the main concepts of marketing, branding, and brand advocacy, and systematically narrows down to the main focus of this research: employee advocacy. The literature review was written in order to create a theoretical framework for the empirical study.

Methodology is described after the literature review. It sets this study into a context and explains the reasons why certain methods were appropriate for this specific research. The chapter goes through the process of conducting the empirical part of this research: research approach, research methods, data collection and data analysis.

After methodology follow the results, which are divided under four themes. The chapter reports the findings from the interviews, covering topics such as pros and cons of employee advocacy, the role of management in employee advocacy, and social media. The results chapter provides answers to the above-mentioned research questions.

The next chapter is discussion. It summarizes the main results and assesses them in the light of the literature reviewed before, as well as reveals the practical and managerial implications of this research. The chapter also includes limitations of the study.

Conclusion is the last chapter of this thesis. It includes recommendations for future research. After conclusion are references in an alphabetical order and appendices at the end of the thesis.

2 Literature Review

This chapter creates a theoretical background for the empirical study. It starts by describing the basics of marketing and branding, focusing on the shift caused by digitalization, and examines the changes new digital technologies have had on marketing and branding. The reason why marketing and branding are included in this literature review is because it helps to set the main concept, employee advocacy, into a context and helps to understand the background of this phenomenon, and what has made it possible. Employee advocacy is part of marketing and branding, which is why understanding both concepts is critical for this research.

After marketing and branding, the chapter goes through brand advocacy, because employee advocacy itself is a form of brand advocacy. It also helps to understand the differences compared to employee advocacy, that follows in the fourth subchapter.

The focus of this literature review is on employee advocacy, which is described in detail in chapter 2.4. Employee advocacy is a combination of factors, and this literature review will introduce three aspects of it: basics of employee advocacy, leadership styles in connection to employee advocacy, and social media's impact on the phenomenon. All three aspects are critical for this study, because the focus is on managerial perspective and social media.

2.1 Marketing

Kotler and Keller (2009, 45) define marketing as "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders." It is crucial to identify both customers' and organizational needs, and marketing means finding resources to fulfil these needs (Stokes 2004, 27-29). Simply, marketing can be defined as ”managing profitable customer relationships” (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris, & Piercy 2013, 4). The aim of marketing is to attract customers by promising and creating value to them – and then, by delivering satisfaction and building strong customer relationships, the organization will be able to capture value in return (ibid., 2-4). The goal is to reach consumers at the touch points that are most influential when they are making decisions (Court, Elzinga, Mulder, & Vetvik 2009).

Before digitalization, marketing was mostly print advertising. Types of traditional advertising include TV advertisements, print advertisements, and radio advertisements. During the last few decades, however, new information and communication technology has been introduced and that has led to significant changes in the marketing environment. Marketing has shifted online, and digital marketing has taken over.

Traditional mass media advertising campaigns are no longer effective (Marsden 2006, xviii). Media audiences are shrinking because of fragmented media; the increasing amount of channels and media makes it tougher to attain target markets via traditional marketing campaigns (ibid., xxi). There is so much clutter in the advertising environment nowadays that traditional marketing is no longer able to break through to capture consumers' attention. Consumers are more likely to consult their friends and family for recommendations in order to avoid the advertising mayhem. (ibid., xx.)

Digital marketing

Digital marketing means to achieve marketing objectives by utilizing digital technologies. It includes email marketing, search engine marketing, online advertisements, and managing an organization's online presence in all of its forms, such as websites and social media pages. Typically, media channels can be separated into three main types: paid media, earned media, and owned media. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 10-11.) However, Edelman and Salsberg (2010) argue, that this framework is outdated. Nowadays media forms should be expanded into sold and hijacked media, in addition to owned, earned, and paid, which alone are too limited. (2.)

Paid media includes, for example, traditional offline media, such as print advertising (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11). It means that a company pays for advertising space, or some third party is paid to promote products or services. Alongside of traditional channels (e.g., television), there are several newer options, such as online videos and search engine marketing. (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 2.)

Owned media is owned by the brand (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11). It includes all properties and channels the company owns and uses for marketing purposes. They might consist of things such as brochures, catalogs, home pages, retail stores, etc. (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 2-3.)

Traditionally earned media has referred to the publicity that a company has generated through PR efforts targeted to influencers, who then have helped to increase the brand awareness (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11). However, nowadays it usually means that consumers themselves want to promote a company through their own media channels at no cost (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 3). Word-of-mouth is considered earned media as well, since it can occur online in different social platforms and communities. So nowadays, rather than using only influencers as brand advocates, companies can also benefit from customer advocates. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11.)

Edelman and Salsberg (2010) define sold media as owned media, that has so much traffic that other companies are willing to buy advertising space from that environment, for the placement of their own content. Alongside of this being a great way to generate more income, it has benefits such as gaining valuable knowledge about marketing of other companies – perhaps it even offers an insight on competitors – and increasing the objectivity of a website with the presence of other marketers. (3-4.)

The opposite of earned media is hijacked media; it is a situation in which consumers create negative claims about a product or a brand. Many consumers have realized that they can utilize their social presence to hijack media in order to put pressure on companies via their own social platforms. It allows consumers to persuade others in boycotting, which puts the reputation of the business at risk. Hijacked media can have serious damage on businesses if they do not know how to properly, and quickly, address the allegations made by customers. (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 4.) If the company is able to respond in a timely manner, the consumers will feel more involved in the business (Mulhall 2006, 63).

Using digital media in marketing has several benefits. One of the biggest advantages is interactivity. When traditional media is mainly considered as push media, digital technology has allowed more interaction between businesses and consumers. Digital media has transformed marketing towards an inbound technique, in which the consumer is more likely to be the one to initiate contact and seek for information, rather than it being pushed towards them through different broadcasting channels. Therefore, search engine optimization and visibility is particularly important in inbound marketing. It is more convenient for the customers, and interactive communication enables individualization, thus making marketing more personalized. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 35-37.) New media technology allows deeper interactions and improvements in targeting, which encourages customers to share the positive experiences with the brand. While customers often promote brands spontaneously, it can also be facilitated and even encouraged, for example with giveaways and free samples. It is a good way of generating earned media. (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 6.)

Another way of achieving higher levels of customer engagement is co-creation. Co-creation means that consumers are given the opportunity to modify their experiences with a product or a service. They can take part in the designing and customization of products and services. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen 2009, 24.) And once customers notice that their feedback and suggestions are taken into consideration, and are actually used to help design a business, they feel a sense of empowerment, which evokes loyalty (Mulhall 2006, 66).

Digitalization and globalization go hand-in-hand, and digital media makes marketing efforts independent of location. It helps to widen the reach of company communications and allows companies to step into global markets more easily. (Edelman & Salsberg 2010, 40.)

Besides the multiple benefits that digital media offers marketers, there are some downsides as well. Today’s digital marketing environment allows consumers to consult an extensive amount of information sources, and traditional communications have become way less effective in persuading consumers

(Keller 2013, 53). Also, new web technology has made creating and distributing one's own content easy for anyone (Zarrella 2010, 3), which has led to a situation, in which consumers have so many options in the market that brands are starting to struggle with customer engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 319). Another very inconvenient thing for marketers is new advertisement blocking technology. The abundance of digital ads has caused people to download ad blocking software to skip and avoid marketing messages they don't want to see (Marsden 2006, xxi). Moreover, technology keeps changing very rapidly, which requires companies to train their staff all the time in order to be able to respond to these changes and stay up-to-date (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43).

Social media

In a nutshell social media marketing means

> *monitoring and facilitating customer-customer interaction and participation throughout the web to encourage positive engagement with a company and its brands. Interactions may occur on a company site, social networks and other third-party sites.* (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 535.)

Social media refers to online resources, that are used for content sharing. There are websites with more professional content and websites where the content is created by regular uses, but social media has managed to combine these two. The most important thing in the whole social media concept is the 'social' element of it. (Drury 2008, 274-275.) Godin (2008), sums it up by saying that social media is indeed a basic human need, just expressed digitally.

Social media marketing is a big part of digital marketing nowadays and it is in the core of every organization's e-business strategy (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 535). The biggest benefit of social media marketing is its cost-efficiency; it can have major positive financial impact (Zarrella 2010, 8). Social media is valuable in building connections, and connections will help to build inquiries and sales (Odden 2012, 200). All sizes of businesses should be involved, because so are the potential customers (Zarrella 2010, 8). However, it can be intimidating because businesses don't have full control over the conversations happening on the social web (Booth, & Matic 2011, 186), but they will be archived for years and they are there for millions of people to see (Zarrella 2010, 1). What companies can do is focus on monitoring and moderating the discussions going on online. By allowing people to communicate and share content with their peers, social media makes content more democratized than it has ever been (Drury 2008, 274).

Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) introduce seven building blocks that are the key elements of social media. They are relationships, reputation, identity, groups, conversations, sharing, and presence. (243.) Their framework, and these key elements, can be used to understand, analyze and develop social media platforms and the landscape.

The most important thing in social media marketing is to encourage and take part in customer conversations. When developing a social media marketing strategy, it is crucial to know customer segments and target markets in order to see which social tools and engagement techniques are most efficient for the targeted audience. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 535.) On social media consumers do not perceive adverts as interruptive, because social networking platforms as a whole are socially useful. However, marketers running any social media sites need to remain vigilant to retain the balance between monetization and the original characteristics of social media (freedom, flexibility, and community ownership), that attracted their audiences in the first place. People are very likely to move onto other social networking platforms, if the site becomes too commercialized. Advertising and branding on social networks should be provided as relevant content, instead of intrusive product placement. (Drury 2008, 274-276.) All of the interactions going on between marketers and consumers on social media should be on the customer’s terms (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen 2009, 23).

Nowadays there are several different social media platforms, which all cater to slightly different audiences. There are sites for the general masses (e.g., Facebook), professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn), media sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), blogging platforms, micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter), and so on (Kietzmann et al. 2011, 242). Companies do not necessarily need to be on every social media site. The critical thing is to figure out what works for the business' targeted audience the best and focus resources on them.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing supports social media marketing, because it is very effective in reaching a great number of people in a short amount of time. For a piece of content to go viral, it needs to be entertaining and/or informative, so that it gets spread out like an online virus. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 536-537.) Successful viral marketing campaigns are primarily achieved by the consumers themselves (Kirby 2006, 92).

Viral marketing is the online version of word-of-mouth communications, also known as buzz marketing. Positive word-of-mouth is likely to increase the purchase intention of a consumer. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 536-537.) Viral marketing is supposed to generate conversations, not only spread the viral message (Kirby 2006, 96). Recommendations from consumers' own friends and relatives, and even from other customers, are perceived as more trustworthy than advertising. Even though advertising can be a good way of hearing about new products and services, it is not trusted on its own. Consumers want to hear reviews of others to back up the information. (Evans 2008, 1.) Therefore, conversations between consumers are highly influential (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 539).

According to Kirby (2006), viral marketing is a good option if a product or a service lacks the buzz-worthy characteristics, the 'wow' -factor – because instead of building buzz around the product, it can be built around the viral agent. However, in the end, the actual product at the core of the viral marketing campaign still needs to be desirable, so people end up buying it. However good the viral agent is, it is not enough on its own. Viral marketing can be effective in accelerating mass-market brand awareness and improving brand advocacy, especially if it is used in conjunction with other marketing efforts. (88-93.)

Unfortunately, viral marketing has risks as well. Investing in an online campaign can go to waste, if it does not go viral as planned. And since positive messages of the company can go viral, so can negative conversations as well.

(Chaffey, & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 539.) Therefore, marketers should also practice online reputation management to minimize negative, disadvantageous mentions (ibid., 506).

2.2 Branding

The word “brand” originates from the Old Norse word “brandr”, which meant “to burn”. It was used to refer to marking cattle by burning the brand of the owner onto them (Keller 2013, 30; Rowles 2014, 7). The American Marketing Association (2013) defines brand as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” Thus, branding is what distinguishes the wares of each producer from their competitors (Keller 2013, 30).

Nowadays brand means a lot more than just the visual identity of a product. The brand image is built of attitudes, beliefs, experiences, images, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that are associated with a brand. (Rowles 2014, 7.) In fact, Ries and Trout (as cited in Bonchek & France 2016) define brand as “a singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of a prospect.” However, King and Grace (2008, 360) say that Jacobs (2003) noticed that branding is more than just shaping customers’ perception of the brand – it can also be used to shape employees’ understanding of the brand. Chapter 2.4 will go through this in more detail.

Brand’s purpose is to make decision making easier, lower risks, and set expectations (Keller 2013, 30). The ultimate function of branding is to decrease the anxiety people feel when making buying decisions (Ind 2007, 15). Branding may deliver return-on-investment any time consumers are deciding between alternatives (Keller 2013, 36).

Bonchek and France (2016) describe brand as a relationship. They argue that by shifting from the old way of thinking that brands are objects or concepts, into a newer model, in which the brand is the relationship, will result in further engagement, differentiation and deeper loyalty. The relationships that brands represent can be asymmetrical, one-directional, and transactional, or symmetrical, reciprocal, and personal. The latter is something that companies should strive for. Examples of such relationships are for instance friend/friend –relationship, and co-creator/co-creator –relationship. Traditionally businesses have provider/consumer type of relationships, but innovative brands should work towards more symmetric connection with their customers. (ibid.)

Almost anything can be branded. Products, services, stores, places, organizations and even individual people. A brand name embodies the information that adds value, it embodies the differences between similar offerings. A brand name is used in order to cause positive associations. (Percy 2003, 12-13.) Branding will produce financial value if marketers are able to create perceived divergences which will lead to loyal consumer base. A firm's most valuable assets are not tangible things (e.g., equipment, properties, etc.), but instead intangible assets like skills and expertise in different fields (e.g., marketing and finance) and brands. (Keller 2013, 33.)

According to Keller (2013, 52-56), the key challenges in branding are tough economic situation, exceptionally reasonable and smart consumers, increasing abundance of brands and competitors, growing costs, and media transformation. All of these are somehow interrelated. Ind (2007) adds, that companies might have trouble with consumers' interpretations. People's different personal and cultural experiences will shape their understanding of what they see in a sign or a symbol (17). Correspondingly, company's employees can shape consumers' brand experience as well. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007, 59) say that employees working in the service-level are both the company's most valuable asset, and the most vulnerable asset. It means that they can either make, or brake, the company's reputation (Frank 2015, 144). Employees have the responsibility to deliver and fulfil the brand promise, because their actions heavily influence customers' perceptions of the corporate brand (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007, 59).

Digital branding and social media

Digital media has had a significant impact on branding as well. Rowles (2014) emphasizes the fact, that it has led to the ability to have two-way communications between organizations and consumers. Social media enables the possibility for consumers to stay in touch directly with the brands that they use in their everyday life. The communications no longer necessarily even need to be between brands and consumers, it mostly happens between consumers; consumer reviews are more important than the company's own message. Digital branding is the sum of customer's online experiences; it is a lot more than just the visual identity of a brand. This shift from broadcasting to dialogue means that traditional branding has become less sufficient. Search engines, social media and mobile have a huge impact on consumers' perceptions of brands and their buying behavior, and it is crucial that companies understand how that affects the business. (3-4.)

Before social networks were invented and became common, branding basically meant that companies would create a product, a favourable image for it, and then take advantage of commercial branding by broadcasting the product for consumers through channels such as TV. There was no possibility for consumers to discuss or engage, which may have led to a shallow understanding of the brand. However, digital media has made it possible to have a conversation – challenge and ask questions, which helps in developing a more honest image of the brand. This has led to a change in consumers' buying behavior, because the brand perception is developed in an earlier stage. By the time a consumer actually engages directly with the brand, they have already done a lot of research and have a clear perception of the brand, that has been gained through information from other consumers. (ibid., 8-9.)

In the new digital age consumers are ready to try a variety of products and a variety of different delivery channels. Therefore, brands need to find the balance between innovation and continuity, in order to stay alluring in the eyes of consumers. Consumers demand unpredictability within the lines of the brand's trusted values and the brand needs to be able to provide surprises whilst also staying true to its personality. (Ind 2007, 16.) That will help the brand gain customers' loyalty, because it is constantly advancing whilst respecting the existing values and customers.

The natural interactive relationship between companies and consumers is harder to retain as companies grow. In small companies, even the management level interacts with customers through their everyday work responsibilities. As businesses grow, managers get removed from the daily customer-level operations, which then may result in losing the dialogue. (Ind 2007, 6.)

Another thing that has changed with digitalization is the duration of engagement. According to Edelman (2010), new media channels and platforms enable the possibility to stay connected with a brand even after the purchase. Consumers can publicly promote or assail the products they have bought, and collaborate. Traditionally marketers thought that consumers go through a funnel: they would start at the wide end of the funnel with several brands in mind and slowly narrow them down to a final choice. (1-2.) However, Edelman (2010, 3) considers the customer's journey nowadays to be less reductive, and more iterative. The next chapter will introduce this new idea of customer decision making.

Consumer decision journey

Traditionally marketers perceive the consumer's decision journey as "The Funnel Metaphor" (Figure 1), where the consumer begins the research of a product or a service with several brands in mind and whilst they are going through the funnel, marketing is targeted at them in order to attract them to a particular brand, ending up in a purchase. (Court et al. 2009.) The problem is, that the funnel model is no longer accurate, since the buying process is not linear anymore. Rather than always coming in at the top end of the funnel, prospects may enter at any stage – or even go back and forth between stages, jump over stages, or stay in a stage for an undefined period of time. (Bonchek & France 2014.)

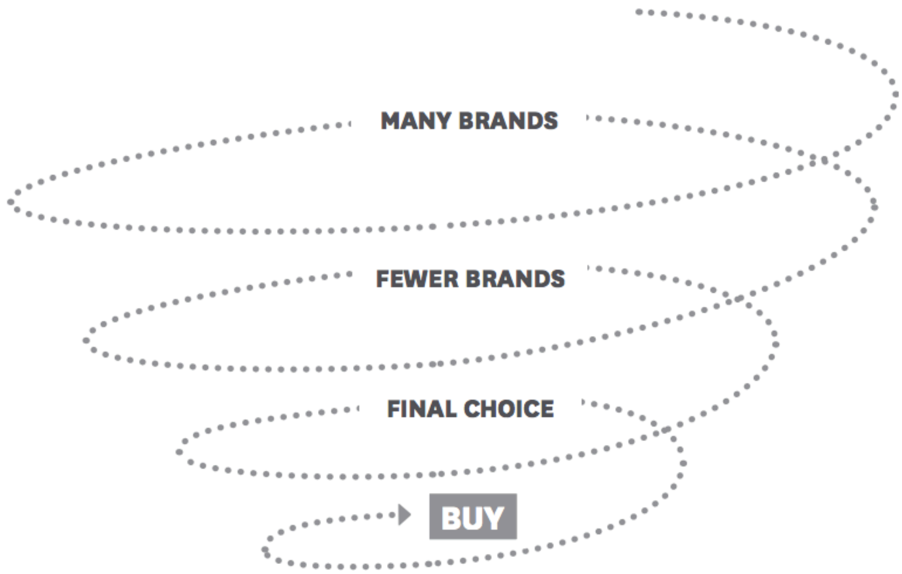

Figure 1. The funnel metaphor (Edelman 2010, 4)

However, Court and colleagues (2009) introduced an alternative, updated model of the journey consumers go through. It is called “The consumer decision journey” (Figure 2).

Compared to the traditional funnel model, where consumers start with a bigger amount of brands and methodically narrow down their options towards the final decision, the new model is more of a circular journey. It has four primary stages: initial consideration, active evaluation, closure, and post-purchase. (ibid.)

This new model emphasizes the changes in the marketing environment. Beforehand marketers were taught to push their message at consumers at each stage of the funnel, but research shows that the importance of consumer-driven marketing is increasing. Marketers need to learn how to affect those touch points that are mainly controlled by consumers (e.g., WOM and internet forums). (Court et al. 2009.) New media emphasizes the relevance of evaluate and advocate stages. Even though marketers spend more money on the consider and evaluation stages (building brand awareness and triggering purchases), advocacy might have even more impact on the brand’s future (Edelman 2010, 4).

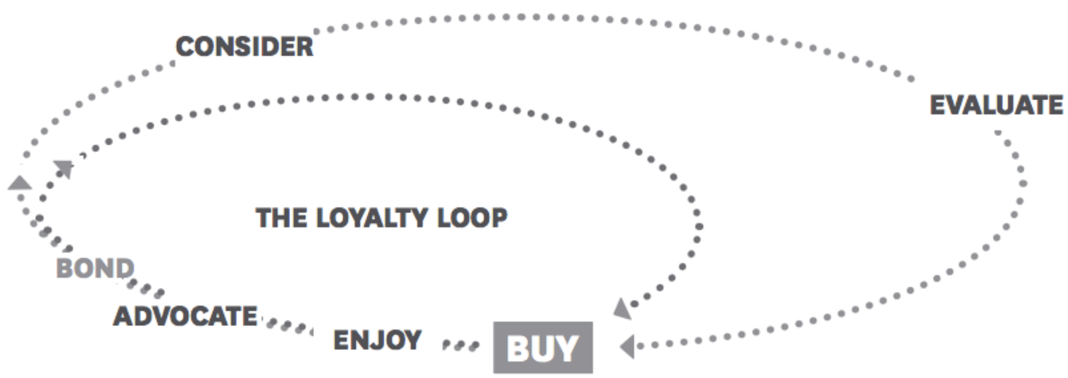

Figure 2. The consumer decision journey (Court et al. 2009; mod. Edelman 2010, 4)

The post-purchase experience (Figure 2) can be divided into three stages: enjoy, advocate, and bond. After the moment of purchase, consumers start to develop a deeper connection with the brand through interacting on new online touch points. The old funnel model lacks these after purchase touch points entirely. Once customers are happy with the product, they are likely to move into advocacy. They may use WOM to market the product to other consumers and reinvigorate the brand’s potential. If customers create a strong enough bond with a brand, they will enter a loop that goes through the enjoy, advocate, and purchase stages, skipping the phases of consideration and evaluation. (Edelman 2010, 3-4.) That is something that businesses should aim towards.

Another difference compared to the traditional funnel model is, that brands can interrupt the process even at the later stages; rather than consumers narrowing down the number of brands systematically, the number of brands might even multiply between the consideration and evaluation phases. For example, consumers are easily influenced by the visuals of a product: they might have had their mind set on one specific brand, but once they enter a store, they face several things that might sway their decision. Such as packaging, product placement, on-shelf messages, and even meeting the salesperson. (ibid.)

This shift in behavior adds new touch points to the decision journey, and increases the opportunities of marketers and brands to make an impact. However, the initial selection of brands that are included in the consideration stage right from the beginning, can have triple the possibility of purchase, compared to the ones that gain brand exposure later during the cycle. Also, the older model did not demonstrate the touch points after the purchase – even though they might be the ones that have the biggest influence. The post-purchase experience will shape consumers’ opinion for any following decisions in the category, so the journey has not ended once the purchase has been made. (ibid.) Marketers put a lot of their resources into media spend and disregard the need of enhancing advocacy (Edelman 2010, 3).

Edelman (2010) describes two types of loyal customers; passive and active. The passive loyalist might stay with the brand without actual commitment. They might be still open to receiving marketing messages from rivals offering them a reason to replace the previous brand they were loyal to, contrary to their claims of loyalty. (3.) Therefore, active loyalists should be a priority for every brand, because they are the ones to drive WOM marketing.

The consumer decision journey has received some critique as well. According to Bonchek and France (2014), some marketers view it as incomplete. One of the biggest weaknesses of the model is how it automatically connects the buying stage with advocacy. Because nowadays, social media has disconnected these two from each other: advocacy does not necessarily require a purchase. People can become advocates without becoming customers, because they can live the brand experience through events, social media, content and many other things rather than just the usage of a product. Still, it is a model that can support customer advocacy in certain contexts, but it is not the be-all and end-all. (ibid.)

2.3 Brand Advocacy

Nowadays the rate of using the internet for social media purposes has rapidly increased. This has lead to a situation in which brand ownership is shared between consumers and the brand itself. Consumers have become the new brand ambassadors, because they are able to share personal stories to their social media platforms. It is important that brands recognize these ambassadors and engage them in the brand's discussions, because it is a way of protecting the brand's reputation. Businesses need to monitor and listen the conversations about their brands online, and turn unhappy customers into brand advocates by understanding the content and conversations they generate. That way companies are able to gain the brand ownership. (Booth, & Matic 2011, 185.)

Brand ambassadors can also be called brand advocates, brand champions, brand evangelists, or similar. According to Smilansky (2009), a brand advocate is a person, a loyal customer of a particular brand, who communicates the brand's core values, messages and features to his or her social circles. The major difference between messages created by brand advocates and by the company itself, is that the previous is more personal. (5.) So basically, there lies a great potential within loyal consumers. Thus, building brand advocacy is a powerful and lucrative word-of-mouth marketing strategy. Well executed brand advocacy programs utilize the energy and goodwill already existing in the market. These programs are a great tool to leverage the investments that a brand has done to make people enjoy it. (Rusticus 2006, 57.)

Brand advocacy can be understood through the brand advocacy pyramid, which divides satisfied customers into three categories, leading up to brand advocacy (Figure 3).

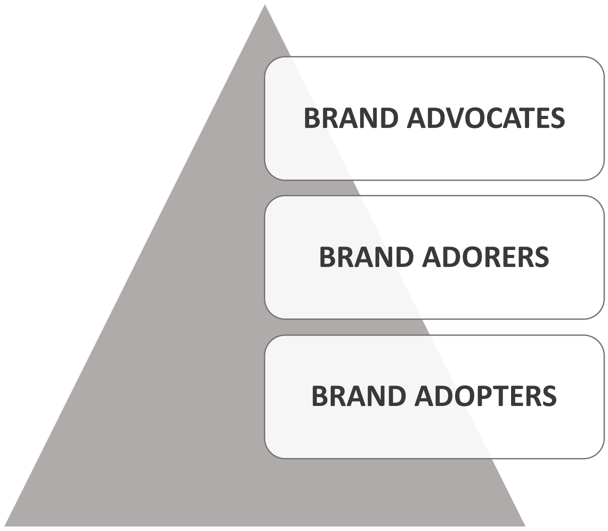

Figure 3. Brand advocacy pyramid (Rusticus 2006, 49, adapted)

It all starts with brand adopters, which is the biggest category. They are consumers who have turner into regular users, because they have had a satisfactory experience with the brand. Brand adorers are the current customers who are highly satisfied with the brand, and show a great amount of liking and loyalty towards it. Finally, right on the tip of the pyramid, are company's most valuable assets: the brand advocates. They enjoy the highest level of satisfaction and are the ones willing to drive conversations in order to convert and encourage other people to like the brand as well. (Rusticus 2006, 48-49.) As the level of customer satisfaction increases, it also positively affects the customer's behavioral and emotional loyalty and advocacy. (Chaffey, & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 336.)

According to Rusticus (2006), brand advocacy is the key for business growth. The focus of marketing efforts should be on expanding the number of brand advocates and encouraging the already existing advocates to talk about the brand more frequently to even larger amount of people. (47-49.) To do that, brands should focus on building an affective bond with consumers. Bonchek (2015) notes, that the key is to foster gratitude – it is naturally reciprocal, and combines both behavior and emotion. Emotions drive loyalty, and emotional connections with customers are the ones that last the longest and grow the deepest (ibid.).

There are also some tools to help marketers increase the amount of brand advocates and build loyalty. The most common one is referral programs, which reward both the advocate and the people they are advocating to, if they turn into adopters (ibid.). Example of this could be an online shop giving out vouchers or bonus points, if a member gets his or her friends to join and make a purchase. Another thing is to make consumers feel like they are part of the brand family; that can be done, for example, through personalized brand merchandise. It deepens the emotional bond users have with a brand, and eases the measurement of brand advocacy. (Rusticus 2006, 57.) A great example are YouTubers (e.g. Tyler Oakley and Alfie Deyes alias PointlessBlog), who have created their own merchandise, such as shirts and accessories, to brand themselves, and to engage their audiences and turn them into brand advocates.

2.4 Employee Advocacy

Morhart, Herzog and Tomczak (2009), refer to employee brand advocacy as “employee brand-building behavior.” It means the input an employee dedicates towards the company’s branding efforts, both during and after working hours. (123.) Morhart and colleagues (2009) divide this brand-building behavior into “in-role” and “extra-role” brand-supporting behaviors. The difference between the two is that the latter happens off the job, and the previous happens on the job. (123.)

Employees working in the company’s frontline, meeting and interacting with customers, act as brand representatives and it is crucial that their behavior meets the organizational standards. Thus, they practice in-role brand-building behavior every day at the job. They are the key feature that helps people to emotionally connect with a brand and develop a long-lasting relationship with it. Especially in the service business, customers’ experiences with a brand strongly depend on the behavior of employees. (ibid.) Successful positioning of a corporate brand is reliant on employees' behavior in delivering the service (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007, 59). So actually, the key to managing customer's brand experience and brand perception is to foster employees' experiences with the organization (King & Grace 2008, 360).

However, even though the frontline staff may have the biggest impact, also the ones who do not have as much customer contact, are important (McKee 2009). Each employee can add value at some stage of the process, and even the back-office staff need to contribute in order to keep the brand promise delivery consistent. That is why all employees must have a comprehensive understanding of the brand values. (Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng 2010, 402.) Through internal branding, the organization can help every employee to understand the big picture, which will then help the employees to make right decision in tough, unexpected situations. (McKee 2009)

Extra-role brand-building behavior, instead, goes beyond the prescribed employee roles and obligations. It includes both participation on the job, and spreading positive messages outside of work. Employees' personal indorsement and recommendations outside of the working context, directed towards potential customers, are a plausible way of advertising. (ibid.)

This extra-role brand-building behavior can also be known as employee brand advocacy or simply, employee advocacy. There are different definitions for employees who execute this kind of advocacy, which aims at enhancing the company brand image and brand awareness. For example, Smarp, a business offering employee advocacy programs for companies, describes employee advocacy as encouraging employees to participate in company communications by sharing interesting content to their personal social media accounts (Työntekijälähettilyys, N.d.).

Levinson (2017), identifies a difference between casual and strategic employee advocacy. Employees sharing informal bits of everyday life at work is not what companies are aiming at – they are seeking for strategic, sustainable, yet organic enthusiasm to share brand messages and core values through employees' personal circle of networks. Employee advocacy should have a long-term plan, clear goals, and metrics for measurement. It should also be supported by the top management. (ibid.)

Wahlman (2016), on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of employee advocacy happening outside of social media. Furthermore, he argues that enhancing employee advocacy depends more on the Human resources department, rather than the Marketing department. Yeh (2014) indicates that HRM practices have a direct effect on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. However, he adds that also marketing department plays an important role in supporting job satisfaction and commitment to the corporation, and both external and internal marketing and HRM processes are necessary. (95.) The best practice is coordination of both human resources and marketing, which leads to successful internal branding (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson 2009, referred Foster et al. 2010, 403).

Company culture is the key, because it drives employee commitment and employee engagement, which are the foundation for employee advocacy (Yeh 2014, 95). And the same goes the other way around: Yeh (2014, 94) reports that employee advocacy enhances job satisfaction and increases the organizational commitment. Employee advocacy is also closely linked to the transparency of company’s employment offerings and to employer’s willingness to do what is best for the employees. (ibid., 95.)

Seppala and Cameron (2015) state that wellbeing at work starts with positive culture, and it is set by the top management. They describe four steps of action, through which organizations can achieve a positive culture, that is beneficial for both employees and the employer. Firstly, it is critical to nurture social connections, because according to many studies, positive social networks at a workplace will lead to greater results. Secondly, empathy is crucial. Empathic leaders are able to evoke persistent behaviors in their employees even in challenging situations. Thirdly, employers should go beyond their way to help their employees. And lastly, employees should feel safe talking to their leader – they should be encouraged to speak up. (ibid.) Overall, positive company culture will lead to successful business, because it motivates the workforce (McGregor & Doshi 2015).

Frank (2015), supports the idea that employees will not turn into advocates unless they reach a certain level of engagement. Another thing is, that employees will only do it, if they see there is something in it for them as well (i.e. it benefits their careers). On top of organizational culture and leadership, Frank lists relationships, career prospects, pay, working environment, employee perception, and employee behavior as the things that are crucial for the development of employee advocacy. (144.)

The role of management in employee advocacy

For employees to become advocates of their employer's brand, they need to truly believe in the firm and the content produced by the company (Frederiksen 2016, 34). According to Ind (2007, 1) the best results in a workplace are achieved, if employees truly, genuinely believe in the brand and live it out.

Morhart and colleagues (2009, 136) proved, that once employees agree with the brand's values and adopt them as their own values, it amplifies both in-role performance and other positive, extra-role, brand-building behaviors. The outcome will be that consumer's brand experience turns out to be more positive, and thus makes them more loyal, which then has a positive influence on the company's overall performance (Al-Shuaibi, Shamsudin, & Aziz 2016, 156). In addition, it helps companies to make the most of employees' intellectual capital (Ind 2007, 1). A brand will be more powerful if employees are given the freedom to bring their ideas into life without any other constraints but the organization's values (ibid., 17). To reach this, companies should focus on internal branding.

Internal branding means "having a continuous process in place by which you ensure your employees understand the 'who' and 'why' behind your business proposition" (McKee 2009). It focuses on employees' adopting the branding concept, which guarantees the delivery of the brand promise to consumers and to all other external stakeholders. It can also work as a tool to help employees identify with the organization. (Foster et al. 2010, 401.) Internal branding aims at increasing employees' intellectual and emotional connection with the brand by communicating and educating employees about the corporate brand values (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001; Thomson, de Chernatony, Arganbright, & Khan 1999, referred Foster et al. 2010, 402). This helps employees to clearly understand the brand promise, which enables employees to act and behave naturally whilst they are serving customers, and still effectively deliver the brand promise (Mosley 2007, referred Foster et al. 2010, 402). Internal branding supports the building of powerful corporate brands (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007, 59). It can lead to increased job longevity and strengthen loyalty towards the organization (Jacobs 2003).

Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Rudd (2013) recognize that managing the behavior of employees is an essential task for leaders. That means that leadership inside the organization is considered a pattern-setting model for employees' brand-building behaviors. (4.)

Morhart and others (2009) have done research about brand-specific leadership and "internalization of a brand-based role identity". They argue that (a) employee's brand-building behavior is in harmony with their brand-identity; (b) for employees to internalize a role identity based on the corporate brand, they need to experience satisfaction in their brand representative roles; and (c) brand-specific transformational leaders are able to provide a working environment, which supports employees' need for satisfaction, and therefore helps employees to adopt a brand-based role identity. So, Morhart and colleagues reason, that brand-specific leaders will be able to have an effective influence only if they manage to make employees integrate their self-identity and a brand-based role identity. (125-126.)

Bass and Riggio (2006) define transactional leadership as leading via social exchange. It means, for example, rewarding employees financially for high performance, or vice versa: denying rewards for the lack of productivity. Transformational leadership style, instead, means that managers try to push their subordinates to achieve unexpected outcomes, and build their own leadership capacity whilst doing that. Transformational leadership is all about empowerment and aligning the vision and goals of the managerial level with employees and the whole organization. (3-5.) Employees' individual goals should also be tied to corporate goals, and that will bring success (The Impact of Employee Engagement on Performance*,* n.d., 8-9). Transformational leaders motivate and inspire their employees to exceed goals and achieve higher performance than they originally thought they could, going even beyond their job descriptions. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 5.) Morhart and colleagues (2009) use the concept of brand-specific leadership, and brand-specific transformational leadership (TFL) refers to the approach that leaders use to appeal to employees' personal values and beliefs in order to motivate them to act on behalf of the brand (123).

What comes to executives' role in creating employee brand advocacy, Morhart and colleagues (2009, 136) believe that brand-specific transformational leadership is more suitable to support employee advocacy than brand-specific transactional leadership. The reason why Morhart and others (2009) believe that TFL approach is better, is because it requires better managerial procedures. These include verbalizing a unifying brand vision; living a lifestyle that follows the brand values, and therefore acting as an adequate role model in the organization; allowing followers to figure out, as individuals, what the role of a brand representative means for them; and provide support, through mentoring and coaching, individually for each employee. This would result in feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness among followers – and those may develop into commitment, proactivity, and authenticity which are the core characteristics of a brand advocate. (136.) Yeh (2014, 94) states that organizational innovation, employee empowerment, and supervisor support are the key factors that positively relate to employee advocacy. Despite the benefits of TFL, Morhart and colleagues (2009, 132) suggest that the ultimate solution for managers would be to aim towards a transformational style, whilst still retaining some of the transactional qualities.

Morhart and others (2009, 125) claim that brand-specific transactional leaders preclude employees' need for satisfaction, and hereby make it harder for employees to integrate their brand-based role identity and their self-perspective. In addition to that, because transactional leadership style is problem-oriented, transactional managers have a tendency to control their followers' performance in their brand representative roles very closely. In return, that leads employees into believing that the leader does not trust in them, nor in their ability to do their work well, enough. That may increase employees' feeling of incompetence, because they start to pay more attention to their weaknesses and as a result, they end up being unsure of their abilities. (Felfe & Schyns 2002, referred Morhart et al. 2009, 127.)

In order for managers to translate their efficient leadership into brand-building behaviors, they need to gain employees' trust (Punjaisri et al. 2013, 5). That is, because employee advocacy is based on how much an organization values employees' contributions, and to which extent do they care about employees' wellbeing – and how employees' themselves perceive this valuation. According to Yeh (2014, 95), Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) state that employees base their attitudes and behavior on the level of commitment that an employer shows toward them. In exchange for their contribution, which benefits the organization, employees expect that their employer supports them.

Employee advocacy on social media

Employee advocacy is definitely a new addition to traditional business development strategies, and therefore it will feel more natural for younger staff. Now that Baby boomers' generation is leaving the working life and Millennials are stepping in, social media advocacy is becoming increasingly relevant. Now in just 8 years' time 75% of the workforce will be Millennials, and they know and understand how digital platforms work. For them, digital engagement is the norm. (Frederiksen 2016, 34.)

Once employees have adopted company's values as their own, they will be willing to look up conversations on social media with people, who have similar interests and concerns. Employee engagement on social media will help companies to facilitate consumer engagement, grow visibility and find new business opportunities. Employee advocacy can also cut the sales cycle shorter. (Frederiksen 2016, 34.)

Employee advocacy has similar benefits as customer brand advocacy, yet it is a smaller risk for an organization. The reason behind it is that employees are more motivated to drive the brand's success, and they know the brand better than any external advocate does. They also understand the brand's vision and mission, know the guidelines, and overall want to be part of the success. (Social Chorus, n.d., 3.) If employees are not interested and excited about the organization's operations, neither will the consumers be (Parkkisenniemi 2016).

One of the biggest benefits of social media employee advocacy for an organization is that it helps to reach a lot more people, and when the message comes through real people, rather than from a company channel, it is more trusted. That is, because between employees and their audiences there is a more personal relationship (Social Chorus, n.d., 2).

According to Frank (2015), on average employees have ten times larger networks than the companies they are working for. That means that brand messages distributed by employees can be shared up to 24 times more often, compared to a brand's official channels alone. (145.) Social Chorus (n.d.) states, that the sharing rate of content is eight times bigger on employees' channels compared to the same content on a brand's page. Furthermore, only eight percent of employees' Twitter followers are overlapping with the brand's followers. (3.)

The key for achieving these benefits, however, is that employers make the tools and channels easily available for employees, so that they can begin sharing content (Frank 2015, 145). Villanen (2015) emphasizes that the desire to share needs to stem from the employees themselves, but employer needs to be the one to create that desire.

According to Frederiksen (2016, 34), 70% of employees who take part in social media advocacy, say that it was beneficial for their career development. Younger staff was more likely to experience these benefits. Also, Social Chorus (n.d., 3), state that becoming an advocate of the organization's brand helps the employee to build one's personal brand, become a thought leader, and establish one's authority on the matter within the community. Moreover, their social media skills will develop which is beneficial for their future career opportunities (ibid.). Personal branding is a way to stand out from the rest (Takala 2015).

The key motivation for employee advocacy on social media is the want to create added value for themselves and their networks. Employees should have freedom to be and express themselves on social media. They should be allowed to use social media during the working hours, encouraged to be active also in non-work related matters, and allowed to make mistakes. Social media does not exist only to facilitate employee advocacy; the more variety of content there is available, the more interest it will draw. (Parkkisenniemi 2016.)

Correspondingly Villanen (2015) argues that the content should be much more than just the own messages of an organization. Employee advocates should be able to openly talk about their jobs, and focus on creating and sharing content that is relevant for their personal audiences. They should use their platforms to talk both with consumers and other experts on the field. (ibid.)

Since gaining significant attention in Finland, some argue that the term 'employee advocacy' does not describe the phenomenon in a positive light. Parkkisenniemi (2016) especially criticizes the Finnish word 'työntekijälähettilyys', because he interprets the word in a way that refers to forcing employees to communicate organizational messages. He claims that the word has a negative vibe. Villanen (2015) and Lähdevuori (2015) also agree that the Finnish translation is a tongue-twister and thus, the English equivalent is a better fit to describe the phenomenon.

3 Methodology

This chapter covers the research method and context, data collection and analysis method, and verification of the research results. The chapter describes the methods used in depth and explains why they were chosen and appropriate for this thesis.

3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study. According to Kananen (2008, 24), Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as any research that aims at new findings without any statistical methods or other quantitative means. One difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that whereas the latter is based on numbers, words and sentences are used in qualitative research (Kananen 2008, 24).

The purpose of qualitative study is to describe, understand, and interpret a phenomenon, and it aims at in depth understanding of the phenomenon. One benefit of qualitative research method is its flexibility. The researcher can proceed according to the requirements of the situation. (Kananen 2008, 24-27.)

Kananen (2008, 30) says that according to Trockim and Donelly (2008) qualitative research is the most suitable approach in situations where (a) there is no information, theories or previous research available of the phenomenon; (b) the aim is to gain in depth view of the phenomenon; (c) researcher wants to create new theories or hypotheses; and (d) the researcher wants to create a fine description of the phenomenon.

The reason why qualitative approach was chosen for this thesis, is because the phenomenon is fairly new, and there is no extensive amount of information or previous studies about it. According to Kananen (2008, 32), qualitative research approach is better than quantitative, if the phenomenon is new and has not been researched before. In this study, qualitative approach allowed to gain deeper, detailed view of the phenomenon, whereas quantitative approach would have provided more horizontally broad results.

The results of a qualitative research only concern those who were involved. The results cannot be generalized the way that quantitative results can be. (Kanen 2008, 28.) Therefore, the results of this study are only indicative.

3.2 Research Context

All of the organizations, whose managers participated in the interviews, operate in the Middle-Finland region. The purpose of this study was to gather interviewees from different industries, so that the results would appeal to a wider audience. Because of this, the study can also indicate if there are any differences between industries regarding attitudes towards employee advocacy and ways of executing advocacy.

The interviewees are briefly introduced in the table below.

Interviewee	Gender	Industry	Job title	Employees*
A	Female	Marketing and advertising	Account director	10
B	Male	Mobile banking	CEO	50
C	Female	Experience	Creative director and marketing manager	20
D	Male	Education	Communications and marketing manager	2500
E	Female	Health and wellness	Head of marketing	80

Table 1. Interviewees

*Number of employees working in the organization.

The interviewees are presented anonymously because one of the respondents wanted to stay unidentified. In order to maintain the reliability of this research in all measures, all respondents and their answers are treated anonymously.

The next chapter goes through the interview procedure more in depth. It also covers the reasons why these organizations and people in particular were a good fit for the interview.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Five people were interviewed in this research. The number of interviewees was determined by considering the saturation rate and tight schedule. Saturation of data happens when new interviews no longer make the data richer, thus the interpretation will not change (Kananen 2008, 34-36), and the data starts to repeat itself (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 87).

Interview questions are related to the research questions, which aim to solve the research problem (Kananen 2008, 73). Interviews can be divided into four different types: structured interviews, semi-sturctured interviews, theme interviews, and open interviews (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, referred Kananen 2008, 73). However, Hirsjärvi, Remes, and Sajavaara (2009, 208-208) only mention three categories, excluding semi-structured interview, which in their theory falls under theme interviews.

Also, Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 75) and Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006b) state, that sometimes semi-structured interview and theme interview can be used as synonyms. In theme interview the themes are determined in advance and they are tied to the theoretical framework. Each theme has some explanatory questions to help. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 73.) Tuomi and Sarajärvi say, that it is argued whether or not all of the pre-planned questions should be asked from all participants, and whether the structure always needs to be the same. For example, Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006b) say that in semi-structured interview all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order.

The method used in this study would fit Kananen's (2008, 73) definition of semi-structured interview: it was like a questionnaire but the answer options were missing, so all the questions were open-ended. However, the questions (Appendix 1) were not asked in the same order in every interview, but all main questions were covered with each interviewee – so it could also be called a theme interview. There were no pre-planned themes, but a theme-like pattern can be seen in the interview frame. Later on, during the data analysis phase the answers were categorized under four themes

A good outcome requires various types of questions on different levels. Interview often proceeds in a way that the interviewer handles one theme at a time, first asking easier questions moving on to more in depth questions. This is because moving vertically too quickly may result in too shallow and scarce answers. (Kananen 2009, 76.) Therefore, the interview started with very basic questions about employee advocacy and moved from there towards a deeper understanding of the benefits and downsides of the phenomenon, as well as insights on the responsibilities of management in facilitating employee advocacy.

Semi-structured interview was chosen as a data collection method for this study, because the researcher wanted to leave some room for changes and additional questions. Interview seemed like an appropriate method because it offers the possibility to clarify any misunderstandings and vague information straight away, and it also allows the researcher to develop an insightful description of the phenomenon. Interviews allow the researcher to delve deeper into the topic because asking any additional clarifying questions is possible during the interview procedure. Thus, any questions that rose during the interview were discussed further to gain more detailed information.

All interviews were conducted in Finnish, because both the interviewer (the author of this thesis), and the interviewees were Finns. The original interview questions are displayed in Appendix 1, and the translated version can be found as Appendix 2.

Interviewees should not be selected randomly. Selection needs to be based on the amount of information and knowledge the interviewees have to offer for the research. The interviewees should have experience of the phenomenon. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85-86.) In this research, the interviewees were selected based on the organization they are working for. All of the companies included do have employee advocates, which is why the interviewees were able to offer valuable insights about the phenomenon inside their own organization. Also, the respondents include both business-to-business and business-to-consumer businesses, as well as consultancy companies with high expertise in the field of marketing. The Interviewees consist of both males and females in managerial positions.

The size of the organization also played a big role in the selection of interviewees. The aim was to have companies with at least 10 or more employees, so the phenomenon would be clearly visible in the company's operations. The size of the businesses involved varies from 10 employees up to 2500 employees.

The interviewees were initially contacted through email, sometimes following with a phone call to set up a meeting more easily. The topic of the thesis was very briefly introduced to the interviewees, so that they would feel comfortable and prepared for the interview, and in order to get participants who are genuinely interested in the subject matter. Interview questions were not sent to the participants in advance.

All interviews were conducted individually and in person. They took place at meeting rooms at JAMK campus or at the interviewee's office – whichever was more convenient to the interviewee. That was done in order to make sure there were no distractions and noise levels would be low enough for the interviews to be successfully recorded. It also ensured that the situation was informal, comfortable, and relaxed. Average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis started with transcribing the interviews that were recorded earlier. Data can be transcribed differently, and there are four levels of transcriptions: summary transcription, basic level transcription, exact transcription, and conversation analysis transcription (Processing Qualitative Data Files, n.d.). Basic level transcription was chosen for this case, because it focuses on the content of speech. Basic level transcription means producing an exact transcription, but leaving out repetitiveness, sentences that were cut off, filler words such as ‘you know’ and ‘like’, and simple sounds like ‘uh’ or ‘oh’. Sentences that do not relate with the topic, or are viewed as irrelevant, can be left out as well. However, in addition to utterances, significant emotional expressions such as laughter can be included. (ibid.)

Hirsjärvi and colleagues (2009, 224) describe qualitative analysis process to be circular and spiral, rather than straightforward. That means that the analysis phase started already during the data collection, when the interviewee had a look at the answers for the first time. It is common for qualitative research that the analysis is done along the way, meaning that both data collection and analysis can happen simultaneously (Hirsjärvi et. al. 2009, 223). Kananen (2008, 57) also emphasizes that these two phases of doing a research are closely intertwined.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the transcribed interviews. Qualitative content analysis aims at describing the content with words in a concise way, resulting in a clear, verbal description of the phenomenon (Kananen 2008, 94). Qualitative content analysis has four stages: reduction, clustering, and abstraction. First, the material is reduced. Then clustering is done in order to spot similarities and divergences, and things related to each other are then combined into one category. And lastly, in the abstraction phase essential and relevant information is separated from the rest. (ibid.)

Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006a) summarize that content analysis simply means careful reading, arranging and organizing the materials, breaking down the data, structuring and reflecting. It can also mean categorizing the content based on different topics and themes. The aim of analysis is to encapsulate the content of the interviews, and to examine answers that are relevant in the light of the research problem. (ibid.)

The interview questions and answers were divided into four themes to help analyzing the data. Kananen (2008, 91) calls this data analysis method as thematising. It is a natural way of analyzing data collected through theme interviews. It means collecting together similar answers relevant to a particular theme.

When thematising data, it is common to use direct quotes from the interviews to provide demonstrative examples and to prove that the analysis is based on real interviews, which have lead to the specific themes (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006c).

The themes in this study are

1. Employee advocacy,
2. Pros and cons of employee advocacy,
3. The role of management in employee advocacy, and
4. Social media versus word-of-mouth.

3.5 Verification of the Results

The research started with the theoretical framework that is linked to the empirical study. Methodology was carefully documented and implemented as described in this chapter. Rigorous documentation of used methods is important so that any external evaluators can follow the research process and evaluate the results and conclusions afterwards (Kananen 2008, 125).

Since the number of respondents is small, the results cannot be generalized to represent the phenomenon in Finland. However, the results indicate what is the phenomenon’s current state in this context, and proved that there is need for further research. This study serves as a base for any future research, that is suggested in the Conclusion chapter later.

Sources used in this research were reliable. Reliability issues and limitations are further discussed in Discussion chapter.

4 Results

In this chapter, the results gathered through interviews are presented under four main themes that were formed based on the interview questions and answers. The results give answers to the research questions presented in the Introduction chapter. Any direct quotes used in this chapter are translated and they can be found in the original language and form in Appendix three.

4.1 Employee Advocacy

All five interviewees were familiar with the topic, however not all would use the exact term ‘employee advocacy’ to describe the phenomenon, because in Finland the term is rarely familiar. However, all agreed that employee advocacy is a highly important matter in every organization.

In all five organizations employee advocacy is executed – as a matter of fact, all five interviewees admitted that they themselves often act as employee advocates. Interviewee A said that inside their company it comes quite naturally, because she and her colleagues are all experts in the field of marketing and understand the importance of advocacy. Interviewee B said that they do encourage employee advocacy and every month they reward the ‘social media user of the month’. Even their company’s founder’s official title is an *“evangelist”*. Interviewee C said, that they have not really focused on it, nor thought about it, but have noticed that employees are willing to share content. Interviewee D said that they have never used the word ‘employee advocacy’ to drive this phenomenon, but agrees that for years they have had the mindset that employees are a great resource in building the organization’s image, and it has been encouraged. He describes it by saying that *“inside our organization it has been, sort of, already built-in.”* Interviewee E admitted, that before the initial request to participate in this research, she was not familiar with the term ‘employee advocacy’. However, inside their company it is very common and very free. Even though they have not really invested on employee advocacy, it seems to happen easily without much guidance.

Definition of employee advocacy

The most common definition given to employee advocacy was, that it means harnessing employees to represent and promote the organization they work for. Many emphasized the idea that advocacy refers to actions both outside and inside the work environment. However, interviewees B and D mainly considered advocacy happening outside of work, even though they agree that both are important.

Alongside of social media posting and casual everyday promotion of the workplace, many of the interviewees recognized that a big part of advocacy happens also during the job. Giving speeches at educational institutions, conventions, conferences etc. was considered very important part of employee advocacy. Interviewee B said that being on social media and posting on different channels does not feel very natural to his generation, and therefore for him personally, employee advocacy is more about speaking in events and being an advocate offline.

A good word that came up in the interviews often to describe employee advocates was *“messenger”.* Interviewee A said that it means that the employee advocates talk, share, and communicate information about the organization and the values of the organization to the outside world. In a nutshell that is the reason why employee advocates are so important.

Characteristics of good employee advocates

The interviewees were asked what is a good employee advocate like. At this point, many said that employee advocacy needs to be truly genuine. Three out of five interviewees described the person as positive and enthusiastic; attitude is everything. All of the respondents mentioned that the employee truly needs to enjoy his or her job, otherwise it will show through and will not be as trustworthy – interviewee D said that it might even turn against the organization if it is not real, because people can see that. Interviewee A’s answer supported that statement, and she added that the employees’ set of values need to be aligned with the organization’s values and thus, employee advocacy will be authentic and easy. Interviewee B said, also related to the same thought, that *“it should not feel like a chore.”*

Other words to describe good employee advocates were *“not mean”*, *“happy”*, *“voluntary”*, *“empathic”*, and *“active”.*

4.2 Pros and Cons of Employee Advocacy

The interviewees came up with several benefits of employee advocacy. There were two that all of them mentioned: improved employer brand and increased awareness of the organization.

Benefits for the organization

Topics that came up in the interviews the most often were employer image, employer branding, and recruiting. All interviewees saw that one of the most important benefits of employee advocacy was improving the employer image, and therefore getting a bigger amount and more talented people to apply for a position in the organization. That ensures that the organization has the best and the most efficient employees.

Four out of all five interviewees said that their employees have had an impact on the recruitment process. They said that employee advocacy had increased the number of applicants when the company was seeking to hire new employees. Interviewee B said that the first step in their recruiting process is that their current employees tell their friends about the open vacancy and see if anyone in their personal circles is interested in applying for the position.

Related to recruiting, interviewee A brought up a new aspect, saying that if the managers want employee advocacy to work really well, they should consider that already during the recruitment phase. They should aim at recruiting people who are a good match with the company: same values, active on social media, willing to share things, and so on. Of course, the applicants’ set of skills and expertise is the most important thing, but if on top that the organization is able to find congenial people, employee advocacy is more likely to happen and be successful.

Another benefit, that Interviewee A and C mentioned, is that employees have a huge marketing potential, and successful employee advocacy really increases the awareness of the company and generates more brand exposure.

Interviewee A explained that it will make customer acquisition easier and generate more leads. Interviewee B touched the subject as well, by saying that maybe if they sold products to the consumer market, the main benefit would be employees as a marketing resource; if they had a product that the employees would use, love, and talk about, it would be more trustworthy than advertisements by the company. However, he does not see the same benefit when they are working in the B2B-sector. He said that *"I believe that the advocate is a reference for others like him"*, meaning that customers are great advocates of their services and products, and that appeals to other consumers, whereas employees are great advocates of the work environment, which should be targeted to future potential employees instead.

Interviewee A said that *"employee advocacy increases the organization's humane value"*, implying that because others can see that the employees truly enjoy working for the company, and willingly and enthusiastically share work related things, the company is seen in a more humane light, which is very positive.

In addition to sharing the company's messages, own thoughts, and experiences about work and the employer, also liking, following, and commenting on the company's social media pages and posts is very influential. Interviewee E said that *"that in itself already indicates that you support and enjoy the company and their values and the content they put out."* That way the messages also pop up on employees' friends feeds and the company can gain a lot of visibility. Interviewee C said that inside their company employee advocacy actually started out by asking the employees to like the content posted through the company's official social media channels. However, that was when they were still in the very early stages of building the company, and they have not needed to ask anyone to like or post anything since, because the employees are willing to do it without even asking.

Interviewee E said that employee advocacy can also work as a way of co-operation: *"I think that it should work both ways, like a dialogue."* Interviewee D also said that *"I see employee advocacy working the other way around as well, so that the advocates tell their employer how outsiders perceive the employer – so in that way, employee advocacy works both ways. In the best* *case, the employees are able to measure the organization's public image through their own social circles".*

Benefits for the employee

Interviewees B, D and E emphasized that employee advocacy also brings something to the employee. In an expert organization, personal branding is very important and employee advocacy is a way to increase one's own brand and credibility, how people value one's expertise in the field. Interviewee B summarized it by saying that *"this is part of every organization's basic philosophy: if you want to get something, you also need to give something."* What he meant is that if the company is treating employees right, they get employee advocacy as a result.

Interviewees D and E said that employee advocacy helps to strengthen the connection employees have with the organization. Interviewee D believes that employee advocacy would increase the pride employees feel working for the company, and therefore improve the atmosphere inside the organization.

Downsides of employee advocacy

All interviewees agreed that there might be problems, but fortunately none have occurred inside their companies. Biggest concerns were that if there are some problems in the workplace, employees might vent on social media and that brings bad reputation to the company. Interviewee B said that *"bad reputation travels fast*." However, he also said that in a way it is a good thing; it is an indication that everything inside the organization is not alright. It is a message to the managers, that something needs to be done to solve the issues – *"because they are not going away by downplaying or hiding them"*. He criticizes that kind of action though, because it is not the correct way of communicating in case of conflict, and venting about work problems online does not necessarily solve anything. The problems should be communicated directly inside the organization. Interviewee A noted that employees have large networks and therefore they have a lot of power if they decide to turn against the company.

Interviewee A also talked about unintentional social media issues. Some people are very temperamental, which may lead to situations in which they may talk out of turn. Therefore, she advised to carefully think through before posting anything online: *“if you feel it might be inappropriate, sleep on it, and think again in the morning.”* She emphasized that everyone should remember the ethical rules and morals, especially on social media, because misunderstandings occur often.

Interviewee D also talked about misunderstandings. In the education industry, it is highly important to know, that only the head of the organization can present the institution’s official take on certain issues. Professors and researchers working in the organization do not represent the organization in their own social channels and therefore all opinions are their own, not the organization’s. He says that sometimes, for example, when an employee has expressed his or her opinion on a political issue, someone has interpreted that as the institution’s view on the topic, even when it is not. That can be problematic.

Interviewee A brought up a linguistic issue. Everyone’s linguistic skills are on a different level, and if someone has particularly insufficient writing skills, or dyslexia, it might bring more harm than good to the company. She said that if someone is not a good writer and they share company related things on social media, it is just embarrassing for the company. However, she admitted that it might be hard to tell someone who is very excited about sharing, that it may not be the best thing considering the company’s image.

The reasons why none of the five interviewees have not faced any problems with employee advocacy were very similar. They all see that in their company it comes easily, naturally, and everybody has certain level of social media skills and they know how to act online. Interviewee B also stated that the average age of their employees is around 33, which means that they are part of the generations that got used to social media at a younger age, and therefore it feels natural. All interviewees believe that their employees enjoy working in the company, and that is the main reason why there are no problems in executing employee advocacy.

4.3 The Role of Management in Employee Advocacy

One of the most important things that came up in the interviews was that employees must feel good at the workplace. The working environment needs to be positive and supportive, so that everyone feels happy coming to work. Interviewee B said that *“everyone should feel that this company is more than just a job.”* He also said that everything starts with taking care and looking after the employees; *“Employees’ wellbeing is a key asset in any company – you cannot successfully execute employee advocacy if your employees don’t feel well.”* He looked at the issue from the employees’ point of view by saying: ”*When you are taken really good care of, you want to tell everyone how well things are going, and you are just so full of excitement to let everyone know*.*”* That is the basis of successful employee advocacy. Interviewee A said that if the employees have a good foundation at the workplace, the idea of employee advocacy is *“easier to sell to the employees”*. Interviewee E added that even though there is a risk that someone might share negative things about the workplace, if they as managers do everything well and take care of their employees, *“the chances are that the talk stays positive.”*

Interviewee D stressed that everything needs to spring from the real actions of the organization, so that the messages do not seem forced or untruthful. He said that *“if we say that we are a good employer, we really must be a good employer. If we want the advocates to say that we have a good team spirit, there needs to be actual proof or research of that. The messages need to be real.”* He thinks that if a company has any made-up, untruthful slogans, *“they are sailing on dangerous waters”.*

Interviewee E mentioned openness as one characteristic of a good, supportive workplace. She explained that being open about everything encourages employees to share their thoughts and ideas both inside and outside the organization. Openness enhances dialogue between different parts of the organization.

Interviewee A said that everyone inside the organization needs to truly understand why employee advocacy is important, and why it should be done. Everyone needs to see the benefits. And on a more basic level, everyone needs to understand core functions of the business: what they do, how they do, and why they do it.

Interviewees A, C, and D mentioned that the tools for employee advocacy need to be available for employees. For example, interviewee A noted that if employees don’t have smartphones, how are they going to share anything? Interviewee D talked about materials, such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, etc. Interviewee C emphasized that employees need to be familiar with the tools and if they are not, providing training is crucial.

Rewarding systems also came up in the interviews. Interviewee A mentioned that rewarding active employee advocates is a good way to get the rest to join as well. She said that peers act as the best example*: “When one employee gets excited about employee advocacy and that employee’s efforts are noticed and rewarded by the organization, all the other employees will notice the benefits of employee advocacy and want to take part as well”*. Interviewee B said that in their company, each month they reward *“the social media user of the month”*. He believes that publicly recognizing employees’ effort leads to positive outcomes. As he said *“because if you are actively doing something, and nobody notices your efforts, you will not keep doing it for too long.”* He does not think it really matters what the reward is, but the organization needs to notice their employees’ efforts and give positive feedback.

Interviewee B also mentioned a concrete example of what they do to make the employees happy in the workplace and how to strengthen their commitment towards the company. He explained that *“we have a very family-friendly approach inside the company; for example, we have this annual family day so everyone knows each other’s families, and the family knows the company. Also, we sponsor our employees’ children’s sport teams and stuff like that.”*

When the interviewees were asked, who plays a bigger role in building employee advocacy, employees or management, most of them said the importance is equal. Interviewee B’s opinion was that you need both, but first, the company needs to do its part; make employees satisfied with the workplace. He also stressed that *“the management has a huge impact on how people react to employee advocacy, whether or not they react positively and want* *to contribute. The corporate management can either act as an incentive, or be an obstacle."* However, he also said that on top of that, successful employee advocacy also requires that employees are eager to participate.

Interviewee D agreed that it starts with actions. Whatever the company wants employee advocacy to be about, needs to be in shape. He also considered that if they were to start building employee advocacy, they must have a clear plan and structure, themes and channels all figured out, and that would ease out the process.

Interviewee C said that so far, she as an employer has not done much to support employee advocacy. They have done some minor things, such as giving hoodies and bags with the company's logo to the employees. That way the employees are like walking advertisements. According to her, the employees asked for the hoodies themselves – *"so it's not like we are forcing them to use that stuff to advertise us."* She said that it is important that employee advocacy is not forced.

Interviewee E firstly said that *"it is fifty-fifty"*, but later on during the discussion she came to the conclusion that management actually plays a more significant role. Because employer is the one who creates the atmosphere, frame, and the tools through which the messages can be shared and forwarded. And without those employee advocacy is very unlikely to happen.

Improvement ideas

When the interviewees were asked about ways of how to improve the current state of employee advocacy inside their organization, the answers were quite diverse.

Interviewee A said that they have very little time to do it, so improvement would be greater resources. Interviewees C and E agreed that they have not had the time to focus on the issue, and that could be improved. Interviewee A also noted, that they should have some kind of plan in case something goes wrong. A plan how they would react if employee advocacy turns out to bring negative consequences.

Interviewee B, as the CEO of the company, was not aware of any improvement ideas as of right now. He said that this is done in the marketing department, so he does not know what they have planned.

Interviewee C noted that she should show more appreciation towards the employees' hard work. She said that she should thank them for what they have done so far, because they have done a good job. Another thing was, that maybe they could improve with the materials. To have leaflets and stickers available if employees want to give any to their friends or leave at public places.

Interviewee D started out by saying that there are several improvement areas. Firstly, employees should have social media training. Secondly, to make the phenomenon more familiar, especially the term 'employee advocacy', to everyone inside the organization. And thirdly, to focus more on encouraging employees to take part in conversations on social media.

Interviewee E said that their marketing team is aware of employee advocacy and its benefits, and together they have talked about procedures that have proven to be effective. However, they could improve by letting all of the employees know the benefits and reasons behind employee advocacy. Thus, improvement needs to happen by sharing the idea and encouraging people to contribute. She also noted that they could train employees to make sure everybody knows which channels to use and how.

4.4 Social Media versus Word-of-mouth

Four out of five interviewees perceived social media advocacy and more traditional, word-of-mouth advocacy, equally as important and effective. Interviewee A said that what generally matters, is the fact that people are more likely to believe messages that come from people they are familiar with.

Interviewees A, B, and D stressed that it depends on the topic, the people and the framework, which one works better. Interviewee A also mentioned that it matters how differently people are influenced, what is effective to each individual. Both ways have their strengths and weaknesses.

Interviewees C and E said that when considering these two methods of advocacy, it is a matter of quality versus quantity. They feel that face-to-face conversations deliver higher quality, whereas social media reaches bigger amounts of people more easily. Interviewee C said: *“They both have their time and place, and employees need to recognize that.”* She says that *“when you see a candid employee talking about the firm, and really believing in the firm, it has much more impact than 20 likes on social media. -- If we want to have a deeper connection with the customer, face-to-face it works better.”* Interviewee E, however, leaned on social media’s side*: ”If I have to decide on which one is better, I’d give social media a little plus in the end, because it reaches bigger masses and it has this certain visibility aspect about it.”*

Interviewee D noted that social media works only if it is natural for the employees. He says*: ”It will look illegitimate, if a person who normally does not post much about himself, suddenly starts to put out company messages.”* Therefore, advocacy should be genuine, and not forced.

Social media guidelines

Interviewees A, B, C, and D said that in their companies, there is a guideline for social media. However, the types of rules differ among the five respondents.

Interviewee A told, that they have agreed on the *“tone of voice”* and the pictures and visuals need to follow certain rules (e.g. color scheme). Beforehand they have had stricter rules, but nowadays the guidelines are very loose, because they believe that each employee has good morals.

Interviewee B said that they trust that people know how to act on social media. He said: *“Of course we hope that no one spreads anything negative, but it does not work so that we just say that you must not do so.”* However, because the company is part of a bigger concern, they have had to create guidelines. However, he stressed that they are not very important.

Interviewee C said that she has created Instagram-guidelines only, because all employees have the right to post on the company’s page. She thinks that the most important parts of the guidelines are certain limits and the tone. She believes that having these guidelines might benefit employees in their next job, because now they know how to act on social media. Moreover, she stressed *that "even if everything doesn't go perfectly, it is better to have active employees rather than a 100 percent perfect Instagram feed."* She does not want the employees to feel that it is too hard or that they cannot do it.

Interviewee D said that they created the guidelines when social media became really popular, about five years ago. Their guideline is mostly focused on the fact, that people would know how to present their opinions as their own, not as the organization's.

Interviewee E said that they do not have any rules or guidelines. The growth of the company has been so rapid, that they have not had the time to focus on it – but people have talked about the issue together, even though there is no official guide. However, she believes that as the company keeps growing, they soon need to create written guidelines. She would want the guidelines to be very encouraging: no forbiddance, rather something that would inspire the employees to take part. *"Sort of like a guidance, that hey we are on these channels and this is how it works."*

Channels and content

All interviewees said that the chosen channels depend on the industry, target audience, goals, and both the employee and the employer. Many also agreed that channels that work for employee advocacy are often the same that the company uses. More specifically, all five interviewees mentioned Facebook as a good channel for employee advocacy content. Four mentioned Instagram, and Twitter and LinkedIn were brought up by three interviewees. Other channels that came up were YouTube, Snapchat, and blogs.

The reasoning why all mentioned Facebook were versatile. Interviewee E said that it works *because "that's where people hang out and it's very easy to share things on Facebook"*. Interviewee D said that Facebook is particularly good at building the employer brand; *"Of course it is great for the employer image, if our employees write or share pictures on Facebook of, for example, a personnel day, or that we have cool campus and great exercise benefits etc."*

Interviewee B emphasized the fact that in Facebook people use their own personal account and the messages are personal, which is why he sees it is effective.

Interviewees D and E said that they think Twitter works the best for their company's purposes – and therefore it would be a good channel for employee advocacy as well. Interviewee D especially finds that Twitter is good in his industry, since it is very fitting for societal interaction. He says: *"Also, only few use Twitter, so if we compare to other channels, it reaches less people. However, the thing is, that from our company's point of view, it reaches more of the right people."*

Interviewee C was going to answer that Facebook is the best platform for employee advocacy, but corrected herself: *"So videos are a big thing right now, and even though I was about to say Facebook at first, I think that actually Snapchat or YouTube are the best ones. YouTube in this case especially."* Inside their company, they have had very good experience with YouTube as an employee advocacy platform. She explained that *"we actually have a YouTuber, who has several thousand followers, working in the company. We didn't recruit him on purpose, but without even knowing he has contributed to our marketing whilst sharing his everyday life online. So that way YouTube works really well. It has also started out really naturally, because we didn't hire him because of YouTube, but because he was a good employee."* Interviewees E and D also mentioned YouTube as an effective employee advocacy platform.

Interviewee A noted that they do not have the resources to run too many channels, and they do not want to put out similar content on each channel. The content always needs to be moderated to fit the particular channel, for example because in some platforms have character limits. Interviewee E agreed with that by saying: *"We have several target groups, because we have three business areas. Different things work on different channels."* Interviewee A said that what they focus on cross-linking, because it *"helps to feed certain channels"*. So, for example, when an event is coming up, they might post about it on Facebook and ask people to keep an eye on their Twitter, where they post in real time right from the spot. That way they can prompt traffic on their many different social media accounts.

When asked about content, the answers had many similarities. All interviewees mentioned that it is better, if the content is somehow linked to the work community or to the employees themselves. Interviewee C explained that *"it should not be anything like 'the company's turnover grew this much', because it is kind of boring, and it shines through that you might not be super enthusiastic about the topic. But, if it is about things that you were involved in, that's good."*

Interviewee B said that, because their goals for employee advocacy are related to recruiting, content related to the employees helps to best achieve their goals. Interviewee E highlighted recruitment-related content as well: *"That we are a good employer, a good workplace, sharing things like that is great".* She said that it really helps them to get the best employees, and because they operate locally, employee advocates really help in spreading the message.

Three out of five interviewees specifically mentioned content that is based on things the employees experience at work. Interviewee A mentioned events organized by the company, and ordinary things that happen during the workday: *"For example, if we are doing a photoshoot someone might post a picture with a caption like 'hey, here's what we got up to today' or something like that. -- Also, we organize this festival and all our employees get free entrance, so of course we hope they post selfies and other content about that experience*". Interviewee E mentioned similar things: *"I think a good example of what has worked is when someone has posted, for example, a picture with caption saying like 'we went bouldering today with the crew!' and then adds #companyX, so then everyone realizes that 'oh yeah that guy works for Company X, cool'."*

Sharing the company's messages can sometimes be in place as well. Even though most of the interviewees agreed, that it is not quite as convincing as employees' own messages, there is a time and place for them too. And as Interviewee E said: *"Of course anything we put out is public and you can share it, if you personally find it interesting."* Interviewee D supported that thought by saying that *"if the marketing department puts out some amazing content, of course employees are allowed to share them, and they should share them, because it does increase the company's image and creates positive buzz around it"*. However, both stressed that everything in moderation – because, as interviewee D said, otherwise it might turn against the company. Interviewee C said, that especially stuff that employees are proud of is good to share. For example, if the company achieves something great and posts about it on their channels, employees might experience collective pride. *"If we feel that something was a joint achievement, that together we have built the company to this point, it makes everyone feel proud."* Thus, sharing ready-made company posts is not always bad, it just indicates that employees are involved with the company and truly proud of its operation and success. Interviewee D still noted, that *"often everyday life at work is entirely different than how it is displayed in the company's marketing videos etc."* – that is the reason why company's messages might not be the most effective content.

Employee advocacy communication tools and apps

None of the interviewees felt that employee advocacy programs or apps would be necessarily useful in their organizations. Interviewee A said that because they are all very familiar with social media and all the different channels, it might work for them. However, she stressed that if the employees are not already familiar with social media, any kind of additional tools and software might seem too complicated for the average employee. As she said, *"it is important to go with employees' terms."*

Interviewees B and E said that they already have some tools for internal communications and there is no need for any other communication tool. Interviewee E thinks that their employees might react in a negative way, explaining that *"employees might say that 'we are tired of too many tools'."* However, she and Interviewee C do see a possibility in an employee advocacy program, if the company keeps growing. Interviewee C explained that their communications at this point are *"semi small"*, but if they expand to few more cities, it might be useful.

Interviewee D believes that employee advocacy can be done without any fancy software, however, he also said that *"I don't see any harm in it either."* One problem he brought up is that it would require an extensive amount of training for the staff before getting use of the full potential of such tool, which is challenging. He wonders how these programs should be deployed in the workplace.

5 Discussion

This chapter will recapitulate the results of the empirical study and assess the results in the light of literature. It also includes any practical or managerial implications this study has. Following that are limitations of the research at the end of the chapter.

The objectives of this research were to describe the phenomenon in Finnish context, focusing on social media, gain insight from managerial perspective, and to create solutions for carrying out employee advocacy, especially on how managers can support and encourage employees towards employee advocacy.

There were two main research questions. The first one is how management sees employee advocacy, and the second is how managers can support employee advocacy. The first main question has two sub-questions: a) what are the benefits of employee advocacy, and b) what are the challenges of employee advocacy.

Five interviews were conducted in order to answer these research questions. Data was then transcribed and analyzed, and the results are presented in depth in the previous chapter.

5.1 Main Findings

The findings of this research have many same key points as the literature reviewed beforehand, yet the interviewees also brought up some new aspects and confirmed and deepened the information apparent in the literature.

The main goal of this study was to gain insight about what the management level of an organization thinks of employee advocacy. That knowledge can then be used to create solutions for managers to further develop the current state of employee advocacy inside their organizations, and to offer findings about how they can support and encourage employees to contribute to employee advocacy.

This study has shown that even though managers are familiar with the topic, companies often lack an employee advocacy strategy: clear plan, goals, and measures. This shows that the phenomenon is new in Finland, and companies are yet to recognize the full potential of employee advocacy. The interviewees defined employee advocacy as employees representing and promoting the organization both at work and outside of work. They see that employees are a great marketing resource, since their networks are often bigger and very valuable for the company. That has been proven in prior studies (e.g. Frank 2015) as well.

The results of this study also prove that management thinks employee advocacy has more benefits than negative effects. The main benefits of employee advocacy that the study brought up were better employer brand and image, deeper employee commitment, improved personal brand of employees, and the increased quality and quantity of job applicants.

This study has shown that managers believe the most significant benefit of employee advocacy is how it effects recruiting. Employee advocacy strengthens the employer brand and enhances the employer image; it makes the workplace look desirable. That has a direct effect on the number or applicants when recruiting. It leads to a positive outcome because the company gets to choose the best, most qualified, and highly motivated people to hire, which has a positive effect on the efficiency of the workforce.

It was a surprising discovery how strongly managers relate employee advocacy to recruitment. All interviewees saw that the increase in job applicant quality and quantity is related to employee advocacy. Prior studies (Morhart et. al. 2009; Al-Shuabi, Shamsudin, & Aziz 2016) do not link employee advocacy so strongly with recruitment benefits, but rather with benefits related to branding and marketing of products or services. That indicates that employee advocacy might have different goals in the Finnish context. Therefore, if Finnish employers seek benefits related to employer branding rather than corporate branding or product/service branding, the content produced by employee advocates must be slightly different, since it is catered to a different audience. Thus, this study indicates that currently employee advocacy in Finland focuses on slightly different features compared to the global phenomenon.

This study also revealed another less commonly considered benefit of employee advocacy: increased knowledge of external stakeholders' perception of the employer brand. It means that through their roles as advocates, employees may be able to inform the employer how outsiders value the company and the employer image, which is a valuable insight considering the development of the brand and the workplace.

Another major finding was that managers are not very concerned about the challenges or negative outcomes of employee advocacy, because they have not faced them inside their organization. It shows that employee advocacy is implemented on a smaller scale in Finland, because any problems have yet to arise. The phenomenon has not expanded or become highly prioritized by companies yet due to lack of resources. Succeeding at employee advocacy requires time, money, and training and in today's busy environment companies are not able to focus their resources in employee advocacy.

The results of this study show that nurturing employee satisfaction is the key to prevent problems with employee advocacy. Prior studies (Yeh 2014; Frank 2015) also prove that employee satisfaction is the foundation for employee advocacy. This study indicates, that employee advocacy in Finland seems to be progressing towards the right direction, because managers realize the importance of their employee advocacy related actions.

Many previous studies (Punjaisri, Evanshitzky, & Rudd 2013; Bass & Riggio 2006; Morhart et al. 2009) stress the need for management's support in employee advocacy. As this study proves, the core of employee advocacy is employee satisfaction – when employees are content, they are more likely to share good things about the organization and their job. Tools, materials, training, and rewards also play a significant role in encouraging employee advocacy among employees. Employees will be more motivated if the employer notices and appreciates their hard work. Therefore, it is crucial that managers understand the significance of their role in successful implementation of employee advocacy.

One of the main findings of this study was that employees need to be genuinely willing to act as advocates, or it will not seem trustworthy. Many prior studies (Frederiksen 2016; Ind 2007; Morhart et al. 2009) have noted that as well. Authentic advocacy brings benefits, whereas forced and therefore false endorsement can be harmful for the brand. In relation to that, the study revealed that managers believe that recommendations coming from employees, other consumers, friends, and family are more likely to work than company's own messages. There is a lot of previous research about it as well (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012; Evans 2008).

Linked to that, similarly to the findings in prior studies (Foster et al. 2010; Morhart et al. 2009), the present study discovered that employees should obtain similar values as the company because it will increase employees' likeliness of acting as advocates. In addition, the interviewees in this study noted that employees' values and their similarity with the company's values should be considered already in the recruitment stage of new employees, because that would ensure that the company hires potential brand advocates.

The research results suggest a few means how managers can support employee advocacy inside their organization. Firstly, by taking care of employees and aiming at employee satisfaction. It is important to hear employees' thoughts, improvement ideas, and criticism in order to keep everyone satisfied at the workplace. Secondly, by being open, and encouraging and empowering, not forcing, employees towards employee advocacy. Thirdly, by educating and training employees about employee advocacy; why it is important, what are the benefits, what are the goals, what do employees get out of it, and so on. Fourthly, by providing tools and materials so that employee advocacy would be easy for employees. And lastly, by rewarding employees and recognizing their efforts.

During the interviews, it also came up that the Finnish term for employee advocacy may cause negative connotations. That is line with many other Finnish marketing expert's opinions (Parkkisenniemi 2016; Lähdevuori 2015; Villanen 2015). However, the word 'työntekijälähettilyys' has already started to settle, so there is not much that can be done about it. Interviewees proposed that key to solving that issue is to thoroughly explain the concept, and from that point on, the term should no longer cause any harm.

5.2 Limitations of the Research

Since there was very little previous research of employee advocacy, it was challenging to narrow down the focus of this research, which is why the topic is very broad. Thus, this research serves as a good base for any future research and allows to narrow down the topic of any research even further, to receive more in depth results of a single aspect of the phenomenon.

There was very little literature about the topic, yet most of the literature used in this research consist of reliable, peer-reviewed journal articles. However, sources such as blog posts, magazine articles and other similar non-academic pieces were also used when writing the literature review. This was done to map out the attitudes towards the phenomenon and to gain more detailed insights about the topic. This may lower the reliability of the research, even though all sources were critically reviewed and the authors are experts in the field of marketing. However, the variety of sources also enriches the theoretical background.

Another reliability issue is the language. All interviewees were Finnish and therefore the interviews were conducted in Finnish. This thesis, however, is written in English and for that reason the author translated the interviewees' responses. Quotations in the results chapter are not in the original language, and during the translation process misunderstandings may have occurred. This may compromise the reliability of data. However, the original forms of the used quotations can be found in Appendix 3.

Since the empirical study only included a small number of respondents, any big conclusions cannot be made concerning a larger population to maintain the reliability of this research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2006, 151). However, this study indicates that the phenomenon is a growing trend, which means that further research in the future is needed.

Methodology was carefully documented and implemented in order to maintain the reliability of this research. The research did provide answers to the research questions presented in the Introduction chapter. That confirms that the questions were properly formed and the literature supports the empirical study.

6 Conclusion and Future Suggestions

Employee advocacy has quickly gained a lot of attention during the last few years. The growing popularity of the phenomenon in Finland is positive, especially the fact that managers realize the benefits employee advocacy can deliver.

Employee advocacy has its risks and it requires a lot of time and concentration, but it is worth it in the long haul – because not only does it positively affect the brand, it also has a positive impact on the whole working environment. Employee advocacy is not just a marketing strategy, it is also a way of improving internal factors such as employee loyalty and commitment, workplace atmosphere, and communication.

It is important that both employees and managers are invested in employee advocacy. In addition to employees' contribution, it requires help and support from the management level staff. By supporting employees, ensuring their well-being, providing tools and training, and acknowledging their achievements, managers play a significant role in employee advocacy. Managers are the ones who create the atmosphere that encourages employees towards advocacy.

This study proved that employee advocacy is a highly topical matter in Finland and the phenomenon requires further research. In terms of future research, quantitative research approach would be advantageous because it can provide more generalized results about the phenomenon, since it allows a larger sample. Quantitative research methods would also enable better reach of the population from which the sample is selected (Saunders et. al. 2006, 138).

The scope of this thesis was quite wide, and therefore researching individual aspects or components of the phenomenon would help to gain deeper information on particular issues. For example, the phenomenon is often looked at from the employee's perspective even though this study proves that employer's role in enhancing employee advocacy is quite significant. Therefore, further research about the responsibilities of employer and management is needed.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions in Finnish

Taustatiedot:

A) Yrityksestä
   1. Yrityksen nimi
   2. Yrityksen koko, henkilöstömäärä
   3. Toimiala

B) Haastateltavasta
   1. Sukupuoli
   2. Titteli

Haastattelukysymykset:

1. Mitä on työntekijälähettilyys?
2. Minkälainen on hyvä työntekijälähettiläs?
3. Kumpi on mielestäsi tehokkaampaa: työntekijälähettilyys sosiaalisessa mediassa, vai perinteisempi word-of-mouth?
4. Onko teillä jonkinlaista some-ohjeistusta työntekijöille?
5. Harjoitetaanko yrityksessä työntekijälähettilyyttä? Jos ei, onko tavoitteena alkaa harjoittaa? Miksi ja miten?
6. Mitä hyötyä työntekijälähettilyydestä olisi teidän brändille?
    a. Minkälaista arvoa se toisi yritykselle?
    b. Minkälainen vaikutus ja mitä konkreettista hyötyä siitä olisi?
    c. Mitä tavoitteita työntekijälähettilyydellä on?
7. Mitä ongelmia työntekijälähettilyyden toteuttamisessa on tällä hetkellä?
8. Miten tämänhetkistä työntekijälähettilyyttä voisi parantaa?
9. Mitkä asiat tukevat työntekijälähettilyyttä?
    a. Miten sinä asemassasi voisit tukea työntekijälähettiläitä ja rohkaista työntekijöitä ottamaan osaa?
    b. Näetkö, että työntekijälähettilyys lähtee työnantajasta vai työntekijästä itsestään?
10. Minkälainen prosessi teillä on? Jos ei ole, niin pitäisikö olla?
    a. Missä työntekijälähettilyyden pitäisi tapahtua?
    b. Mitkä sosiaalisen media kanavista koet tehokkaiksi ja hyviksi alustoiksi työntekijälähettilyydelle?
    c. Minkälaisen sisällön jakaminen olisi mielestäsi hyödyllisintä?
11. Vaatiiko työntekijälähettilyys mielestäsi selvät ohjenuorat tai säännöt? Miksi, miksi ei?
12. Mitä mieltä olet työntekijälähettilyyttä edistävistä ohjelmistoista?
13. Oletko itse toiminut työntekijälähettiläänä? Mitä, missä, ja miksi?
14. Saako yrityksen tai sinun nimesi mainita opinnäytetyössä?

Appendix 2. Interview questions in English

Background information:

A) About the company
   1. Company
   2. Size of the company, number of employees
   3. Industry

B) About the interviewee
   1. Gender
   2. Job title

Interview questions:

1. What is employee advocacy?
2. How would you describe a good employee advocate?
3. Which one do you think is more effective: employee advocacy on social media or more traditional word-of-mouth?
4. Do you have a social media guide or rules for your employees?
5. Do you have employee advocacy inside the company? If not, are you planning on executing it in the future? How and why?
6. What benefits would employee advocacy have for the corporate brand?
   a. What kind of a value would it bring to the company?
   b. What kind of an effect would it have?
   c. What are the objectives of employee advocacy?
7. What problems do you see in executing employee advocacy at the moment?
8. How could you improve the current state of employee advocacy?
9. What kind of things support employee advocacy?
   a. How can you, in your position, support employee advocacy? How employees are encouraged to participate?
   b. Do you believe advocacy begins with the employee or with the help of the employer?
10. What kind of an employee advocacy process there is in the company? If there is not, what it should be like?
    a. Where should the advocacy happen?
    b. What social media channels do you think are suitable for employee advocacy purposes?
    c. What kind of content should employees share?
11. Do you think there should be clear rules and guidelines for employee advocacy? Why or why not?
12. What do you think of employee advocacy software?
13. Would you consider yourself to be an employee advocate? Have you shared the company's messages or values on your personal social media accounts? What, when, and where?
14. Can your name or the organization's name be published in the thesis?

Appendix 3. Direct quotations used and their original form

“Evangelist” – Evankelista

“Inside our organization it has been, sort of, already built-in.”
– Meillä se on ollu tavallaan jo niinku sisäänrakennettuna.

”Messenger” – Sanansaattaja

”It should not feel like a chore.”
– Sen ei kuuluis tuntuu työltä.

“Not mean” – Ei ilkee

“Happy” – Ilonen

“Voluntary” – Vapaaehtonen

”Empathic” – Empaattinen

”Active” – Aktiivinen

”I believe that the advocate is a reference for others like him.”
– Uskon sillee että se työntekijälähettiläs on referenssinä muille samanlaisille ku se.

“Employee advocacy increases the organization’s humane value.”
– Se nostattaa yrityksen humaania arvoa.

“That in itself already indicates that you support and enjoy the company and their values and the content they put out.”
– Se jo niinku itessään viestii siitä, että sä tykkäät siitä yrityksestä ja niiden arvoista ja kannatat sitä sisältöö mitä ne laittaa ulospäin.

”I think that it should work both ways, like a dialogue.”
– Ajattelen sen silleen, että sen pitäs toimii molempiin suuntiin, dialogina.

“I see employee advocacy working the other way around as well, so that the advocates tell their employer how outsiders perceive the employer – so in that way, employee advocacy works both ways. In the best case, the employees are able to measure the organization’s public image through their own social circles”.
– Näkisin sen työntekijälähettilyyden roolin myös niin päin, että lähettiläät kertoo sitten niinkun työnantajalleen hiukan siitä, että miten niinkun työnantaja nähdään ulkopuolella – eli sillä tapaa lähettilyys toimii myös toiseen suuntaa. Pystyy myös parhaimmillaan jollain tapaa siinä omassa piirissään mittaroimaan että minkälainen julkisuuskuva tällä organisaatiolla on ulospäin.

”This is part of every organization’s basic philosophy: if you want to get something, you also need to give something.”
– Tässä tullaan semmosiin joka yrityksen perusfilosofioihin; jos sä haluut saada jotain, sun pitää myös antaa.

“Bad reputation travels fast.”
– Paha kello kuuluu kauas.

“Because they are not going away by downplaying or hiding them.”
– Koska ei ne häviä vähättelemällä tai piilottelemalla.

“If you feel it might be inappropriate, sleep on it, and think again in the morning.”
– Jos tuntuu että se saattaa olla epäsopivaa, niin kannattaa nukkua yön yli ja miettiä sitä uudestaan aamulla.

”Everyone should feel that this company is more than just a job.”
– Kaikista pitäis tuntua siltä, että tää yritys on enemmän ku vaan työpaikka.

“Employees’ wellbeing is a key asset in any company – you cannot successfully execute employee advocacy if your employees don’t feel well.”
– Se on keskeinen voimavara yrityksessä, että työntekijät voi hyvin. Ei oo mahdollisuutta menestyksekkäästi tehdä lähettilyyttä jos ne eivät voi hyvin.

“When you are taken really good care of, you want to tell everyone how well things are going, and you are just so full of excitement to let everyone know.”
– Kun susta pidetään oikein hyvää huolta, sä haluut kertoo kaikille muille miten hyvin sun asiat on, ja sä oikein pursuut sitä intoo kertoo.

“Easier to sell to the employees.”
– Helpompi sillee myydä työntekijöille.

“The chances are that the talk stays positive.”
– Chancet on, että se puhekin pysyy sitte positiivisena.

“If we say that we are a good employer, we really must be a good employer. If we want the advocates to say that we have a good team spirit, there needs to be actual proof or research of that. The messages need to be real.”
– Jos sanotaan että me ollaan hyvä työnantaja, meidän täytyy oikeesti olla. Jos halutaan että ne lähettiläät sanoo, että meillä on hyvä yhteishenki, niin täytyy tutkitusti olla hyvä työhenki, pitää oikeesti olla näyttöä sille. Että se tulee aidosti se viesti.

“They are sailing on dangerous waters.”
– Sit ollaan vaarallisilla vesillä.

“When one employee gets excited about employee advocacy and that employee’s efforts are noticed and rewarded by the organization, all the other employees will notice the benefits of employee advocacy and want to take part as well.”

– Kun yks työntekijä innostuu siitä, ja sitten kun tän työntekijän panostus huomataan ja siitä palkitaan, nii muutki huomaa ne edut ja haluaa osallistuu myös.

“The social media user of the month.”
– Kuukauden somettaja.

“Because if you are actively doing something, and nobody notices your efforts, you will not keep doing it for too long.”
– Jos sä aktiivisesti teet sitä asiaa ja jos sitä ei huomata, jos ei sitä huomioida, niin ethän sä tee sitä pitkään.

“We have a very family-friendly approach inside the company; for example, we have this annual family day so everyone knows each other’s families, and the family knows the company. Also, we sponsor our employees’ children’s sport teams and stuff like that.”
– Meillä on semmonen perhe-tyyppinen lähestyminen koko firmassa, esim. kerran vuodessa perhepäivät, että kaikkien perheet tuntee toisensa, ja että kotonakin tunnetaan yritys. Lisäks sponsoroidaan työntekijöiden lasten urheilujoukkueita ja sellasta.

“The management has a huge impact on how people react to employee advocacy, whether or not they react positively and want to contribute. The corporate management can either act as an incentive, or be an obstacle.”
– Johdolla on erittäin suuri vaikutus siihen, että miten siihen suhtaudutaan. Että suhtaudutaanko siihen positiivisesti, halutaanko sitä tehdä. Johto voi olla joko kannuste tai este sille asialle.

“So it’s not like we are forcing them to use that stuff to advertise us.”
– Eli se ei oo sillee että me pakotettais heitä käyttää niitä, että se olis meille mainokseks.

“It is fifty-fifty.”
– Se on niinku fifty-fifty.

“They both have their time and place, and the employees need to recognize that.”
– Molemmille on aika ja paikka, ja työntekijöiden täytyy osata lukee sitä.

“When you see a candid employee talking about the firm, and really believing in the firm, it has much more impact than 20 likes on social media. -- If we want to have a deeper connection with the customer, face-to-face it works better.”
– Niin se, kun näkee sen vilpittömän työntekijän, joka oikeesti puhuu siitä firmasta ja on oikeesti sen homman takana, niin kyl se on käyntikorttina paljon isompi kun se että 20 sometykkäystä.

”If I have to decide on which one is better, I’d give social media a little plus in the end, because it reaches bigger masses and it has this certain visibility aspect about it.”
– Jos näitä pitää arvottaa, niin ehkä somelle pieni plussa perään koska se tavottaa laajempia massoja ja siinä on semmonen tietty näkyvyysaspekti.

”It will look illegitimate, if a person who normally does not post much about himself, suddenly starts to put out company messages.”
– Se näyttää tosi päälleliimatulta, jos henkilö joka ei Facebookissa muuten päivitä paljoakaan itsestään, niin alkaa pistää semmosia firman postauksia.

“Tone of voice.”
– Tone of voice.

“Of course we hope that no one spreads anything negative, but it does not work so that we just say that you must not do so.”
– Tietenki toivotaan, ettei kukaan postaa mitään negatiivista, mutta eihän se tapahdu niin että me sanotaan että niin ei saa tehdä.

“Even if everything doesn’t go perfectly, it is better to have active employees rather than a 100 percent perfect feed.”
– Vaikka kaikki ei meekkään täydellisesti, niin se on parempi, että meillä on aktiiviset työntekijät kuin sataprosenttisen priima Instafeedi.

“Sort of like a guidance, that hey we are on these channels and this is how it works.”
– Tavallaan semmonen ohjeistus et ’hei me ollaan näissä kanavissa ja näin me toimitaan’.

“That’s where people hang out and it’s very easy to share things on Facebook.”
– Siellä ihmiset hengaa ja Facebookis on helppo jakaa näitä asioita.

“Of course it is great for the employer image, if our employees write or share pictures on Facebook of, for example, a personnel day, or that we have cool campus and great exercise benefits etc.”
– Että tottakai se on hyväks työnantajakuvalle, jos työntekijät kirjottaa tai jakaa kuvia Facebookissa esimerkiks työntekijäpäivistä, tai että meillä on tosi makee kampus ja hyvät liikuntaedut yms.

“Also, only few use Twitter, so if we compare to other channels, it reaches less people. However, the thing is, that from our company’s point of view, it reaches more of the right people.”
– Myös se että aika harva käyttää Twitteriä, et jos verrataan muihin kanavoihin niin Twitter tavottaa vähemmän porukkaa. Mutta se on niin, että meidän kannalta se tavottaa enemmän niitä oikeita ihmisiä.

“So videos are a big thing right now, and even though I was about to say Facebook at first, I think that actually Snapchat or YouTube are the best ones. YouTube in this case especially.”
– No videohan on nyt kova juttu, että vaikka meinasin aluks sanoo Facebook, niin todennäkösesti Snäppi tai Tube olis parhaita. Tube on ehkä tässä tapauksessa kuitenkin.

“We actually have a YouTuber, who has several thousand followers, working in the company. We didn’t recruit him on purpose, but without even knowing he has contributed to our marketing whilst sharing his everyday life online. So

that way YouTube works really well. It has also started out really naturally, because we didn't hire him because of YouTube, but because he was a good employee."
– Meillä on töissä yks Tubettaja, jolla on monia tuhansia seuraajia, niin hänen palkkauksensa ei ollut tietoista, mutta hän on siinä myös tiedostamattaan tehnyt meidän markkinointia kun jakaa sitä arkeaan. Että sillä tavalla se Tube kyllä toimii tosi hyvin. Mutta se on lähtenyt luonnollisesti kun ei palkattu Tuben takia, vaan siks että oli hyvä työntekijä.

"We have several target groups, because we have three business areas. Different things work on different channels."
– Meillä on monta kohderyhmää, koska meillä on kolme liikeryhmäaluetta. Vähän eri jutut toimii eri kanavissa.

"Helps to feed certain channels."
– Ruokkii tiettyjä kanavia.

"It should not be anything like 'the company's turnover grew this much', because it is kind of boring, and it shines through that you might not be super enthusiastic about the topic. But, if it is about things that you were involved in, that's good."
– Ei mitään, että 'yrityksen liikevaihto kasvoi', se on vähän tylsää ja siitä ehkä paistaa kavereillekin läpi, että ei oo niin innoissaan tästä aiheesta. Mutta jos se liittyy semmosii asioihin mitä hän on ollut tekemässä, niin semmoset on hyviä.

"That we are a good employer, a good workplace, sharing things like that is great."
– Se että me ollaan hyvä työnantaja, hyvä työpaikka, tämmösiä juttuja on hyvä jakaa.

"For example, if we are doing a photoshoot someone might post a picture with a caption like 'hey, here's what we got up to today' or something like that. -- Also, we organize this festival and all our employees get free entrance, so of course we hope they post selfies and other content about that experience."
– No esimerkiks jos meillä on kuvauspäivä ja joku postaa kuvan sieltä että 'hei tällasta me tehtiin tänään' tai muuta vastaavaa. -- Me myös järjestetään semmonen festari ja kaikki meidän työntekijät saa ilmasen sisäänpääsyn, niin tottakai me toivotaan, että ne sitten postaa selfieitä ja jakaa niitä juttuja siitä kokemuksesta.

"I think a good example of what has worked is when someone has posted, for example, a picture with caption saying like 'we went bouldering today with the crew!' and then adds #companyX, so then everyone realizes that 'oh yeah that guy works for Company X, cool'."
– Semmoset on mun mielestä hyviä esimerkkejä mitkä on toiminu, että joku postaa esimerkiksi kuvan ja laittaa kuvatekstiks että 'me oltiin tänään työporukalla kiipeilemässä!' ja sit mainitsee sen esim että #companyX, sillee että porukka tietää sen että 'ainii tuo oli töissä Company X'ssä, siistiä'.

“Of course anything we put out is public and you can share it, if you personally find it interesting.”
– Tietenkin kaikki mitä me sinne laitetaan, on julkista, ja sitä voi jakaa, jos koet sen ite mielenkiintoseksi.

“If the marketing department puts out some amazing content, of course employees are allowed to share them, and they should share them, because it does increase the company’s image and creates positive buzz around it.”
– Jos tulee semmosia huippujuttuja firman markkinointiviestinnän puolesta, niin tottakai niitä kannattaa ja saa jakaa, ja se tuo sellasta hyvää imagoa ja positiivista pöhinää siihen ympärille.

“If we feel that something was a joint achievement, that together we have built the company to this point, it makes everyone feel proud.”
– Jos koetaan, että se on yhteisen työn tulosta, että ollaan yhdessä rakennettu firma tähän asti, niin kyllä se saa kaikki tuntee ylpeyttä.

“Often everyday life at work is entirely different than how it is displayed in the company’s marketing videos etc.”
– Mutta se arki on kuitenkin usein täällä työpaikalla jotain ihan muuta kuin mitä niissä markkinointivideoissa sun muissa on.

“It is important to go with employees’ terms.”
– Se on tärkeetä että mennään niillä työntekijän ehdoilla.

“Employees might say that ‘we are tired of too many tools’.”
– Työntekijöiden vastaanotto saattas olla sellanen että ‘ei me jakseta enää enempää apuvälineitä.’

“Semi small.” – Semipientä.

“I don’t see any harm in it either.”
– En näe että siitä haittaakaan olis.