Sini Laurila

EXTERNAL EMPLOYER IMAGE OF THE CASE COMPANY

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EXTERNAL EMPLOYER IMAGE OF THE CASE COMPANY

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Opinnäytetyön aiheena oli tutkia yrityksen ulkoista työnantajamielikuvaa. Tämän tutkimuksen tuloksia työnantajamielikuvasta verrattiin aiemmin tutkittuihin tuloksiin. Tutkimus toteutettiin keväällä 2018. Työn tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten yrityksen työnantajamielikuva oli kehittynyt vuodesta 2016. Tavoitteena oli lisäksi selvittää, mitä ihmiset kokivat yrityksen voivan tarjota heille. Edellisen tutkimuksen toteutuksen jälkeen yritys oli kokenut merkittävää kasvua ja rekrytoinut merkittävän suuren joukon uusia työntekijöitä.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisessa osuudessa käsiteltiin yrityskuvaa ja sen mainetta, työnantajakuvaa ja sen vaikutuksia rekrytointeihin. Toinen merkittävä aihe teoreettisessa osuudessa oli työnantajan brändäys. Tässä keskityttiin erityisesti brändäyksen vaikutuksiin rekrytointiin ja työnantajamielikuvaan.

Työ pohjautui pääsääntöisesti määrälliseen tutkimukseen, jossa oli mukana piirteitä laadullisesta tutkimuksesta. Työn empiirisessä osuudessa toteutettiin kyselylomake, jonka avulla pyrittiin selvittämään henkilöiden mielikuva yrityksestä työnantajana. Tutkimusjoukko ei tutkimuksen toteutushetkellä työskennellyt työnantajan alaisuudessa. Kyselylomake pohjautui aiempaan tutkimukseen ja sen aiheet seuraavat vahvasti tutkimuksen teoriassa löydettyjä aiheita. Kyselyssä käytettiin 21 kysymystä, jotka yhdistettiin viiteen eri teemaan.

Yritys rekrytoi tälläkin hetkellä huomattavasti uusia henkilöitä, sekä aikoo tulevaisuudessa rekrytoida paljon. Tutkimuksella halutaan samalla selvittää, miten massarekrytointi ja yrityksen nopea kasvu ovat vaikuttaneet yrityksen työantajamielikuvaan. Tutkimus on yritykselle erittäin tärkeä. Tutkimus mahdollistaa työnantajamielikuvan kehittämisen, sillä se kuvaa yrityksen nykyisen työnantajakuvan ja vertaa tuloksia aiemmin tutkittuihin tuloksiin. Työnantajamielikuvan selvittäminen mahdollistaa yritystä brändäämään itseään paremmin ja kilpailemaan tehokkaammin työnantajamarkkinoilla.

Työn tuloksena saatiin selville yrityksen ulkoinen työnantajakuva. Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, miten työnantajakuva on kehittynyt. Tuloksista huomattiin, miten ihmiset kokivat yrityksen mahdollisesti tarjoavan työntekijöilleen.

EXTERNAL EMPLOYER IMAGE OF THE CASE COMPANY

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The topic of the thesis was the external employer image of the case company. The purpose of the thesis was to measure how the company's external employer image has developed by comparing the results to company's previous research and its results. Another purpose was to find what people see the company has to offer for them. The research was performed in the spring of 2018. After company's previous research was conducted, it has experienced rapid growth and recruited remarkably.

The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on two topics: Employer image and employer branding. The first topic includes subjects like corporate image, corporate reputation, employer image and its influences on recruiting. The second topic, employer branding, clarifies the roots of employer branding, its impacts on recruiting and reputation and finally explains how employer image can be used as a tool to develop the employer image.

The thesis was mainly carried out by quantitative research with some characteristics of qualitative research. The empirical part of the thesis was performed based on the company's previous research. The topics followed the subjects founded on the theory. The research of the thesis was performed by creating a questionnaire which measured the company's external employer image. The questionnaire included 21 questions which were combined to five different themes.

The company is currently recruiting remarkably and is going to continue recruiting masses of new employees in the future. The research of the thesis helps the corporate to understand how mass recruitment and rapid growth has affected to its employer image. The research is seen as a great value for the company and it tells how the company's employer image has developed. The results of the research enable the company to develop its branding and to improve its image as an employer. The thesis helps the company to compete against other businesses and recruit more efficiently.

From the results of the research, it was found out the external Employer image of the company. It was learned, how the employer image has developed. By analyzing the results, it was noticed, what people saw the company had to offer for them.
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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on finding out the employer image of the case company and the main topics used are employer image and employer branding. There is a research and data gathering on the company's employer image. The idea is also to compare the results of the research to a previously made research. The topic for the thesis was requested by the company.

Employer image is formed by many steps and is seen effecting on recruiting new employees more effectively. Employer image and reputation has become more central for all businesses. Companies have nowadays understood its power on business and profit. The employer image has deeper effect than just for recruitment. The thesis focuses on finding the case company's external employer image and how it has developed.

The theoretical part focuses on two topics that are employer image and employer branding. Employer image covers corporate image, corporate reputation, employer image and its effect on recruiting. Employer branding describes its roots, effects on recruiting and finally explains how employer branding can be used as a tool in developing employer image. After theoretical part, there will be analyzed how the research was performed and how valid and reliable the research really is. The sixth chapter is about data gathering and in the end the results will be introduced.

The results of the study will give notable and current data of the corporates externally experienced employer image. The thesis will help the company to understand its image and reputation as an employer. The thesis will introduce, how the company's image has developed in just a few years. The theory of the thesis will help the company to understand, how the company's employer image has formed and how it can improve the image and reputation. By understanding all this, the company can recruit and brand the company more effectively in the future.

2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Purpose and objectives

The study is conducted for a manufacturing company that is located in southwest Finland due to their request. The company is recruiting new employees all the time and thus it sees important to know its employer image externally. The main purpose is to find out what is the company's external employer image today and how it has developed. The idea is to learn, how people see the company and its reputation. Other purposes are to find out which are the subjects effecting to employer image and what people see the corporate can offer for them. The focus is only to study people, who are not working for the company.

The company has previously measured its external employer image in 2016. The study is now repeated with a few changes. It is essential to repeat the study in order to make a comparison with the previous one. The company has had massive recruitment campaigns and growth since the last study was implemented. This will help the company to find how this all has affected into its employer image and reputation. For a company which is recruiting people a lot, a good employer image is a key element in a successful recruitment. Especially, because the Finnish economy has started to heal since the previous depression and as recruiting generally, is becoming more challenging. These facts are proving the topicality and importance of the study.

The objective for this thesis is that the company can use the founded results when planning their marketing. By succeeding in the objectives, the company can find its development areas and by processing their employer image, the company can find some tools, how to develop it. These tools will help the company to recruit even more effectively in the future. The thesis will tell the company's current standing and attractiveness in the eyes of persons who are not working for them. The researcher will learn how to conduct a study and also the importance of employer image for companies. In below figure (Figure 1), it is presented the research questions for the thesis.

What is the external employer image of the case X?

How has the external employer image developed?

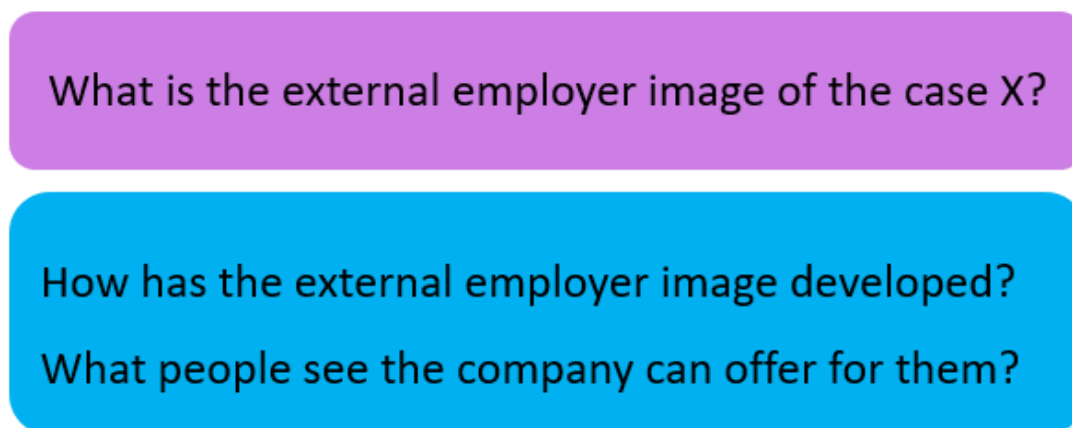What people see the company can offer for them?

Figure 1: Research Questions

The theory of the thesis will help to understand the subject of employer image and its importance for the company. The empirical part is built around the performed research and the research questions (Figure 1) are aimed to be solved from the results. The first question is the main question to be solved.

The writer of this thesis is currently working for the case company and at the time of working at Human Resource department, she noticed there was a need for this kind of work. The work in HRM department has helped her to approach this topic and to understand how employer branding is linked to their employer image and recruiting process as well. After having worked there for a few months, the writer had much better understanding and competence on performing the project.

2.2 Scope for the thesis

The scope will help to focus only in the main subject of the thesis. The thesis has two main topics which are employer image and employer branding. The focus is only in external employer image. Corporate image effects on the employer image and that is why it is included in the theory as well. Employer image is strongly built based on branding. Employer branding will be the second main topic in the theory, but the focus will not be on branding in general. In the thesis, branding is linked to recruiting and employer image.

The thesis focuses strongly on recruiting and as it is an important and current subject for the company, the thesis includes strong HR perspective. The whole recruiting process is not described in the report. As these topics are formed strongly based on internal and external image, the thesis will have some information also about internal factors. The main focus remains on the external image and the research is performed only based on external experiences and opinions of the respondents.

2.3 Conceptual framework

In below Figure (Figure 1) the conceptual framework of the thesis is visualized. It describes the central concepts of the thesis and their interrelationships. It illustrates how employer image is formed.
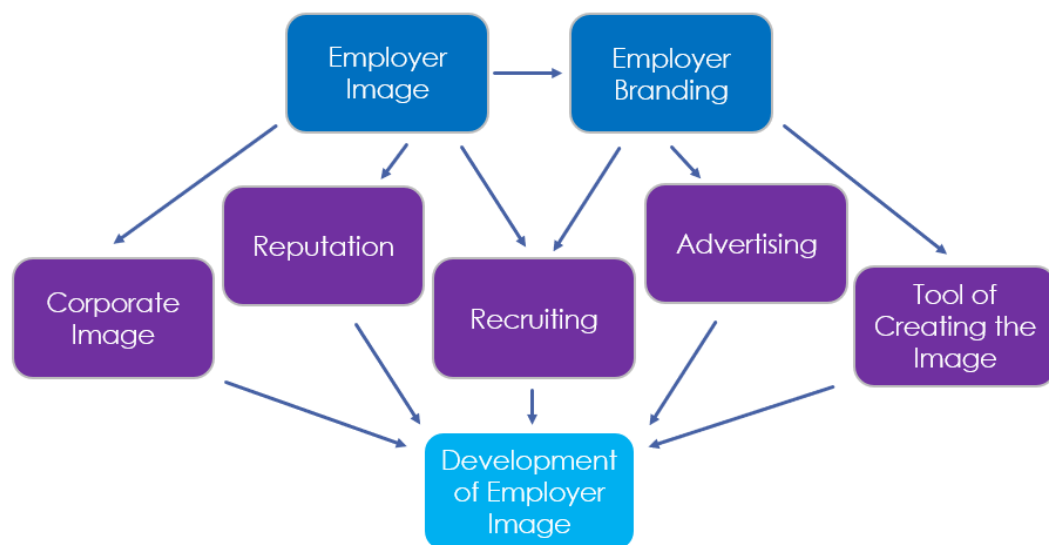
Figure 2: Conceptual framework of the thesis.

The conceptual framework presents the main concepts of the thesis: Employer image and employer branding. These main concepts are the grounds of the thesis. Concepts of corporate image, reputation and recruiting are central when understanding the company's employer image. The second main concept is employer branding as it affects on employer image so deeply. Employer branding has evident connection on recruiting. Advertising is central concept in consumer branding that can be used in employer branding. The last concept from employer branding describes how employer branding

can be used as a tool of developing employer image. This clarifies the link between employer image and employer branding.

The concepts in Figure 2, are bounded to each other's as these both have a central effect on forming and developing the employer image. These have an important role in recruiting and the thesis has a strong link to Human Resource in general. The theory is linked to the case company's everyday business as its employer image has significant effect on recruiting. The results of the research will help the company to develop its external employer image and give factual information for the development of the company's employer image.

3 EMPLOYER IMAGE

3.1 Corporate image

The corporate image is called with many titles. It can be called a profile, image, reputation or brand. These words are all intangible and refers to meanings that are not easily measured. (Pitkänen 2001, 15.) Image in general is something that is experienced by an individual. The image is affected by our needs, values, knowledges, observations, attitudes, experiences and prejudices. Even if the person lacks personal experiences, it can still have an image of the object. The image is always real for the person behind the judgement. (Isohookana 2007, 20.)

Corporate image is the overall view that is representing company's operations, nature and existence. The corporate image does not tell what it is like to work for the company. (Markkanen 2005, 101.) Corporate image is always believed to be truthful and this image is the result from informations gathered through different channels. The image can be built based on: knowledge, own experiences, experiences of the others, media, beliefs and feelings. (Isohookana 2007, 22.) On the other hand, this image can refer to an information created by a company. (Pitkänen 2001, 15).

Media is a good channel of delivering the corporate image. Corporate image may not be based on truth. The media can exaggerate news to mean something else which may edit people's vision of the company. That is why the company may not always have an influence on how people see them. Company must follow how people are discussing about them, to avoid misunderstandings and false advertisement. For company, it is important to have an impact on how people see the business. A positive employer image is valuable equity, which can be measured in money. Negative image is expensive and difficult to change. The image can boost the competitiveness of a business and that is why companies should examine their image critically and early enough. (Pitkänen 2001, 55-59.)

The corporate image is powerful and it can be considered as the ultimate truth (Pitkänen 2001, 55). It is based on facts that individuals are construing. These experienced facts will build the corporate image. (Markkanen 2005, 101.) Corporate image can also be developed by creating a personality for the company. In order to develop the corporate image, it is first needed to recognize the current image. (Brown 2011, 24.)

3.2 Corporate reputation

Corporate reputation is often seen as company's image (Pitkänen 2001, 15). Corporate image represents the general attractiveness versus the competitor's attractiveness in the eyes of possible future employees. Reputation is built by a company's existing employees and customers. Reputation and reputation management is seen as a strategic asset for the business. (Aula & Mantere 2005, 32-34.)

The word "reputation" includes some negative language (Pitkänen 2001,15). Reputation is the general combination of impressions and outlook of people (Roper & Fill 2012, 5). It intrigues even the top management. Reputation is caused by actions which have created an image for the company. It reflects the consciousness of the company and its brand. (Hetzen 2006, 15.)

Back in the days, a corporate reputation was aimed to be cleaned by renewing a company logo and creating new advertisement campaign. This was done to cover the existing reality and companies hoped that these cosmetic changes would change their reputation. Nowadays people are more discussing about reputation management. In reputation management, it is emphasized that the corporate image should be built on reality and facts and that the focus is on trust. (Pitkänen 2001, 15-16.)

Reputation management is a key word in creating the corporate image. Building the image by trust, the company lies on robust grounds. Without trust, customers will not buy company's products. Without trust, employees will not come to work, or they will not commit working in the company for a long time. Social equity is vital for the business to succeed. This is built on company's network which is built on trust. Reputation can be seen as knowledge, judgement, opinion, name or a rumor. These can be positive or negative and it means that the corporate reputation can either be positive or negative. Of course, company's aim is to be seen as a reputable business. (Pitkänen 2001, 16-18.)

Reputation includes conspicuousness which means that people will recognize the corporate by its name and reputation. This conspicuousness is related to talking and listening and is seen as public relations (PR). The reputation also covers the gathered stories told from the business. The corporate itself can ponder on what kind of stories it creates from itself. This contains the company's origin, target, mission and vision. These stories are easily remembered. (Pitkänen 2001, 17-18.) Companies should learn how to use the PR as their advantage. PR can have a strong influence on people's awareness of a company. By managing events and spreading information, a company may succeed on getting the attention of several media and receive advertisement without any costs. (Kotler & Armstong 2014, 472-473.)

Reputation is developed firstly by people's own experience, secondly by the word of mouth and discussions with others, thirdly PR, the publicity created by media and journalism (Pitkänen 2001, 18.) Reputation management includes good actions, relationship management and company's communication (Aula & Mantere 2005, 215-216). The corporate can lose its reputation which it has been building for decades. The reputation can be destroyed in one night if a company receives negative publicity.

Positive reputation is built with hard and continuous work. The company can aim on receiving positive reputation by its own actions, outlook and words. The first impression is important because negative first impression is easier to deteriorate than turning into positive. People will picture corporate image and reputation themselves and the company can only give them blocks to build. For this reason, it is important that the company profiles itself persistently and aims to develop its strengths and abilities. By systematically profiling the company in a long-term, the presumptions of people will develop as desired. (Pitkänen 2001, 18-20, 22.)

3.3 Employer image

Employer image is formed by people's opinions of a company as work place (Lievens & Slaughter 2016, 411). Employer image is resulting from an idea and imagination. A person who does not work in the business still has some knowledge about the company which gives them an image about what kind of employer the company is. (Valvisto 2005, 22.) Employer image is created by corporate image, recruiting policy and the way how the company treats its employees. Corporate image is based on marketing communication and news heard from the employer. The recruiting advertisement, its content, the quantity and frequency of recruitments will reflect the recruiting policy. The employer image is also caused by the way the company treats its employees and applicants. (Viitala 2007, 104.)

Performing a research, is important for companies that are aiming to develop or re-shape their employer image (Lievens & Slaughter 2016, 427). Employer image can be measured by researching a group of people's opinions. In the best case scenario, the researches will give a direction on how to improve the employer image of the company. In most cases, the results are received by the company and only hoped that next time, the results will be better or at least on the same level. Companies getting last places of the research will become afraid of losing the competition of good and skilled labour against other companies. Results of the employer image researches will reflect the values of the respondents. The company's top management is interested from these results. The employer image is built based on a person's ideology of a good employer.

If the research is done repeatedly, the employer image can be reflected to general economic trends and cycles. (Valvisto 2005, 22-23.)

People will rate companies as a whole, not only as employers. Company's products, services, leadership style, direction and responsibility will shape the image as well. (Website of the Ekonomit 2018.) Information is also gathered from news, advertisements and through celebrities. People that are working in the company or are its customers, will share information outside the business. This information is reflected through their values. If company itself does not give a clear image of its high quality and innovative product, it may automatically reflect from a business that has stagnated. Employer image is also formed through the general image of the industry. Companies operating in consumer markets are always more known than the ones operating only in business to business field. (Valvisto 2005, 23.)

Employer image is based on people's beliefs and opinions. It may not be truthful and that is why company's communication is essential (Piha & Poussa 2012.) Employer image is formed through a long period of time and it does not change easily. Neutral employer image can quickly turn into negative if the company receives negative attention in public. Much more positive news are needed to improve the employer image. Changing employer image is a long and goal-oriented process that often requires time. (Valvisto 2005, 23-24.)

3.4 Effects on recruiting and building the employer image

Positive employer image will differentiate the company against its competitors (Isohookana 2007, 28). Competition of skilled labour is tough and it will become even more difficult. This is one reason why employer image is seen as a good way to stand out from other employers. Good employer image is not easily copied (Salli & Takatalo 2014). To hire new employees, the company has to be able to address a group of people, who are suitable for the task. When looking for skilled and experienced labour, a company must have a positive employer image in the eyes of its target group. The company should define its hiring target at a general level. This is a long-term process

that needs strategic thinking. The company needs to define which are the skills, educational backgrounds and values it is looking for. (Valvisto 2005, 25.)

After a company has determined their recruiting target, it must understand, what people inside its target group really value and where they are aiming next. If the group of people matches with the company's target group, the employer image is likely to be positive. (Valvisto 2005, 26-27). For a company which has a good employer image, recruiting is easier. With talented employees, the company can achieve better profitability. A profitable business can invest more on its personnel by motivating and rewarding them. Engaged and committed employees will spread the positive image and increase the company's employer image. (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 154.) If recruiting the wanted talent is difficult, it is probably telling some challenges in a company's employer image. To successfully recruit a company's target group, the company must realize its current standing and identity in the eyes of potential employees. With good communication culture, a company secures that their employer image is noticed by their target group. (Valvisto 2005, 26-27.) In addition, the communication culture helps the company to differentiate itself from its competitors (Rope 2005, 130).

A positive employer image may not be enough if the company is not already known. Getting the company known and visible helps getting the target group interested. When the company has succeeded on forming positive and known employer image, it will get more followers in social media that will help spreading its open positions to a wider group of people. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.)

Social media helps creating positive employer image. Especially LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook, are seen as important channels of creating positive image. Social media enables negative word of mouth to spread quickly and reveals the true nature of the company easily. Social media is constantly getting more popular which means that creating employer image through social media becomes more crucial. An employee or a person looking for employment can have a negative or positive effect on employer image on social media. On social media, people can update their thoughts and write ratings about companies. This increases the word of mouth which spreads quickly. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.) The correct recruiting channel ensures successful recruitment (Valvisto 2005, 26-27).

Employer image is crucial point in recruiting. This is important for everyone inside the company to realize. Especially the ones responsible for recruiting and top management should understand that slow and inefficient recruiting process can create negative image of a bureaucratic and undynamic employer. Professional and positive behavior, from the side of the employer, is important to remember as one key point when creating a positive employer image to the interviewee. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.) A company which has good management, atmosphere and otherwise successful and profitable business, the competition of future recruitments is easier. When the reputation and the overall image of the company is good, it lies on a robust ground. (Markkanen 2005, 165.)

Recruiting is an excellent opportunity to reform the already existing employer image. Social media is a good channel for sharing recruiting campaigns and videos. A good advertisement video addresses the respondents and makes the viewer smile. This helps creating a positive image of the company. When planning a recruiting campaign, it is essential to ensure whether the campaign is really representing what you have planned. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.)

When creating an employer image, it is needed to be open and honest. This helps the applicant to form a realistic image of the company and to decide whether to apply the open position of the company. It is short sighted to build an employer image which looks good on paper if it is not real. This may help recruiting the candidate, but it does not engage the person into the company. The key tools of creating an employer image is to be genuine, realistic and unique. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.)

Durable and positive employer image is formed through satisfied employees. This demands persistent work where employees are genuinely taken into consideration and their opinions are valued. To create a good employer image externally, the company needs to gain positive employer image internally. When building the employer image, a company needs to decide what it promises for new employees. This promise should represent the reason why the company is a great place to work. This can be utilized, when recruiting new employees. There are also competitions which measure companies and their employer images. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.) One of these is Great Place

to Work. It is one good example of research which has become popular in recent years. Negative media attention quickly drops a company's ranking in the competition. (Vuorinen 2013, 195.) The survey operates in over 40 countries and it has proved that great workplaces exists regardless of industry, location or the company's size (Burchell & Robin 2011, 5, 183). The companies which receive the highest grade in the competition, can use the study in their recruiting campaigns to promote themselves as a good employer (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 160).

The company's own situation significantly effects on recruiting new employees. It is easier to recruit people in a company which is generally doing well and has steady growth expectations. (Vuorinen 2013, 195.) An individual person looking for an employment will choose the company by its reputation and recognition. This is why large-scale businesses are one of the most wanted companies to be employed at. (Markkanen 2005, 84.)

When building the employer image of a company, an employer needs to realize the building process. The first step is to allocate enough internal resources to build the image. This includes existing employees and company's top management. The second step is to make it as a project. The third step is to evaluate the company's current status as an employer. This step includes analyzing company's recruiting material and process: How the process looks in the eyes of an applicant? This includes company's social media and its webpage. The next step is to analyze the employer image internally. The company should find out how its employees are writing about the company and how do they see it. After this, the company should solve the circumstances what is intriguing the potential applicants. The fourth step is to analyze the information you have gathered. This includes the strengths and development areas of the company. The fifth step is to create a promise for the employees. The sixth step is to develop a strategy for utilizing for example the power of social media. This is a path that has continuously developed and still continues growing. The power of Social media requires attention. The seventh step is to set targets. This can be for example to increase the recognition of the corporate brand. (Salli & Takatalo 2014.)

When companies are competing from the talented employees the determinant factor is corporate image, employee experiences and employer branding (Kaijala 2016, 88).

Employer image and corporate image are strongly linked together. The results from these are often similar. For a company that has a strong and a positive image in general, has more likely a positive employer image as well. Small companies are less known and for that reason, these may not have strong employer images. For small businesses, the need to recruit masses is not likely, so the image does not have to be widely spread. This though means that the target group needs to be limited even more precisely. Branding for the target group has to match the target group's expectations. (Vuorinen 2013, 196.)

4 EMPLOYER BRANDING

4.1 Employer Branding and Roots in Marketing

Brand in general can be described as the term "reputation". Reputation is the sum of individual's own experience, knowledge and fascination. (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 220.) Brand can represent quality, stability and value for money. It helps the companies to stand out from the competitors. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 19.) Branding can be seen as an identity of a company, person, product or group. It shows qualities that its planners have developed. The qualities were seen as attracting the public. (Levine 2003, 3-4.) When competition becomes tough, it is essential to differentiate the business by concentrating on branding (Hertzen 2006, 133-134). The value what a brand can bring to a company, can be measured in money. Brands are something that consumers want even though they might not need those. (Laakso 2004, 24.)

Strong brand is salient for business and helps a company to succeed. The purpose of a brand is to add value for the company and attract customers. Employer brand has the same qualities as brands in general. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 20-22.) It is an expansion from corporate brand (Watkiss 2012, 17). Employer brand helps the employer to differentiate and to receive its targets with less amount of money and time. It has been found out that employees can work with smaller salaries if employed at a well branded and recognized company. Positive employer brand often helps to get more skilled and potential candidates to apply the job offered. Primarily, employer branding improves

the company's ability to compete of the most suitable and skilled candidates. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 20-22.)

A key to hiring the most potential labour can be job branding. Job branding means making the task desired for the top candidates. The task should contain features that will reflect the candidates' career goals and possible rewards that they can receive. This is a useful method especially for candidates that are starting their careers. Skilled senior employees instead value more extra benefits and financial compensations instead. That is why job branding is only an extension and a broader concept of employer branding. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 25-26.)

Employer banding can be described as a pool of benefits that are provided by the employment. These can be economical, operational or psychological benefits. Employer branding is seen as linking marketing and HR together. Employer branding has the features of building company's reputation as employers. Employer branding has become a crucial part of company's strategies. The word "brand" has been described as identity that is a distinct impression. Employer brand is closely linked to employer Image and even seen as the image of the company. The image is rooted deeply to company's own values. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 17-18.)

The aim of employer brand is to market the company for its possible future employees and already existing ones. Employer branding has strong roots in marketing as well. In branding, the company is trying to attract the talented and committed consumers. The branding itself, should be focused on reinforcing company's values, targets and future goals. Branding contributes on building the employer image and reputation. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 19.)

4.2 Employer Branding and Recruitment Advertising

HRM has a significant role in each company. The role of HRM is to manage people, who are regarded as company's greatest asset. This is seen even more important than money, as the people are really behind the work and deciding, how it is done. The

people can be described as the performers of the work which brings results, money and products. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 1-2.)

Employer brand effects on recruiting as well as the employer image does. Employer brand reflects how well – known a company is and how they treat their employees. (Hertzen 2006, 49.) Recruiting is believed having one of the greatest functions of HRM and company's operations (Łącka - Badura 2005, 2-4). Talent management is in important role of recruitment. Talent management includes attracting candidates, identifying recruiting targets, developing skills of company's employees, deploying right people in right task and time and engaging the new employees. By these elements, companies are aiming on finding the right skills and employees for the future. (Kaijala 2016, 29-30.) A company should have an innovative and open attitude towards recruiting to catch the most potential candidates and skills first (Markkanen 2005, 84 – 85). As a result of global competition and evolving business environment, talented and experienced employees are harder to find. This has changed the way of recruitment. Nowadays advertising open positions has become more important for companies to attract candidates. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 2-4.) To attract talented employees in mass recruitment, positive employer image is central. Top candidates are attracted by strong employer brand. (Kaijala 2016, 96.)

Recruitment in general, is a process, where right candidates are being searched among all applicants (Łącka - Badura 2005, 4-5). The aim of recruitment is to receive number of qualified applicants for the task. It is important that the applicants' expectations and values should be similar to the company's. (Hertzen 2006, 49.) Other purpose is to strengthen company's employer image among its employees and possible future employees (Łącka - Badura 2005, 4-5).

Recruiting is strongly affected by the current economic situation. The labour market conditions, corporate image, present unemployment rate, company's size, budgeted recruitment costs and planned growth rate are all affecting on recruiting. The process needs to be cost-efficient and support company's strategy to match with its requirements. This demands thorough forward planning in order to decide the methods used. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 4-5.)

Recruitment advertising has a fundamental role in employer branding. A recruitment advertisement includes a short introduction of a company what presents its brand and to attract a possible candidate to apply the open position. (Hertzen 2006, 49.) Recruiting advertisement is an abridgement of the job description and at the same time a short marketing communications (Markkanen 2005, 125).

Open positions can be advertised through many channels. Nowadays the advertising is mostly done via Internet. (Markkanen 2005, 65, 87.) The main goal when choosing the recruiting channel is to find the one that catches the audience which includes the most potential applicants for the job (Vaahtio 2005, 129). Previously open positions have been advertised in newspapers, radio, television or other publications. The aim of these ads is to get the most suitable and talented people to apply the open position. On the other hand, to discourage untalented, inexperienced, otherwise unsuitable people from applying. This has been seen to reduce hiring the unsuitable ones. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 4-6, 17.) The final purposes are filling the open position and strengthening the company's image. Thus, each recruiting advertisement should be planned to keep in mind company's own imago. (Markkanen 2005, 167.)

Creating more effective job advertisements demands that the values of employees are recognized (Alnıaçık & Alnıaçık 2012, 1343). Recruiting advertisement may be the first place were suitable candidate hears of the business. Advertisement includes: Presenting the company, describing the requirements and responsibilities of the task, describing work benefits and instructing a possible candidate how to apply. The advertisement explains what kind of skills, experience and abilities the company is looking for. To successfully market the open position, the message needs to contain essential information. The content itself is more relevant than the outlook and design. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 6-8.) The heading of the advertisement needs to be thoroughly planned. The heading is often the one that the candidate first sees. From the Internet, heading is the one searched. (Markkanen 2005, 132.)

4.3   Employer branding as a tool of employer image

It is possible and advisable for a company to develop its employer image (Viitala 2007, 104). It has recently become as a part of a strategic leadership. This is a result from recognizing that the value of the company is depending on its employees. Which is why, recruiting is one of the key elements seen in company investments. Employer image is vital in recruiting the most talented candidates. Employer image has a strong role in engaging and motivating company's employees. Positive image helps to achieve long term success. Strategic thinking is needed to achieve a good employer image. Especially on innovative industries, it is necessary to recruit the most skilled employees and to succeed in engaging them, to help the company's competitiveness. (Vuorinen 2013, 189.)

The idea of employer branding is to boost recruitment, motivate and engage the employees. Employer branding is marketing the employer for the employees. In this scenario, the customer is its potential future employee. Employer branding should represent a company to whom the work is done. The product to be sold is the company. Employer marketing does not differ much from consumer marketing. (Vuorinen 2013,190.) Below, in Figure 3, one can see how marketing mix can be used as recruiting mix.
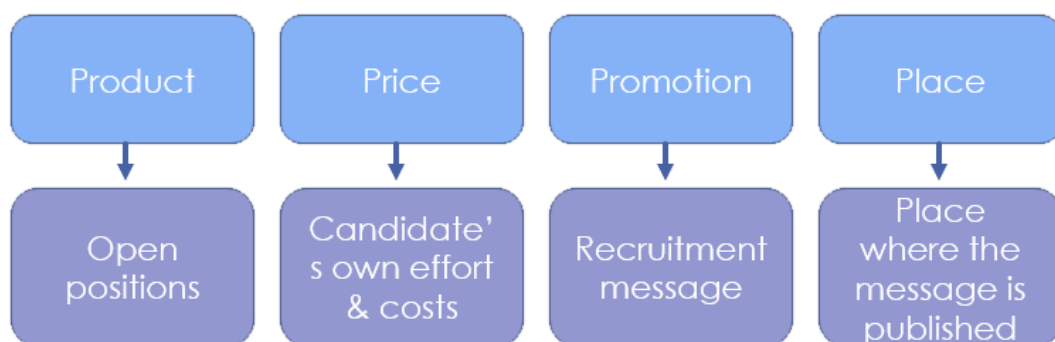
Figure 3: Recruiting mix. (Modified from Laakso 2004, 35).

Marketing mix includes the basics of marketing (Laakso 2004, 35). This mix is used in modern marketing and it comprises from a mix of marketing tools used to meet the target (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 76). These tools are divided into four different groups: Product, Place, Promotion and People. (Laakso 2004, 35). When analyzing the

Mix more, there can be similarities with marketing open positions. These positions are the products that are sold to consumers, which actually are the possible applicants. This vacancy contains some qualities, values and features. Price refers to the candidates' own effort and cost for applying the job. Candidates invest their time and energy in the process. Promotion can be referred to the recruitment message, that has been planned thoroughly. The purpose is to reach the target candidates and get them to apply. Place can be considered as the place where the message is published. This place needs to be carefully decided so that it covers the target group. (Łącka - Badura 2005, 11-12.)

When developing the employer image, the company tends to influence on how talented and committed employees the company has in the future. Employer image needs to be based on the absolute truth as the employees receive data from the company all the time. They will gather the data and share it to the world. Dishonesty in employer branding will be revealed eventually. Developing the employer image via employer branding can boost on recruiting the most talented candidates and engaging the existing employees. This enables the company to differentiate from others. In employer marketing the focus is on: What are the skills we need? What motivates our target group? How we differentiate us from the others? Employer image and company's internal marketing affects on its existing employees' motivation, commitment and engagement. Employer image is depending on its own actions, marketing, recruiting, customer service, news, top management, employees, industry, physical buildings and its services and products. Employer branding brings together HR and the strategy. (Vuorinen 2013, 190-191.) The next figure (Figure 4), will describe the process of developing the employer image.
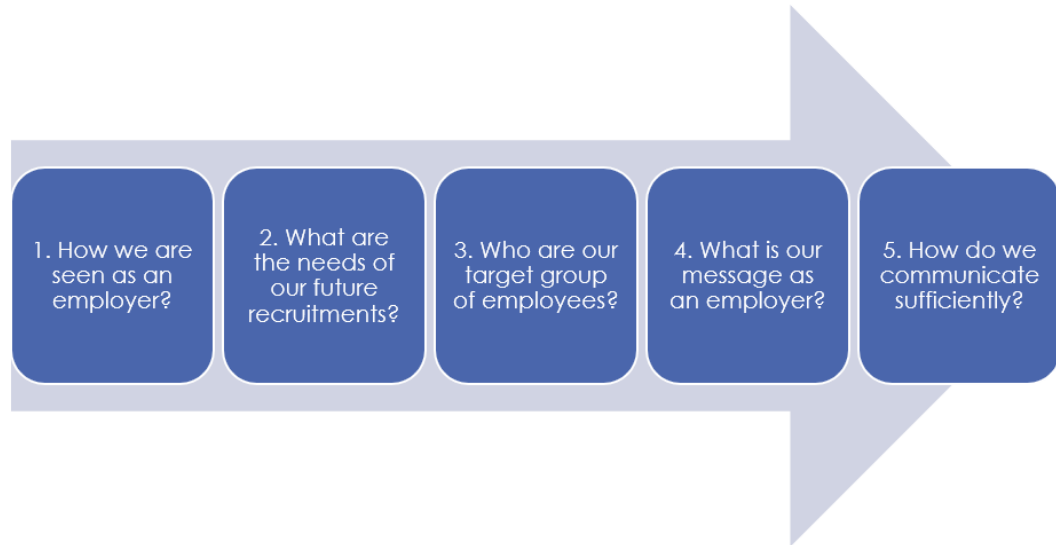
Figure 4: Process of developing the employer image. (Based on Vuorinen 2013, 191-192).

The process contains these five questions introduced in the figure. The first question: "How we are seen as an employer", indicates that the company should figure out, how people are seeing their company as an employer. (Vuorinen 2013, 191-192.) Employer image is more focused on the applicant's own interpretation of company's image (Markkanen 2005, 103). The image can be examined both internally or externally. Company's own employees may give more specific and useful information about the current situation. (Vuorinen 2013, 191-192.)

The second question is: What are the needs of our future recruitments? (Vuorinen 2013, 192). Before the recruiting decision, it should be determined, whether there are other options like filling the position by sharing work tasks or hiring someone inside the company. (Österberg 2005, 71.) Analyzing the future demands of recruitments should be based on strategy. The company must decide where they want to be, how this is possible and what are the skills they needed. Recruitment needs should be compared with the current situation and align the possible conflicts between the employer image. (Vuorinen 2013, 192.)

When a company recruits, it needs to know what they are looking for (Markkanen 2005, 73). The third question covers this issue by defining their target group of employees. By replying this question, there should become a profile of a recruiting target

group and what do they value in an employer. The company should respond to these values to get them interested. (Vuorinen 2013, 192.)

The fourth question is that what is the company's message as an employer to others. This helps the corporate to position itself in the market. The message should be based on truth and it should bring out the best characteristics of the employer. The message should differentiate the company from other competitors and to address their target group. This message can include multiple career possibilities, technological know-how, organizational challenges, personal growth possibilities or creativity. The correct message is built from inside to outside image. Open positions are advertised in multiple platforms and these messages often strongly represents the employer brand. That is why these messages should be thoroughly pondered before published. (Vuorinen 2013, 192-193.)

The fifth question is: How do we communicate sufficiently? This means, how the message is delivered to the target group. One powerful way is to spread the message via company's existing employees' mouths. The most efficient ways are appealing to people's feelings, strong mental images, slogans, interesting stories or celebrities. (Vuorinen 2013, 193-194.) Stories are effective ways to communicate as these are more likely to be remembered than several facts (Kurvinen & Sipilä 2014, 169).

Big part of employer branding consists of PR and to emphasize the company's strengths. These will help the company to increase their valuation among the applicants. Positive messages can be for example international career possibilities, personalized benefits, participating into trade fairs, collaboration with schools, magazine articles and other social media possibilities. The key idea still lies in the organizational culture, where the employees enjoy working. After this, the only obstacle is how to deliver this image to other potential future employees. To deliver the message to the target group, the company has to deliver the message to its clients, competitor's partners and media. (Vuorinen 2013, 194.)

Some people have negative attitude towards developing and marketing the corporate image. They might assume that a good company can easily recruit the needed number of people, without having a huge recruiting campaign. In the past, this attitude has

been similar in consumer marketing with products. Luckily, companies have understood the meaning and idea of marketing. The challenge lies that nowadays the generation Y, has different motivators than older generations. This new generation is motivated by the meaning and flexibility of work, open communication and organizational culture which meets with people's values. Employer image is correlating on the quantity and quality of applicants. The image reflects to employee's commitment, motivation and turnover. Company's most important asset are their employee's and by developing the employer image, the company can have far more reaching results. (Vuorinen 2013, 196-197.)

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

5.1 Research methods

In empirical studies, Research methods can be sorted into two groups: Qualitative or quantitative methods. The results of the research should follow the research problem and the theory. That is why it is important to find information that supports the founded results and helps to gather the knowledge. During the research process it is normal to change the plan or even the methods and sources. In these situations, the research problem can change as well. In the end, it is important to create a logical research. (Saukkonen 2018.)

Qualitative research is aiming to understand the research subject. In qualitative research, the problem might occur when the researcher has reached into a point where it has enough information gathered, but the person still extends the research. Often a well forward planned research with clear boundaries is better than a shallow but comprehensive. In quantitative research, the objective is to analyze the data by using statistics. These numeric results can then be explored and generalized to cover a wider group of people. (Saukkonen 2018.)

In researches, that will measure people's opinions, it can be used different scales. One of them is called Ordinal scale. The scale measures people's opinions based on how

much they agreed arguments. For example, the scale can be from one to five. One is where the respondent totally disagrees and five is where they totally agree. The scale is called as "Likert Scale". (Website of the KvantiMOTV 2018.)

In this thesis, both of these methods are used. The empirical part of this thesis consists of partially quantitative and qualitative research. These methods were chosen as the topic requires understanding the topic with enough quantitative data. The second reason behind choosing the methods is to have a broader picture but at the same time comprehensive enough to have a reliable data. One of the research method used is observation by the researcher. She has worked in HR – department which has helped to understand the relations between the topic and the case company.

Qualitative direction of the thesis is shown by the themes that the writer created from the questions. In addition, it is shown in the analysis of employer image development. The questionnaire of the research is structural and typical in quantitative studies. The size of the respondents adds the qualitative direction for the thesis enables generalization of the results. Reasons for choosing qualitative research is because the topic requires understanding the employer image and why it has developed as it is. The thesis is built around the case company which automatically brings some qualitative direction for the research. The idea is to understand the topic comprehensively. The idea is not to generalize the results to cover any other except the researched company. The questionnaire included 21 questions that measured the external employer image of the company. Due to the quantity of the questions, the writer created five different themes, where the questions were grouped. These themes presented 5 topics that were later analyzed in the results. By analyzing the questions in the themes, it was easier to understand the results and connections to each other's. The sampled group is not determined in advance but is more chosen by the occasion. The amount, of respondents were also not completely determined in advance. Based on the results there will be observations and conclusions.

The questionnaire type of the research is common in quantitative research. The empirical part is built around a structured questionnaire that is found in Appendix 2 (Appendix 2). In the questionnaire, the idea is to find out what has happened to the company's employer image and how much the change is. By using the same questions in the

questionnaires, it is possible to generalize the results. Likert scaling was used in the questionnaire. The scale helped to analyze the results accurately and the respondent's opinions were possible to put in order. These all made the study more quantitative. The questionnaire was made into a program called Surveypal.

5.2   Data gathering

Data gathering can be cross-sectional or longitudinal study. Longitudinal study follows the phenomena and its development in time. It is important to reason the beginning and the end of the study. In cross-sectional study, the analyze will focus on certain periods of time that can vary depending on the subject. (Saukkonen 2018.) The study in the thesis is cross-sectional as the research period was fixed and it lasted only one month. Some features can be found to longitudinal study as the research is later compared to a previous research to find the development of the external employer image of the company.

The size of the research can be quite massive if the character of the research requires everyone's opinions. It is essential to know when the research has reached its saturation point. In most cases, researching everyone is impossible. Then it is essential to make clear boundaries and plan the survey to be allocated for only covering the potential group of people. In these cases, generalizing the information becomes essential. (Saukkonen 2018.)

Questionnaires are the most typically used methods in quantitative researches. By using questionnaires, the aim is to ask the same questions from everyone and to create a standard profile. Questionnaires are either sent by mail for the respondents or shared on the spot. (Saukkonen 2018.)

The data for the thesis was gathered in May 2018 due to the quick schedule received from the case company. Collecting data was possible at the early stage of the thesis because the idea of the thesis was to compare the new results with a research that was performed in 2016. After the previous survey was implemented, the case company has experienced strong growth and development.

Structural questionnaire was used in the research. At the beginning of the questionnaire, there was asked the general background details of the respondents. These were like the age, gender, municipality of residence and labour market situation. The questionnaire was filled based on choosing one option. After background details, the questionnaire had 21 questions relating to the company as an employer. The questions were typed as arguments which the respondent could agree or disagree. These were argeed or disagreed based on a liker scale. The used scale and the questions are descried in the first Appendix (Appendix 1).

The questionnaire was kept partly similar with a few improvements regarding to the size of the previous questionnaire. The new questionnaire became shorter by leaving only the key points that were necessary. The final content of the questionnaire was then approved by the case company. These questionnaires were shared on the spot, as paper forms in different recruiting exhibitions. The form was also found online. These questionnaires were handed out together with the employer. The questionnaires were shared in three different weeks on seven different cities. This was to have a broader picture on the company's employer image rather than focusing only to the area that is close to the company's location.

At first, the target was to get around 500 respondents due to the size of the previous survey. The previous survey was implemented only online, and the target of the group was not as allocated. With the new survey that was implemented in this thesis, the target group is now more allocated. The responses were gathered only in recruiting events where the respondents were more interested in employing themselves. As the questionnaires of the study were shared on the spot, the total amount of paper questionnaires was reduced to 500 pieces which became the sampled group. For a bachelor's thesis, 500 is quite a markable size for a sample group and the results will become relevant. In the trade fairs, it was realized that paper questionnaires had much more interest than filling the responses straight into the system by a QR code created by the writer. The results were analyzed firstly by transferring the paper questionnaires by hand into Surveypal. After having all the responses in the cite, analyzing the results began.

The sampled group was 500 from which it was received 223 responses. From those 223 it was accepted 210 replies as 13 replies were filled only partly. It was decided that these 13 replies did not include enough data to be used. These lacked the section where it was measured the employer image and so these were found irrelevant for the study. 210 responses are still a quite massive quantity for a bachelor's thesis. The response rate was calculated based on 210 responses and for the study it was 42%. Together with the company, the research was decided to be enough massive and saturated.

5.3 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are essential concepts in researches and are built around reliable sources (Anttila 2018). Reliability and validity determine, whether the research and the results are reliable. In these two concepts, the validity describes more determinant way on describing the quality. (Saukkonen 2018.)

Reliability is often measured in quantitative research. In a research, which has good reliability, the results are accurate and according to the objective. (Heinonen 2018.) The results should not be fortuitous. In a reliable research, the main criterion is that it is reproducible. Poor reliability may occur if the data is gathered negligently or transcription is made inaccurately. (Saukkonen 2018.)

Reliability of the thesis is good if the results are not fortuitous and the survey is reproducible. Accurately made transcription from paper to Surveypal is important. This increases the reliability for the thesis. In the thesis, the questionnaire impacts much into the reliability. The used Likert Scale improves the reliability of the work as it gives the results more accurately. The study that was made in the thesis was planned well in advance. The target group was allocated and chosen to match the subject as much as possible. The study was implemented only in recruiting events to receive responses from people who were looking for the employment. This allocation was in the case company's interest and it can be used with the theory that was gathered into the thesis.

Transcription of the thesis was made precisely. As the study did not have open questions, the transcription could be done accurately. The only issue that could weaken the transcription is because the responses were uploaded to the system by hand. This was noted and that is why uploading the responses to the system was made in smaller parts. After each upload, the field was verified to match the questionnaire.

The sampled group was chosen to be massive to avoid fortuitous results. The results of the research were accurate and the objective was achieved. The researched group of 210 people was quite massive to receive enough data and generalize the results. The response rate was 42% and it can be seen relevant to the study. Based on the response rate of 42 %, it is possible to reliably generalize the results. The results were also not contradictory. These factors increased the reliability of the work.

Validity represents the proficiency of a research. Validity of the research means the ability of the research methods to measure the intended purpose. Validity of the research can be achieved if research methods measures the intended purpose of the thesis. (Hirsijärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 231.) If the research is studying a completely different subject than was first intended, the work has inadequate validity (Anttila 2018). The respondents have to understand the questions in the same way as the researcher does to have a strong validity for the work. In addition, the target group has to be correct. (Hirsijärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 231.)

This study focuses now only on studying the employer image and the overall perceptions that people have towards the company. The second objective was to find out the development and the current questionnaire couldn't differ much. The current research has good validity, if the questionnaire measures the external employer image of the company and the development can be analyzed. The questions need to be understood by the respondents. The research was gathered in different recruiting fairs to receive the results that were in the case company's interest. Allocation was thoroughly planned in advance. The shared questionnaire was modified from a previous questionnaire.

The results of the research indicated that the research had been successful. The research questions were relevant on finding out the purpose of the thesis. The purposes were to find out the external employer image and what people believes the company

has to offer for them as an employer. In addition, it was possible to compare the results to a previous research and find out the development of the company's external employer image. By sharing the questionnaires in the recruiting events, it was possible to help the respondents to understand the purpose of the research and to ensure that they understood all the questions. These all indicated that the work had strong validity.

6 THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Background info

In the chapter, the results are described relating to the background details of the respondents. The results were analyzed based on Surveypal and from the program, the results were shared to excel. Below the results are shown with graphics.

The background details were gathered from respondent's age, gender, residence of municipality, educational background and labour market situation. The background details were filled by choosing the option that matched with the respondent. The idea was to choose only one option from the alternatives. This is demonstrated in Appendix 2 (Appendix 2), where the question form is presented. The figures relating to the background details are shown in Figures 5 – 9. The figures are found below.
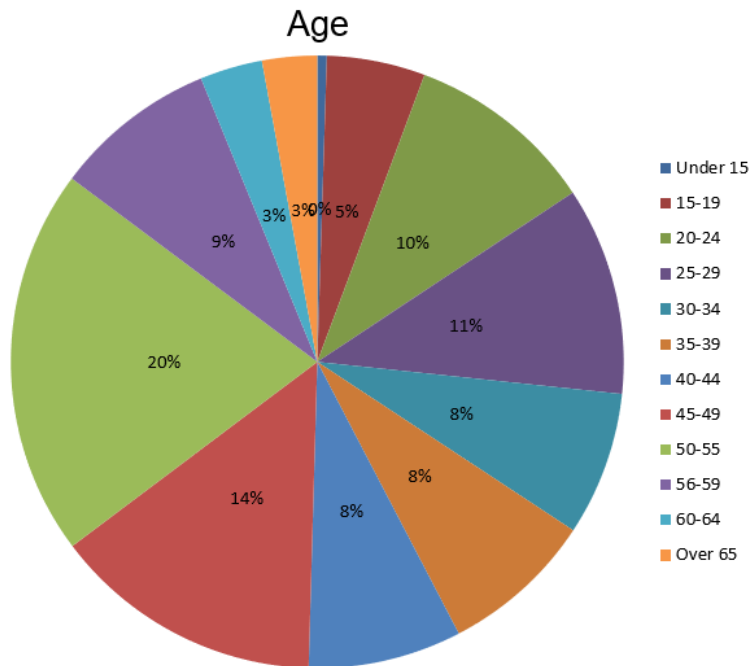
Figure 5: Age of the respondent.

From the figure 5, the respondents were mainly from the population of working age. 91.4% of the respondents were between the age 20-64. 21% of the respondents were 20-29 years old. 34.8% of the respondents were 45-55 years old. Only 25 people were either under 20 or over 59 years old.
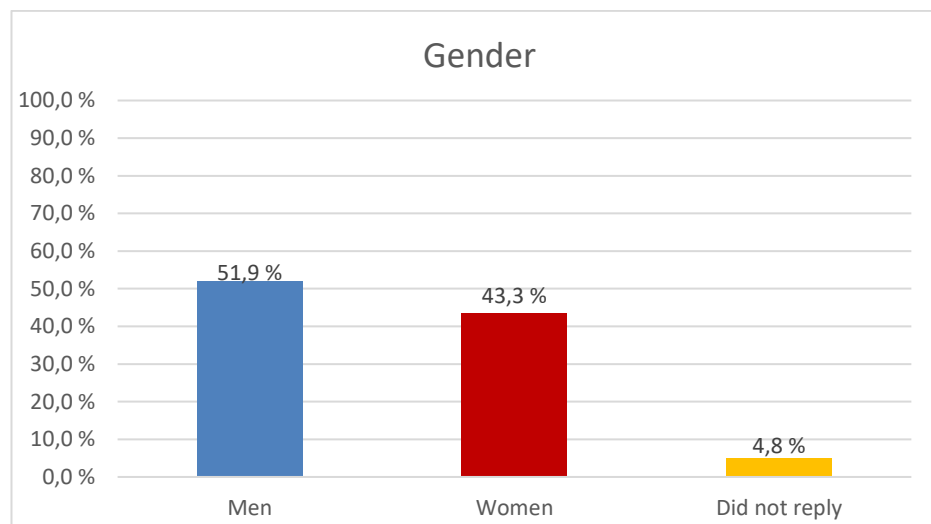

Figure 6: Gender

From the Figure 6, the gender of the respondents is showing the difference between men and women. The gender of the respondents did not differ much between these two groups. It needs to be noted that 10 people did not reply to this question. This means that the correct percentages are: Men 51.9 %, Women 43.3 % and the ones who did

not reply 4.8%. Overall Men were slightly more active for responding to the research. As the questionnaires were randomly shared on the spot and the gender was not purposely chosen, this is conventional.

Residence of municipality

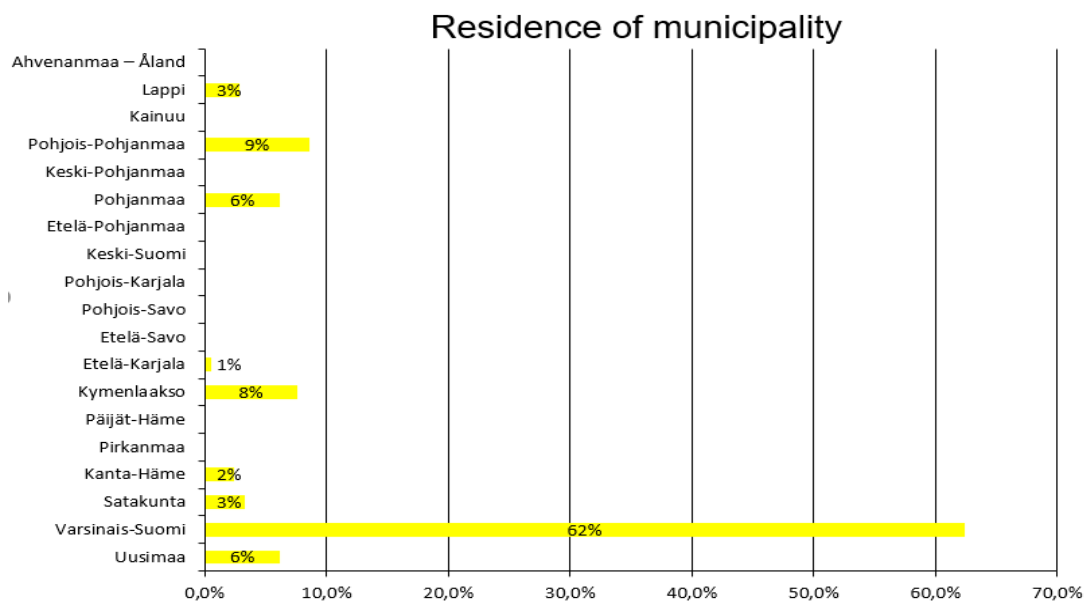| Municipality	Percentage
Ahvenanmaa – Åland	
Lappi	3%
Kainuu	
Pohjois-Pohjanmaa	9%
Keski-Pohjanmaa	
Pohjanmaa	6%
Etelä-Pohjanmaa	
Keski-Suomi	
Pohjois-Karjala	
Pohjois-Savo	
Etelä-Savo	
Etelä-Karjala	1%
Kymenlaakso	8%
Päijät-Häme	
Pirkanmaa	
Kanta-Häme	2%
Satakunta	3%
Varsinais-Suomi	62%
Uusimaa	6%

Figure 7: Residence of Municipality

The Figure 7 shows the residence of municipality of the respondents. The responses were mainly received from the area of Varsinais – Suomi (62.4 %). 131 people lived in Varsinais – Suomi and it is over half of the respondents. The region is close to the company's location and it can be concluded that people within the area had the highest interest of the company.
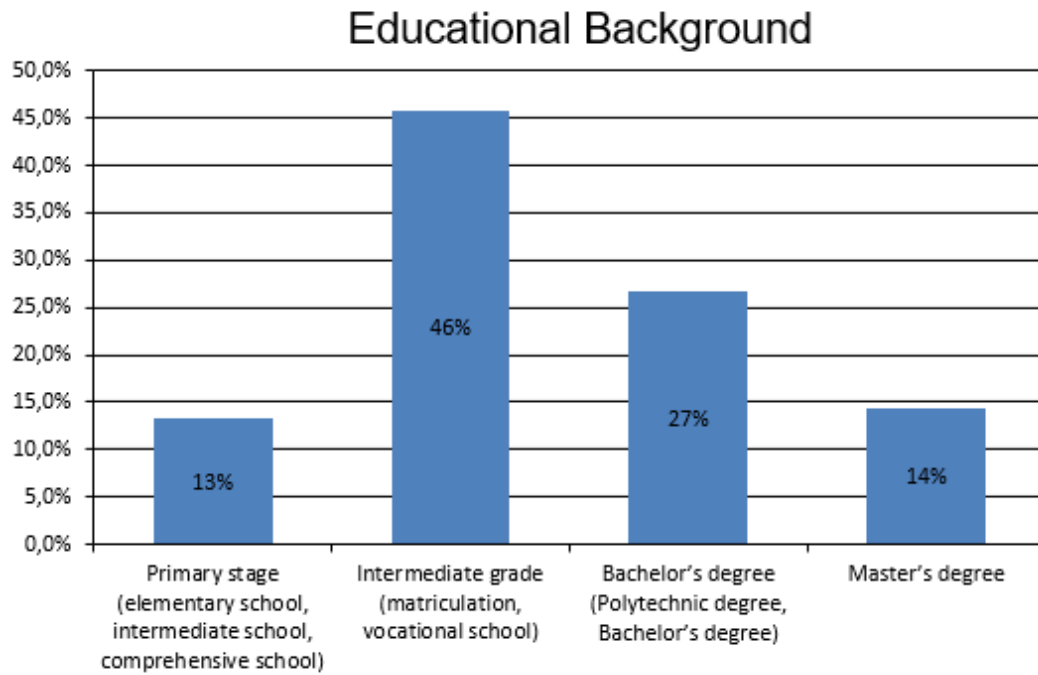
Figure 8: Educational background.

The Figure 8 describes the educational background of the researched group. The responses were received from each educational background. Altogether 96 people, that is almost half of the researched group, had studied the intermediate grade. The bachelor's thesis was the second highest group as 56 people had studied it. The company has positions for all educational levels. Mainly, the open positions are for tasks that are in the factory area and from the results it is shown that the respondents were not too highly educated for these positions.
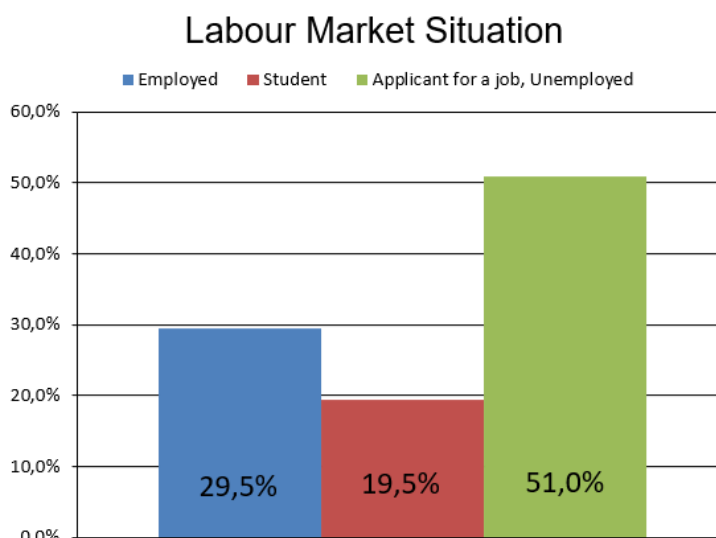

Figure 9: Labour Market Situation.

The Figure 9 shows the labour market situation of the respondents. The target of the research was to reach people who might look for employment and to find how they see the company. The results indicated, that over half of the responses were received from people who were unemployed or looking for a job. Altogether 107 people were in that group. This covered 51 % of the respondents. Only 29.5 % of the received replies were currently employed. Each group is important for the company and their opinions matter. People, who were unemployed, were the most potential candidates for the company.

From these background details, it can be concluded that the allocation of the survey was successful. The respondents were mainly looking for an employment and the dispersion of their age was inside the age group of working adults. The educational backgrounds indicated that the company arouses interest from all educational levels. The regional distance from where most of the responses were received, was close to the company. The area is seen as one of the company's working areas. Other regions that were not as near to the company, made the study broader and more comprehensive. The gender had the least importance as the company has mutual interest for both genders.

6.2 External employer image

The results of the study and the employer image are described below. Before analyzing the results, the questions were sorted to different categories, to analyze the similar subjects in the same figures. The analyzed categories were: Career, Work Expectations, Work, Corporate Image and Employer Image. The results are illustrated by graphics from Figure 10 to 14.

The questions were actual and related to the company itself. Answering the questions was based on a Likert scale. In the scale, the respondent chose an option based on the one that was the closest of his or her opinion. In the study, the options were scaled from 0-5: 0 = I don't know, 1 totally disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = fairly agree, 4

= partly agree & 5 = totally agree. Numbers one and two were seen quite negatively and numbers from three to five were positive. The scaling was the same as in the previous research to compare the results. The question form of the study can be found in the second Appendix (Appendix 2).

Figure 10: Career expectations.

Figure 10 describes the results of four career related questions. The questions were: In the case X, there is a good opportunity for developing career; In the company, I can learn new; Working in the case X is a great reference to my future career; The company invests in training and educating its employees. Overall, the career expectations were seen quite positive. Below, it is more closely analyzed these individually.

The blue color in the Figure 10 presents how the respondents thought the company can offer possibilities for developing career. 70 respondents (33.7%) fairly agreed and 62 (29.8%) partly agreed the argument. At least 76.5 % fairly agreed to this and it is the opinion of 159 people. Overall the career development was seen relevant in the company. Only 23 people (11.0%) though that the opportunity is not good.

The red color in the Figure 10 describes whether people thought that in the company, there is a possibility for learning new. 36.6% partly agreed that in the company, they can learn new. 67 respondents (32.7%) totally agreed and only 2 respondents (1%) totally disagreed this. Totally 181 people (88.3%) agreed to this claim, 9 (4.4%) did not know and 15 (7.3%) disagreed. All responses were quite optimistic for this.

In the Figure 10, the green color describes how people thought the company can act as a reference for their future careers. 64 (31.4%) of the responses partly agreed and 31 people (15.2%) thought it was a great reference to their future career. 51 people (25.4%) fairly agreed and 27 (13.2%) did not know this. Totally 146 people (71.6%) believed this claim. 31 people (15.2%) disagreed this.

The purple color in the figure 10 represents the fourth question. It was: The company invests in training and developing their employees. 81 people (38.9%) partly agreed, 54 (26%) totally agreed and 25 (12%) did not know. Totally 173 people (83.2%) agreed to this and 10 (4.8%) disagreed.
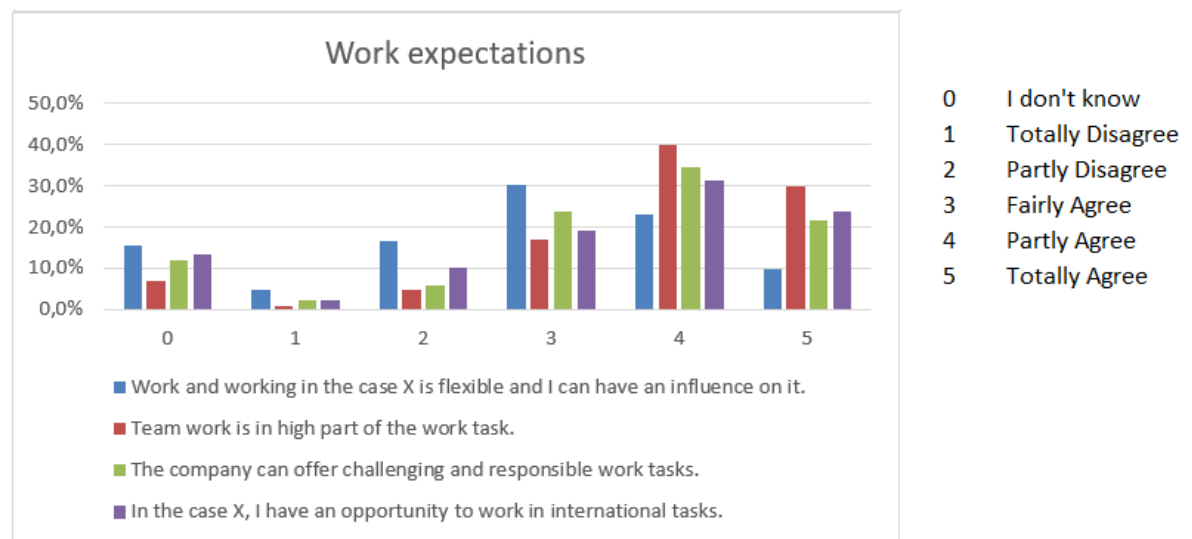

Figure 11: Work expectations.

In figure 11 is pictured the respondent's idea on what the company can offer and how the work is done there. The questions are: Work and working in the case X is flexible and I can have an influence on it; Team work is in high part of the work tasks; The company can offer challenging and responsible work tasks; In the case X, I have an opportunity to work in international tasks. The results indicate that the topic of work expectations aroused some disparity among the respondents. The main graphics still shows strongly positive and agreeing opinions.

In the Figure 11, the first question that is painted on blue describes the flexibility and ability to influence on the work in case X. 44 people (32,5%) disagreed and 30 (15,6%)

did not know. Totally 129 people (62,9%) agreed that they could have some influence on the work.

The red color in Figure 11 represents whether the respondents believed that team work is in important role in the company. 80 people (40%) of the respondents thought that this is partly true and 63 (30%) totally agreed. Overall 15 people (7.1%) did not know, 12 (5.8%) disagreed and 183 (7.1%) agreed the claim.

The green color in the Figure 11 represents the claim whether the company can offer challenging and responsible work tasks. 72 respondents (34.6%) partly agreed and 25 (12%) did not know. Overall 17 people (8.2%) disagreed and 166 people (79.8%) agreed that it is true.

The purple color in Figure 11 shows the respondent's opinion relating to working on international tasks in the company. 40 people (19.2%) fairly agreed the claim and (13.5%) did not know. 26 people (12%) disagreed and 154 people (74.1%) agreed.

Figure 12: Work in the case X.

In Figure 12 the topic covers work related subjects. It can be noted that some of these questions were agreed clearly and some disagreed. The analyzed questions were: I know what sort of work I can do in the case X; Work in case X is working in the line, I believe that in the case X, I will receive a proper compensation or salary from my work; In the company, I can work with well – planned processes.

The Figure 12 measured whether the respondent knows what type of work him or her can do in the company. This is painted on the blue color. 67 people (32.7%) fairly agreed on knowing what type of work they can do in the company, 52 (25.4%) partly agreed, 25 (12.2%) totally agreed and 31 (15.1%) partly agreed this. 19 (9.3%) of the responses did not know their opinion. Totally 144 people (70.3%) agreed and 42 (20.5%) disagreed the argument.

The red color in the Figure 12 presents whether people agreed that the work in the case X is the same as working in the production line. 62 people (29.8%) fairly agreed, 44 (21.2%) partly agreed and 47 (22.6%) partly disagreed. Totally 132 people (63.5%) agreed the claim, 30 (9.6%) did not know and 56 people (26.9%) disagreed.

The third argument in the Figure 12 was regarding on the proper compensation and salary received from the company. It was painted on green. 63 people (30.4%) partly agreed that the company provides a proper compensation from the work and 61 (29.5%) fairly agreed it. 21 respondents (10.1%) did not know, 27 (13%) disagreed and 159 (76.8%) agreed the argument.

The purple color in the Figure 12 indicated whether the company had well planned processes to work with. 85 respondents (40.7%) partly agreed that this is true. 22 people (10.5%) did not know, 13 (6.3%) disagreed and 174 people (83.2%) agreed this.
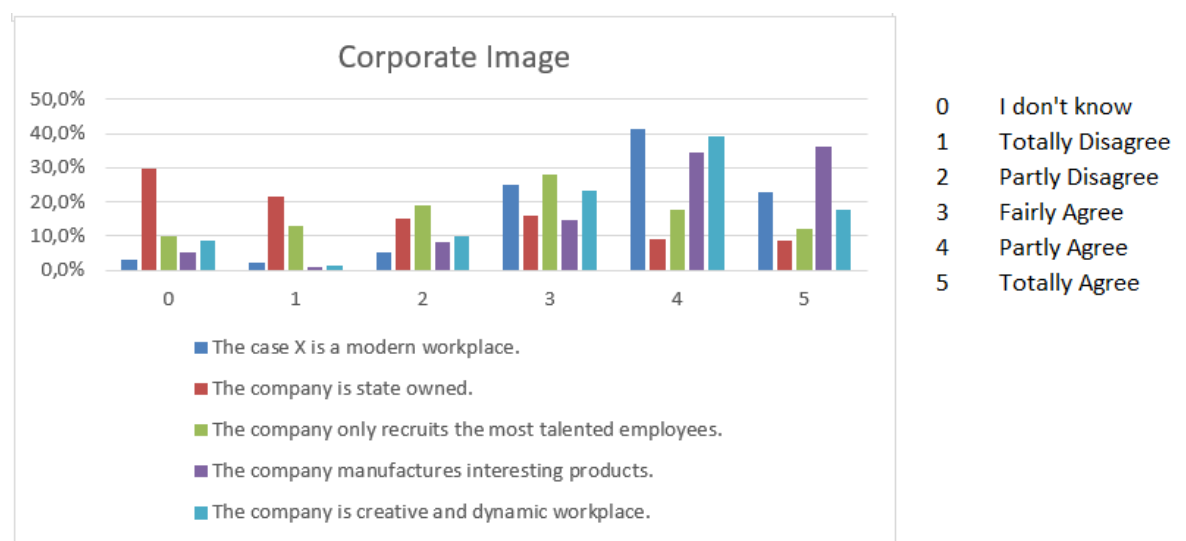

Figure 13: Corporate Image.

In Figure 13, it is shown how the respondent thought of the company. The questions covered: The case X is a modern workplace; The company is state owned; The company only recruits the most talented employees; The company manufactures interesting products; The company is a creative and dynamic workplace. From the chart, it can be quickly seen that the one painted on read, aroused some questions. The colors and arguments are individually analyzed below.

The blue color in the Figure 13 measured whether the company is a modern workplace. 86 people (41.5%) partly agreed and 47 (22.7%) totally agreed. 185 people (89.3%) agreed that this is true. 6 (2.9%) did not know and 16 people (7.7%) disagreed with the argument.

In the Figure 13, the argument painted on red was: The company is state owned. This made the respondents quite unsecure as 61 people (29.6%) did not know if the company was state owned. 44 respondents (21.4%) totally disagreed and 18 (8.7%) totally agreed this. Overall only people (33.9%) agreed and 75 people (36.4%) disagreed the claim.

The green color in Figure 13 indicates how people felt about the company's recruiting target. 58 people (28%) fairly agreed that the company only recruits the most talented employees. 21 people (10.1%) did not know and 66 (31.8%) disagreed. Totally 120 respondents (58%) agreed with the argument.

The fourth question in the Figure 13 was painted on purple. It argued that the case company manufactures interesting products. 74 (36.1%) of the respondents totally agreed, 11 (5.4%) did not know and 19 (13%) disagreed. The total agreed percentage was 85.3% which represented 175 respondent's opinions.

In the Figure 13, the pillar that is painted on pale blue, represents the argument: The company is creative and dynamic workplace. 48 people (23.4%) fairly agreed with it and 18 (8.8%) did not know their opinions. 164 (80%) agreed and 23 people (11.3%) disagreed.
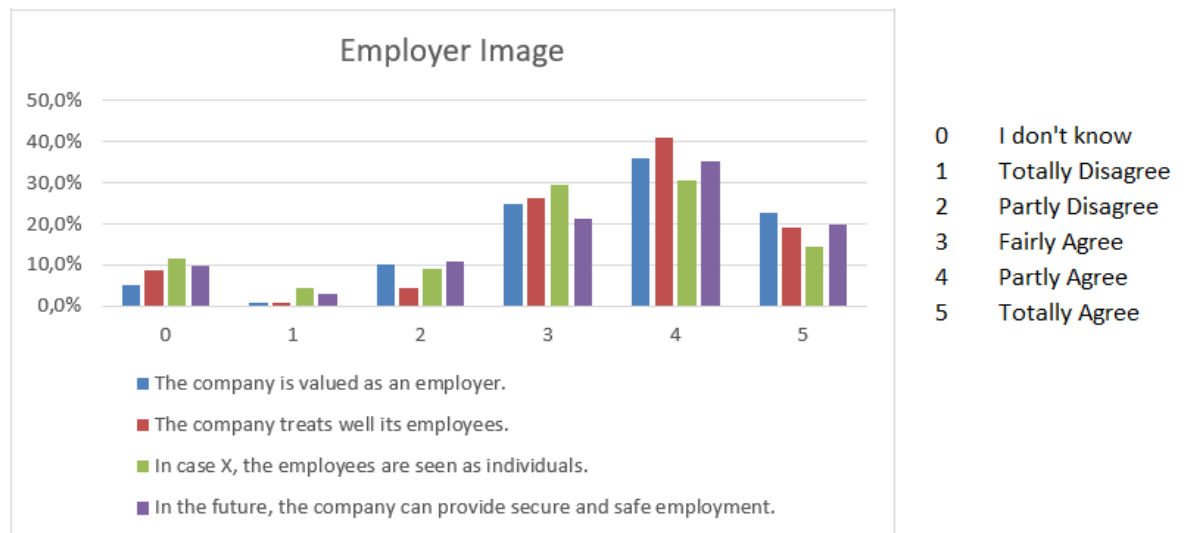
Figure 14: Employer Image.

The Figure 14 describes 4 different questions which are related to company's employer image. The questions were: The company is valued as an employer; The company treats its employees well; In case X, the employees are seen as individuals; In the future, the company can provide secure and safe employment. The results are presented below.

The blue color in the Figure 14 was whether the company treats its employees well. 18 people (8.6%) did not know, 55 (26.2%) fairly agreed and 11 people (5.3%) disagreed with the argument. Totally 181 respondents (86.2%) agreed.

In the Figure 14, it was described on red whether the respondents believed that the case company is valued as an employer. 75 (36.1%) of the respondents partly agreed and 52 (25%) fairly agreed that it was true. 11 people (5.3%) did not know this and 23 (11.1%) disagreed with the argument. Totally 174 replies (83.7%) indicated that this was agreed.

The green color presented in the Figure 14 whether the employees are seen as individuals. 61 people (29.6%) fairly agreed that the employees are seen as individuals. 28 people (13.6%) disagreed, 24 (11.7%) did not know and totally 154 people (74.8%) agreed with the claim.

In the Figure 14, the purple color indicated whether the company can provide safe and secure environment in the future. 28 people (13.6%) disagreed and 73 people (35.4%) partly agreed with the claim that the company can provide secure and safe employment in the future. 20 (9.7%) did not know and 158 people (76.4%) agreed.

7 THE EXTERNAL EMPLOYER IMAGE OF THE COMPANY

7.1 Analyzing the Results

The survey revealed that the respondents' age mainly varied from 18 to 64. That age group represents working adults. The gender of the respondents did not have a huge discrepancy. Responses were received mainly from Varsinais – Suomi. This can be due to the close location of the case company.

Based on the background details, it can be analyzed how successful the allocation has been. The respondents were received from all age groups and the research showed that potential new employees can be found near to the company's location. Education is not the main criterion for the company, as it has open positions for all levels. The responses divided so that the second degree was the most common background and the higher educational levels were not as general. The respondents were mainly looking for a job or unemployed. Overall the background details support the fact that the results are relevant and allocation has been successful.

From the results, it can be concluded that the company's career possibilities were externally seen mainly positive. The respondents thought that the company can offer good opportunities for developing their careers, learn new and that the company invests on training its employees. The greater part of the people though that the possibilities were fairly good or even better. In employer branding, it was seen important that the company offers career possibilities and training to its employees. These increased the company's attractiveness.

Working in the case company was from the external point of view seen to be based on team work. Most of the respondents partly agreed that the company can offer challenging and responsible tasks. In addition, the international tasks were seen similarly. The flexibility and the ability to influence in the company was mainly fairly agreed. The argument had the most deviation among the other work expectations. The theory allocated that in a well – branded company, people have more positive image and they will more likely apply to work for the company. Challenges, flexibility and international possibilities were attracting factors for recruiting more employees.

Based on the results, the respondents felt the company has well planned processes. They believed that the salary and compensation were at least fairly proper and that they know what work they can do there. One of the arguments seemed to split the opinions and it was whether the task is to work in the assembly line. Most of the responses agreed that it is true. From the theory, it was found out that by branding the company, providing financial compensations, rewards and career aspects, it can allure people to apply an open position. It is one reason why job branding was encouraged in the theory.

The company was seen as a modern, creative and dynamic workplace. The respondents agreed that the company manufactures interesting products. One question seemed to have unclearness among the respondents. It was whether the company was state owned or not. Almost 30% of the respondents did not know this. Also, the question whether the company only recruits the most talented employees seemed to have some unclearness. From the theory, it was learned that the corporate image is telling from the company's character, operation and existence. Corporate image was formed based on the individual's own belief. It was emphasized to aim for a reputable business. The corporate image was in the center when creating the employer image.

When measuring the company's employer image, the results were positive. In average, 84,95% of the people agreed that the company is valued as an employer and treats its employees well. The pillars in the figure 14 (Figure 14) were all quite alike. From the results, it was learned that the respondent though that employees are seen as individuals and the company can provide safe and secure future. Only around 20 % of the respondents did not know or disagreed the arguments. The theory highlighted that with

a good employer image, it is easy for the company to recruit and prosper. The image was built around a corporate image, recruiting policy and how the company treats its employees.

7.2 Employer Image Development

In the previous study, the research was implemented online. It reached people more evenly across the country. The research was much bigger regarding on the size of the researched group and the asked questions. The educational background was quite similar but the labour market situation was different. There were less people looking for employment and more people who already employed.

The results of the previous and the present research were different. Previously, the respondents did not know what to reply to the questions. It was shown that 30 – 40% of the replies were: "I don't know". In the current research, the same percentage was approximately 10%. In the current study, around 70 – 90 % of the responses agreed at some level with the arguments. Previously, it was around 40 – 60%. The arguments were previously disagreed by 5 – 20% of the respondents as currently the percentage was 15 – 30%.

When comparing the results behind the previous survey and the current, it is notable that the old survey had much more responses, where the respondent did not know their opinion for the asked questions. It is important to understand the reason behind this. Below is analyzed the possible reasons that could have caused this.

The first interpretation could be based on the data collection method used in sharing these questionnaires. In the current study, the questionnaires were shared face-to-face as previously, the questionnaire was only open online. In the current research, some people were not comfortable on giving their opinions as they said that how can they know this as they are not working there. It was easy to explain the purpose of the questionnaire on the spot and tell the respondents that this is only for finding the external image and that the questionnaire was shared to people whom did not work there

in purposely. After explaining this, the researched group felt more relieved and comfortable for giving their opinions.

The second interpretation came from the view where the respondent's place of residence was found irrelevant. As the study was not carried out only in the local area of the company the results can be generalized to cover Finland geographically. It can then be concluded that previously, the people did not know enough about the company, to have an image of the researched questions. Since the company has experienced strong growth in recent years, people have better awareness of the company. They are now able to reply to those questions. The strong growth and different advertisement campaigns of the company have spread the word and made it better known. Branding and marketing have been successful.

The third interpretation is taking into account the municipality of the residence of the respondents. As the previous research had mostly responses mainly from Metropolitan area and the current research was mainly filled in Varsinais – Suomi, the results are of course different due to the company's location. It is evident that as the current research is filled mainly close to the company, the people are more aware and are now able to form their opinions.

From the study, the municipality of the residence of the respondents was excluded and it was not taken into the allocation of the research. The location can be found irrelevant. In the current research, almost 40% of the respondents were not close to the company's location and so the research did not only focus on exploring the local image but is affected by other regions as well. It can be concluded that the company has received more awareness among people and is now more reputable. The first interpretation, where the respondents were insecure for replying to the questionnaire due to the fear of having "wrong answers" could have some effect on the decreased amount of replying "I don't know". As the issue occurred only with some of the respondents and not with everyone, it is impossible to connect this with the claim of respondents fearing to reply in the wrong way.

8 DISCUSSION OF THE THESIS

According to the theory, employer image is built around corporate image, -reputation and the company's employees' opinions. Recruiting can be boosted by marketing and having a positive employer image. The recruitment messages were seen important. Tools to develop the employer image can be for example PR, creating events, taking care of the company's employees, branding and understanding the current situation based on performing researches that measure employer image. It was realized that positive PR and recruitment advertisement can be used to promote a company. The best tool was, to develop the employer image from inside. This means that by having a positive employer image among company's employees', turnover rate is decreased and the company is more likely promoted from inside to outside. The most credible information was spread by company's existing employees.

The research questions for the thesis were: What is the external employer image of the case X? How has the external image developed? What people see that the company can offer for them? The questions were answered in the results of the research.

The first question was to learn about the company's external employer image today. The questionnaire included questions which were important for the company to find out their employer image. The theory of the thesis supported company's view, that asked questions were relevant for figuring out the external employer image. The questions were break divided into five different categories: Career, Work Expectations, Work, Corporate Image and Employer Image. When analyzing the questions, links were found to theory. After analyzing the results of the research, it can be conducted that the employer image of the company is positive. 21 arguments of the questionnaire were agreed on average 75.5%. When measuring only the questions related to the employer image of the company, the result was that 80.4% of the respondents agreed on the company having a positive employer image.

The second research question was: How the employer image has developed? Because in the previous research that was conducted in 2016, there were so many "I don't know" answers, it was decided not to analyze whether the employer image had improved or not on the level of each question. In the previous chapter, it was analyzed

how the employer image had developed. In the previous research, people did not have a clear image of the company as an employer. It was realized that rapid growth of the company, increased people's awareness. Also, the recruitment branding might have influenced to the evolution of employer image has developed by increased awareness of the company in general. Increased awareness concerned each question asked.

The third research question was to examine: What people believe the company has to offer for them? Company's processes were seen functional. It was believed that the company can offer training and career development for its employees. It was also agreed that the company can offer responsible and challenging work tasks. People agreed that in the company, employees can learn new, develop their skills and that working in the company is a great reference for their future career.

The purpose and objectives of the thesis were achieved. From the results, it was found out the company's current external employer image. The company had increased its awareness and their employer image was better known. It was seen that the company can offer good career opportunities and development. The company can use the results when planning their marketing in the future. As the company now has current information on how they are seen as an employer, it will be able to develop different areas according to their targets.

The case company has a positive reputation. Two arguments aroused from the research: Work in case X is working in the assembly line and the company only recruits the most talented employees. It was seen that the work is line work and almost half of the researched group believed that the company does not only recruit the most talented ones. The second question might have been affected by the massive recruitments that the company has had. The recruitments have shaped the company's employer image. The recruitment campaigns of the company have increased the awareness of the company.

The thesis included qualitative and quantitative methods. By performing quantitative research, the generalization of the results was possible. The results were later analyzed with the aim on understanding them. This added more comprehensive direction for the

research. By having more comprehensive questionnaire, it would have been possible to understand the results more deeply.

The results were reliable and the reasons behind the development were rational. The sampled group was targeted to be large enough to reliably generalize the results. The image had developed systematically and from the results, it was seen that the respondents replied to the questions convergently.

The challenges of the work were to translate the questionnaire into English and to hide the case company's identity. It was important to be conscious what cannot be said. For example, the arguments of the questionnaire needed to be changed. The thesis was approved by case company before publishing it.

The theory of the thesis contained some grounds of the employer image in general which could be used by the writer. It highlighted the importance of the thesis for the company. For the case company, thesis gave the updated data of the external employer image. It provided the results which the company can use in the future, when deciding how to develop the employer image.

The employer image is a concept contains internal and external direction. Further studies can be made from internal employer image. Employer image develops constantly so it is recommended to repeat the research in the future. It helps the company in branding and recruiting. Further study can also be performed from geographic differences of company's employer image.

The researcher has been able to utilize the practical training in the HR department of the company. The practical training period and studying the theory of the topic, enabled the writer to understand the company's situation and to analyze the results. The topic was interesting for the researcher and she was able to increase her understanding about it. In the future, the writer is competent to construe companies recruiting messages and communication. Writing the thesis has been a learning experience where each phase has been different. One of the hardest things has been writer's perfectionism.

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SURVEY FROM EMPLOYER IMAGE OF THE CASE X

This is an abstract from the questionnaire that was used in this thesis to study the respondent's opinions about the case company. It describes what the questionnaire covered and in which order. The actual questionnaire was studied in Finnish so this abstract gives much better overview for the reader about the questionnaire as it is written in the same language as the thesis.

At first in the questionnaire, there were reported the purpose of the survey. The purpose was to find the respondents opinion from the case company as an employer. In the introduction of the questionnaire, it was explained that the personal contacts given by the respondents, were not connected with the opinions about the case X. Only the respondent's opinions were used on measuring the opinion.

The questionnaire was totally structured, and the answering was based on choosing one option. In background info, there were only alternatives and the topic was divided by these. In the second part, there was measured the actual employer image. It was measured by using a Likert scale. The scale was from zero to five. 0 meant that the respondent did not know his or her opinion. 1 meant that the respondent totally disagreed, 2 was partly disagreed, 3 was fairly disagreed, 4 was partly agreed and 5 meant that the respondent totally agreed.

The background questions included age, gender, municipality of residence, educational background and labour market situation. Answering to these was easy, as the respondent needed only to choose the option that was accurate. It was also easy for the respondent to ask if they had some questions regarding filling the questionnaire, as the form was filled on the spot.

The actual questions related to the respondent's opinions about the case X, were asked after the background details. The questions were related to the company's culture and employer image. The questions are presented in appendix 2 (Appendix 2).

In the last part of the questionnaire, the respondent had the opportunity to take part on the raffle for winning movie tickets to Finnkino. There was reminded that the personal details were not connected to the survey in any way. In the end of the questionnaire, there was a square that was needed to be crossed in order to take part on the raffle of the movie tickets. By this, it can be confirmed that the respondent did leave the details on purpose. There were also mentioned that the responses' opinions were only used in statistical purposes.

COMPANY LOGO

STUDY OF THE EMPLOYER IMAGE

The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out Your opinion from the Case X as an employer. By filling the question form, you will help us to find out the employer image of the Case X. The respondents can take part to a raffle of winning movie tickets to Finnkino.

This is an anonymous questionnaire where the respondents can voluntarily give their contact details in order to take part to the raffle. These personal details are not used when analyzing the results of the questionnaire.

Background questions

Age

☐ Under 15   ☐ 15-19   ☐ 20-24   ☐ 25-29   ☐ 30-34   ☐ 35-39

☐ 40-44   ☐ 45-49   ☐ 50-55   ☐ 56-59   ☐ 60-64   ☐ Over 65

Gender

☐ Women
☐ Men

Residence of municipality (all of the residences does not have a translation to English, so not translated)

☐ Uusimaa	☐ Varsinais – Suomi	☐ Satakunta
☐ Pirkanmaa	☐ Päijät – Häme	☐ Kymenlaakso
☐ Etelä – Savo	☐ Pohjois – Savo	☐ Pohjois – Savo
☐ Keski – Suomi	☐ Etelä – Pohjanmaa	☐ Pohjanmaa
☐ Pohjois - Pohjan-maa	☐ Keski – Pohjan-maa	☐ Lappi
☐ Kanta – Häme	☐ Etelä – Karjala	☐ Pohjois – Karjala
☐ Kainuu	☐ Ahvenanmaa - Åland	

Educational Background

- ☐ Primary stage (elementary school, intermediate school, comprehensive school)
- ☐ Intermediate grade (matriculation, vocational school)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree (Polytechnic degree, Bachelor's degree)
- ☐ Master's degree

Labour Market Situation
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Applicant for a job, Unemployed

Company X – Culture and Employer image: Evaluate based on Scale 0-5.
0. I don't know
1. Totally disagree
2. Partly disagree
3. Fairly agree
4. Partly agree
5. Totally agree

	0	1	2	3	4	5
In the case X. there is a good opportunity for developing career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the company, I can learn new.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working in the case X, is a great reference to my future career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company invests on training and educating its employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	0	1	2	3	4	5
I know what sort of work I can do in the case X.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work in case X is working in the line.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The case X is a modern workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company is state owned.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company only recruits the most talented employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company is valued as an employer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company manufactures interesting products.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that in the case X, I will receive proper compensation or salary from my work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	0	1	2	3	4	5
The company treats well its employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In case X, the employees are seen as individuals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company is creative and dynamic workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work and working in the case X is flexible and I can have an influence on it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Team work is in high part of the work task.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The company can offer challenging and responsible work tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the case X, I have an opportunity to work in international tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, the company can provide secure and safe employment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the company, I can work with well-planned processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please fill the contact details in order to take part to the raffle. This is voluntary, and the details are not used in any other purposes.

Name (first name and surname) _____
Phone no   _____
Email   _____

My contact details can be used*
☐   To the raffle