Competing for talents
How a company can work with employer branding and talent management to attract talents

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Hannah Benon
Charlotte Jansson

Supervisor: Jukka Hohenthal
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Hannah Benon                           Charlotte Jansson
This case study examines how a company can work with employer branding and talent management in order to attract students. The study explores how these concepts can be combined in the joint activity and what the implications are of arranging such an activity. This is illustrated through the case competition Brandstorm, arranged by L’Oréal Group. The study has a qualitative approach and it is based on in-depth interviews with managers on three different organizational levels at L’Oréal. The result shows that using a case competition as a joint activity is a tool to combine employer branding and talent management. The aim of a joint activity is two folded; the case is developed by the employer branding team to create awareness and appear as an attractive employer, further targeting students in order for the talent management team to spot and recruit talents. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of communicating a consistent Employer Value Proposition (EVP) that conveys symbolic values. A case competition can also be seen as a tool for managing talents and creating of talent pools. It is further clear that collaborating with universities is preferable when targeting students, thus conveying an attractive employer brand image.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Talent Management, Employer Brand Management, Employer Value Proposition, Employer Brand Image, Talents, Talent Pools, L’Oréal.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5
   1.2 Aim and contributions .............................................................................................. 7
2. Theoretical framework .................................................................................................... 8
   2.1 Employer Branding .................................................................................................. 8
   2.2 Employer Brand Management .................................................................................. 8
      2.2.1 Employer Value Proposition ......................................................................... 9
      2.2.2 Brand communication and brand engagement .............................................. 9
      2.2.3 External reputation ....................................................................................... 10
   2.3 Talent Management ................................................................................................. 11
      2.3.1 Finding the best talents and creating talent pools ......................................... 12
      2.3.2 Talent positioning and how to attract talent ............................................... 13
   2.4 Summary of Theoretical framework ....................................................................... 14
3. Method .......................................................................................................................... 16
   3.1 Method approach ................................................................................................... 16
   3.2 Case study ............................................................................................................... 16
      3.2.1 Selection of case company ............................................................................ 17
      3.2.2 Case firm overview ..................................................................................... 17
      3.2.3 Selection of informants ............................................................................... 19
   3.3 Data collection ......................................................................................................... 21
      3.3.1 Primary data .................................................................................................. 21
   3.4 Data analysis ............................................................................................................ 24
   3.5 Limitations, Validity and Reliability ....................................................................... 24
4. Analysis & finding ......................................................................................................... 26
   4.1 Employer branding ................................................................................................. 26
   4.2 Employer Brand Management ............................................................................... 27
      4.2.1. Employer Value Proposition .................................................................... 27
      4.2.2 Brand communication and brand engagement ........................................... 29
      4.2.3 External Reputation ..................................................................................... 30
   4.3 Talent Management ............................................................................................... 31
      4.3.1 Finding the best talent and creating talent pools ......................................... 32
      4.3.2 Talent positioning and how to attract students .......................................... 33
5. Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 36
6. Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 38
   6.1 Suggestions for future research ............................................................................. 39
1. INTRODUCTION

There have been dramatic changes at the labour market during the last decade (Barrow & Mosley, 2011) due to increased advanced technology (Hager, Holland & Veckett, 2002; Datta, 2001) and inflated level of high education (Fulgence & Salaam, 2015). New advanced technology enables an enhanced information flow, mostly thanks to the Internet. In extension, this implies that information is easily spread between companies and people, including existing and potential employees, why a firm’s reputation constantly is at stake (Sullivan, 2004). Additionally, new conditions at the labour market implies that there is an increased amount of highly educated students with access to information, which forces companies to build and keep a good reputation in order to attract talents (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010; Anderson & Witvliet, 2008; Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005). A firm’s brand is considered to be its most valuable asset when attracting new talents and the need of enhancing the company’s reputation through branding has increased significantly during the last decade (Backhous & Tikoo, 2004; Aaker, 2004). Branding formerly referred to differentiating products from the competitors’, however the term has developed to include places, people and also employers (Peters, 1999).

The term employer branding, originally referred to the employer’s reputation, was coined as late as 1990 by Ambler and Barrow (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). During the late nineties marketing research journals started to examine the links between human resources and marketing. In the beginning of the new millennium employer branding became a widely accepted concept and started to be implemented by companies (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). The concept has since then been rather explored and developed (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Prior research has mainly focused on the organizational identity and the employer brand image (Lievens, van Hoye & Anseele, 2007; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994) and on the attractiveness and associations of a company as an employer (Livens & Highhouse, 2003; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) Today, employer branding is gaining importance and popularity amongst firms, as the competition for recruiting the most skilled employees is becoming even more important than attracting new customers (Keller & Richey, 2006; Berthon et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the focus on how companies can attract specific target groups through employer branding activities is relatively unexamined within the field of employer branding (Livens & Highhouse, 2003). Additionally, the increased focus on attracting and recruiting top talents within today's organizations (Tims, 2011), has implied that area of talent management has gained importance (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique, 2011). Further, the concept of talent
management became popular in 1997, when the well-cited report “War for Talents” was published by McKinsey & Co (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). The report highlights the increased demand and fierce competition between companies regarding recruiting and retaining talents (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). The concept is still developing, and there are only vague definitions of the term talent management so far (Aston & Morton, 2005).

There has been a shift in how companies market themselves as good employers, from using more traditional job advertisements to the usage of creative employer branding activities (Bringeus, 2005). This allows companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors, which is vital as the entry salary is stagnating and companies have to attracting top talent by using new methods in order to compete (Tims, 2011). Moreover, as firms are competing for new talents, students are becoming an attractive target group (Tims, 2011) since they are at an early stage in their careers with high avidity and motivation (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). In order to recruit and attract top talents the activities directed to students should therefore be designed to create awareness (Malati & Sehgal, 2013; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen & Schoonderbeek, 2013). When comes to attracting students, a growing trend among companies is to arrange case competitions (Bringeus, 2005; Käll, 2014). The method of using case competition has mainly been used as a recruitment tool by consultant agencies and it is based on a business case that the students has to solve based on their problem solving ability (Ireland, 2010). This has become a successful activity for students as they can get experience, show their skills and at the same time network with the existing. Firms organising case competitions seize the opportunity to create awareness, thus attract and recruit new talents (van Mossevelde, 2014a; Tims, 2011). Looking at Universum’s ranking list of the ‘most attractive employers’ in the Nordics 2015 (see appendix 5) all of them participate in, or arrange, case competitions (Universum, Ranking, 2016). The trend among ‘the most attractive employers’ is to have a close cooperation with universities and also to be part of the curriculum, through which the students perform consulting-like services in terms of research or case studies (O’Meara, 2015; Tims, 2011). Other trends include having student ambassadors and being present at business fairs arranged by the universities (Deloitte-talent, 2015; EY, 2015; KPMG, 2016; PwC student, 2016; EY student, 2016). The number one ranked company at Universum’s list over ‘the most attractive employer’ 2015 was L’Oréal Group (Universum, Ranking, 2016) who uses case competitions as a main tool to attract students. L’Oréal’s largest and most famous case competition is Brandstorm, which is an international competition that has enabled over 80 000 students across the world to work with L’Oréal and their top executives (Brandstorm,
The case competition is created by the global employer branding team, but executed by the local talent management team (Global Employer Branding Manager, 2016), hence the case competition could be characterized as an activity combining the two concepts of employer branding and talent management. Yet, contrastingly to the trends there seem to be a gap in theory of how companies can practice employer branding and talent management in order to attract students. Therefore, this study aims to answer the research questions below:

*How can a company work with Employer Branding and Talent Management to attract students?*

*What are the implication of combining these concepts in one activity?*

1.2 AIM AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The aim of this study is to explore how a company can practice employer branding and talent management when targeting students, by arranging a case competition. Further, the study will look upon the implications of combining employer branding and talent management in the joint activity in order to examine the connection between employer branding and talent management. Additionally, the study aims to research employer branding and talent management from a company perspective.

The study has both theoretical and practical implications. The concept of employer branding is still developing, originally emphasizing on the employer’s reputation, towards a more holistic perspective where the internal efforts supports the external employer branding activities (Mosley, 2007). Yet, companies’ effort to integrate employer branding with talent management remains unexplored (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2010). This study will demonstrate the concept of using a case competition as a combined employer branding and talent management tool in order to attract students. The study will therefore contribute with theory investigating the connection between the two concepts. The practical contribution is to provide companies with increased knowledge and understanding of how employer branding and talent management can be combined and practiced in a joint activity. Further, the study will contribute with insights on how to attract students using universities as a direct channel. The study will also offer an internal perspective of the process of arranging a joint activity, and the implications of it. Lastly, a managerial implication is an increased understanding of how a case competition could create awareness and attract talents, which potentially could lead to an enhanced employer brand reputation.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding is the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996:187)

Ambler & Barrow’s (1996) definition is most cited in the subject and their work has been a foundation for further research within this area (Lievens et al., 2007). Employer branding emanates from the strive to appear as an attractive employer by the target group (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Further, the employer brand aims to express the core of the organization, which is reflected in the employer brand identity (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; van Mossevelde, 2014b). The employer brand identity is based on the internal perspective, hence how the current employees perceive the company (Lievens et al., 2007; Balmer, 2001) and the company’s aspirational positioning (Aaker, 2004; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). The employer brand identity emanates from the firm’s mission and values and it is strongly related to the corporate culture (Aaker, 2004; Balmer, 2001). Furthermore, the employer brand identity is communicated externally which affects the employer brand image and thereby the attractiveness of the company (Lievens et al., 2007). Brand image is also connected to the brand associations (Aaker, 1991), as the public’s associations to the firm determines the brand image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2011). The associations are considered influenced by the instrumental- and symbolic framework (Dutton et al., 1994; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The instrumental attributes are specific and based on utility, in terms of salary, bonuses, working hours and other benefits (Dutton et al., 1994; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Elving et al., 2013), whilst symbolic attributes are intangible and are based on values and can be described as traits, for example status or innovative (Elving et al., 2013).

2.2 EMPLOYER BRAND MANAGEMENT

Employer branding has the potential of giving companies competitive advantages, if the employer branding strategies are designed effectively (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2011). It is argued that employer brand management should focus on creating an effective positioning for the employer brand, this is done through the (1) Employer Value Proposition (EVP). It further includes managing the communication, both externally and internally, to reach the target group and at the same time keep the managers engaged in the employer brand as their behaviour and attitudes will affect the impact of the employer brand.
management work, which is linked to (2) brand communication and brand engagement. Understanding the measurements of employer branding is also vital to be able to identify potential gaps between the current and desired employer brand image. This is most often measured through (3) the external reputation. (Barrow & Mosley, 2011)

2.2.1 EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

The Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is the employer brand identity presented in a unique package of benefits that the firm offer employees (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Universum EVP, 2016). The EVP should reflect the organizational identity and the values it provides (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). An effectively designed EVP could attract new employees, thus increase their interest in the employer (Universum EVP, 2016; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). In order to develop a unique and successful EVP, the employer needs to analyse the company both internally and externally (Universum EVP, 2016; Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Internally, it is crucial to convey an authentic and accurate impression, which is in line with organizational values and vision. Externally, the firm have to analyse the market in order to examine the target groups and their desires, to match the target group’s ideal image of an attractive employer. Thus, a competitive advantage needs to be identified and expressed in order to create a successful EVP (Universum EVP, 2016; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). It is common among firms to focus on the instrumental attributes when creating the EVP. However, research suggests that the employer brand image is more affected by the symbolic meaning, implying that companies should focus on conveying symbolic attributes (Elving et al., 2013), to appear as modern, genuine and innovative in order to differentiate (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Concluding, employer branding should be seen as a process where the company defines how it is superior as an employer, which ultimately is expressed through the employer value proposition (van Mossevelde, 2014b; Elving et al., 2013).

2.2.2 BRAND COMMUNICATION AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT

Employer brand management includes managing the firm’s communication, which enables the company to reach their desired target group with the EVP (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). All type of communication and interaction a firm has with the public is considered to affect the employer brand (Barrow & Mosley, 2011: Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Johnson & Roberts, 2006). Also, brand communication takes into account the indirect communication, such as word-of-mouth, media coverage and online publications (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Sullivan, 2004). The employer brand communication should emanate from the employee's perspective to add
credibility to the employer brand image (Elving et al., 2013). It is therefore considered vital that the employees, and all stakeholders, convey a true description, which responds to the shared image of the company, in order to attract talent successfully (Lievens et al., 2007; Aaker, 2004). Further, brand engagement can enhance employer brand communication, as the engaged personnel can act as brand ambassadors and thereby represent the firm (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). In order to motivate the employees, a firm can encourage them to share their stories about the company and its corporate culture which is usually done via an employer brand activity. The activity should be designed to convey the attractiveness of the company, primarily by expressing the benefits the employer provides in terms of knowledge and skills, training and career opportunities in job advertisements (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Elving et al., 2013). It is argued that successful employer branding activities are based on the associations and aspirations of the employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Additionally, involving the personnel in employer brand activities may increase their motivation and engagement, thus it may positively affect the employer brand image and attractiveness (Elving et al., 2013). Moreover, it is suggested that the recruitment process and interaction at an early stage of a person’s career, has a significant effect on the applicant's’ perception and the perceived attractiveness of the potential employer (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Elving et al., 2013). Therefore, a favourable channel for companies to get in contact with potential employees at an early stage is through Universities (Wilden et al., 2010). The interaction is often performed through job fairs, however nowadays a few companies are collaborating with universities to be part of the curriculum, in order to be top-of-mind as early as possible in the student's career choice (O’Meara, 2015; Tims, 2011).

2.2.3 EXTERNAL REPUTATION
Brand image and brand reputation have a close relationship, as a firm known for having good products, services or financial success often have a more positive employer brand image. Employees also tend to be proud over their employer when they are well spoken about externally. It is argued that a company’s reputation affects both the potential and existing employees’ brand image, however current employees tend to be more observant of external brand communication than potential employees. (Barrow & Mosley, 2011) Further, as a firm’s reputation is becoming increasingly important, several independent organisations has started to publish employer branding ranking lists of the “most attractive employer” (Sullivan, 2004). The employer branding organisation Universum publishes lists based on countries and regions worldwide, such as the Nordics (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark). Universum uses surveys
to gain data from students and professionals in how they rank the most attractive employer in that region, normally around 20,000 students and professional participate in the study. (Universum, Rankings, 2016) Being exposed on ranking lists can increase a firm’s credibility and it increases the recognition of the company. Further, a company can reach public recognition by getting mentioned in media or other contexts, which for example can be measured in the amount of times the company name is searched for on search engines like, for example, Google. (Sullivan, 2004) Additionally, employer branding campaigns can be an effective tool for companies to improve their reputation and the image of the brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

2.3 Talent Management

Talent management refers to “an organization’s efforts to attract, select, develop and retain talented key employees” (Mäkeleä, Björkman & Ehrnrooth, 2010:134). Talent management is based on individual performance and the fact that talents can be ranked by their capabilities and competencies. In this sense talents are characterized more by what they do and how they act rather than in which position or context they are operating in. (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Talent management is driven by four main factors, one of them being global demographic combined with economic trends, which refers to the population pyramid where longevity is increasing and birth rates are declining. In combination with an increased openness between countries and economic integrations it has widen the talent supply. Globalization is another driver, which has resulted in increased mobility of people as the immigration barriers have decreased. (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Schuler et al., 2011) Further, high-skilled workers have a higher immigration rate which affects the talent flow (Economist, 2006). Additionally, transformational changes of business environment are drivers, which refers to the shift towards knowledge-based economies where specialization and skilled employees is key to success, which impacts on the demand for talent. Lastly, diversity is a factor that is as a result of companies operating in different markets, it puts pressure on companies to manage a diverse population and shifting work modes, which affects career paths and incentive systems (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Shuler et al., 2011). Prior studies have shown that companies who are using talent management in the most successful has a well-developed internal strategy that is coherent throughout the organization, thus supports the activities the company performs to attract and recruit talents (Stahl, Björkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Siles & Wright, 2007). Talent management strategies should furthermore be anchored in the corporate culture and the employer brand identity (Stahl et al., 2007). Further, the usage of
talent management and how it is applied varies between companies, as some companies differentiates talents and potential talents from existing employees within the company, while other companies choose to not separate them as a group (Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

2.3.1. FINDING THE BEST TALENTS AND CREATING TALENT POOLS

The concept of talent management is derived from different theoretical streams, why there are vague definitions of talent management (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). However, the concept originates from the McKinsey report “War for Talents” which emphasized on attracting and recruiting A-performers and top talents. According to the report, companies aim for A-performers (Lewis & Heckman, 2006) which also implies to terminate “C performers”, why focus is on finding, hiring and rewarding top performance employees (Michaels et al., 2001). However, it is argued that only having A-performers and top talents is not desirable nor favourable, as it implies that there will be no difference in the performance between the employees, thereby making talent management equivalent with traditional human resource management (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). One of the challenges with talent management is to ensure that there is an adequate flow of employees into the organisation. In addition to this, the strive to attract the best talents has resulted in the creation of talent pipelines and talent pools, which refers to forecasting the need for talents as well as managing their development. A definition of the concept is; “a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents that the organisation can draw upon to fill pivotal talent positions” (Collings & Mellahi, 2009:307). The strategy of using talent pools refers to recruiting the best talents before having a clear position for them, instead of the traditional recruitment process where employees are assessed for a certain position (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Talent pools are in that way also connected to HR activities as it includes recruitment and selection of talents (Lermusiaux, 2005).

Companies tend to want talented people only when they need them, which has resulted in a talent–on-demand framework that has emerged at today's labor market resulting in the stock of talents. Talents on the other hand aim for fast career paths, early promotions and great responsibility. (Capelli, 2008b) Using talent pools in this way means that the company is proactive in finding top performers before it is urgent to fill empty positions (Sparrow, 2007). It is a way to reduce uncertainty for companies, as when attaining talents continuously to the pool it reduces the pressure on HR when there is a position to fill. Thus, it also shortens the lead time and the recruitment process as the talents are already in the loop, which allows companies to decrease their forecast and planning of employees (Capelli, 2008b; Mäkelä et al., 2011) The
usage of talent pools is common in larger organisations, as they often find the right people before finding the right position (Stahl et al., 2007). An implication when building and maintaining talent pools can be the mismatch between supply and demand. Oversupply of talents can result in turnover of employees or layoffs, where undersupply of talents can result in that key positions are not filled when needed (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Additionally, when the supply of talents is too high compared to the demand, the careers of the talents gets more “non-traditional” as they might have to be more flexible to move within, but also outside, the organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009: DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). As the talents are getting increasingly more inter-firm mobile, the talent pools need to be expanded externally and globally (Capelli, 2008b). Multinational companies therefore have to manage talent pipelines on an international level (Farndale et al., 2010). Hence, having one international talent pool within the firm allows companies to handle their talent investments and resources in a more efficient way (Capelli, 2008b).

2.3.2 TALENT POSITIONING AND HOW TO ATTRACT TALENT

In order to address the challenges at the labour market, companies have to adapt new strategic thinking and find solutions to attract talented people, thus achieve a successful talent positioning (Beechler & Woodward, 2009) Talent positioning refers to having “the right people at the right place at the right time” and is the result of having efficient talent management (Tarique & Schuler, 2010:128). To achieve such a position, there are several solutions companies can apply in order to attract top performers (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Starting, companies should address the employment processes, which refers to the type of person the company want to attract. Firms tend to search and favour certain profiles and nationalities, which impacts on their positioning as companies have to match the talents’ preferences regarding different means and incentives. Additionally, by adapting the search for talents and the incentives to the local labour markets, firms will attract more and better suited profile for their local needs (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Mäkelä et al., 2010; Shuler et al., 2011). Further, companies need to address the talents’ potential career paths and promotions within the organization, thus show the possibilities and tools for development (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Mäkelä et al., 2010). Firms can also join partnerships and collaborate with universities in order to attract, influence and develop top students. This allows companies to get in contact with high performance students during the time of their study, rather than after, while in return offer mentorships, tools and education for development and offer career possibilities. In order to adapt to the new
conditions and be proactive at the labour market, a few companies have started to engage in partnership with Master programs focusing on strategy and leadership at business schools and universities. This enables companies to integrate the students within the company via internships or part-time work before they graduate, thus at the same time train them, which results in gaining talents that are more relevant for future recruitments. (Beechler & Woodward, 2009)

2.4 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework in this study emanates from two managerial perspectives, employer brand management and talent management. Employer branding is a branch from marketing and human resources, and the concept in this study is mainly based on Ambler & Barrow’s (1996) definition of employer branding and employer brand management.

Employer brand management consist of three main areas of responsibility according to Barrow and Mosley (2011), the first one being the development of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) which is the unique package of benefits that the firm offer to both potential and existing employees (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Universum EVP, 2016). The second responsibility is regarding the brand communication and brand engagement. Internal brand engagement strengthens the brand communication, which in turn is vital when communicating the EVP and the employer brand. The brand engagement is also connected to employer branding activates, as the engagement of the employees are important for the success of the activity. (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Elving et al., 2013) Lastly, employer brand management includes managing the external reputation, however a firm cannot entirely control the reputation, therefore it is rather seen as a measurement tool. External reputation is also connected to the attractiveness of a firm, as a good reputation leads to a positive brand image, which can attract talents (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The concept of talent management is a branch from human resources, which was developed to recruit and keep talents within the company when competition and talent demand increased between companies (Michaels et al., 2001). The concept has been further developed into the strategy of creating talent pools, using talent pools implies that the company is proactive when finding talents to fill empty positions before it is urgent (Sparrow, 2007). This approach is common in larger organisations, which finds the right people before finding the right position (Stahl et al., 2007).
Both employer brand management and talent management has the objective of attracting talents to the company. Employer brand management and talent management originates from human resources; however, employer brand management also has its roots in the field of marketing. (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Beechler & Woodward, 2009) Arranging employer branding activates is a chance for companies to attract talents, by expressing the benefits that the employer can offer. Further it is also an effective tool for companies to improve their reputation and the image of the brand in order to appear as an attractive employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Elving et al., 2013). Employer branding activities is additionally a tool for recruiting talents (Barrow & Mosley, 2011), which is also an objective of talent management (Stahl et al., 2007). The figure below has been developed to illustrate the connection, the common aim of attracting talents, between employer branding and talent management, which forms the theoretical foundation of this study.

![Diagram of Employer Brand Management and Talent Management Connection Model](image)

Figure 1. Employer brand management and talent management connection model
3. METHOD

3.1 METHOD APPROACH

This study emanates from a qualitative approach, which is suitable when aiming for a deep understanding of the subject (Jacobsen, 2010; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012) and when little is known in the area (Jacobsen, 2010; Yin, 2014). The exploratory method was chosen, as there is a lack of prior empirical research within this specific field of combined employer branding and talent management activities, and the study aims at exploring this phenomenon. The exploratory approach implies openness and unique insights, preferably through interviewing experts within the subject. (Saunders et al., 2012). However, it also has explanatory characteristics as this study will examine how the case company is using talent management and employer brand management within the organisation. When researching a phenomenon that is still evolving, it contributes to new theory (Saunders et al., 2012; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), as in this case where there is a gap in theory within the connection between talent management and employer branding activities and this study will contribute with theory in how a joint activity can be practiced.

3.2 CASE STUDY

This qualitative research is performed through a case study, which is a preferable method when the aim is to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2014). “A case study explores a research topic or phenomenon within its context, or a number of real-life contexts” (Saunders et al., 2012:179). A case study is a favourable method when answering “how” and “what” questions (Saunders et al., 2012) which is aligned with this study as the aim is to research how employer branding and talent management is practiced. Further, the case study method was appropriate as it represents empirical descriptions of the phenomenon in a certain context (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012) which was lacking in previous research within this area. For the purpose of this study, a single case has been selected. Using a single case is beneficial as the case is considered to offer greater insights into a phenomenon that is unexplored, instead of exploring several cases less thoroughly (Saunders et al., 2012).
3.2.1 SELECTION OF CASE COMPANY

The case company chosen for this study is L’Oréal Group. The interest of the topic arisen as both authors participated in the case competition Brandstorm during 2015, which provided insights into the practical aspects of how the activity attracts talents. Due to the author’s experiences and interest in L’Oréal’s way of carrying out the activity, the case company and topic itself was chosen simultaneously on empirical grounds. However, after further investigations, empirical findings showed that employer branding activities has primarily been examined within the management consultant agency industry, or companies that provides these type of services (Tims, 2011), why it appeared interesting to examining L’Oréal who operates in the beauty industry. The case company was also voted as the number one “most attractive employer” in the Nordics 2015 (Universum, Ranking, 2016), which contributed to making L’Oréal a suitable case company for the purpose of this study. Thus, this implies that the choice of case company is characterized by a non-probability sampling, which is considered as the most practical method (Saunders et al., 2012; Jacobsen 2010). In order to narrow the research, since examining all the talent management and employer branding activities that L’Oréal Group performs would have been too extensive, the case competition Brandstorm was chosen as the main activity for the purpose. Brandstorm was considered the optimal choice as it is the most prioritized talent management and employer branding activity on which L’Oréal spends the most effort, time and money on to perform (Global Employer Branding Manager, 2016; Nordic Talent Acquisition Director, 2016). Furthermore, conducting the study using L’Oréal as a case company implied that they fulfilled the criteria of; (1) having both employer branding and talent management teams (2) targeting students and arranging student activities (3) having developed employer branding and talent acquisition strategies, thus perform activities based on these.

3.2.2 CASE FIRM OVERVIEW

L’Oréal was founded in 1909 by the chemist Eugène Schueller (L’Oréal, 1909, 2016). Today, L’Oréal Group is the market leading company within the beauty and cosmetic segment (Top 10 FMCG companies in the word, 2016) and was voted as the #34 on Forbes’ list over the World’s Most Valuable brands 2015 (World’s Most Valuable brands, 2016). L’Oréal Group’s portfolio contains out of 32 brands and additionally local brands. The company target five main segment, and to better serve these, L’Oréal is divided into five divisions; (1) Luxe Division (2) Consumer Product Division (3) Professional division (4) Active Cosmetic Division and (5) The Body Shop. The company has 82,900 employees around the world, and the organizational structure is divided into three levels; (1) international, (2) regional and (3) local. There is one
international headquarter which located in Paris, France, additionally there is five regional hubs on five continents, which act a regional headquarters. Further, L’Oréal are present in over 130 countries, and most of the countries have a local headquarters (L’Oréal, 2016)

L’Oréal segments their potential workforce into three groups; (1) students, (2) graduates and (3) professionals. When targeting students, L’Oréal arrange various employer branding and talent management activities, one being Brandstorm (Careers, L’Oréal, 2016). L’Oréal work directly with universities when promoting the case competition and the competition has turned into an educational touchstone for business schools worldwide (Brandstorm - A Breakthrough Innovation, 2016). The concept was developed in 1992, and Brandstorm was first launched as an assessment centre. Ten years later the first case competition started in Paris, however, the case competition was launched as late as in 2011 in the Nordics. The case competition is divided into three different stages, the first stage being a campus based final where students from the particular campus compete to be qualified to the Nordic finals. Additionally, there is a wild-card function in the competition, which allows students from other universities, then the ones L’Oréal collaborates with, to participate and the winner gets to compete directly in the Nordic final. The Nordic final is based in the regional headquarters in Copenhagen, and the winner will participate in the international final in Paris, which is the last step. This year (2016), more than 3000 teams worldwide are participating in the competition, which means that L’Oréal can reach over 9000 students globally with their employer branding message. The global case competition engages all the headquarters, from local to international. Brandstorm revolves around the brand La Roche-Posay this year, which is a brand that belongs to the Active Cosmetic Division. (L’Oréal, Brandstorm, 2016). Figure 2, on the next page, illustrates the informants’ relation to each other and their position in L’Oréal in relation to Brandstorm.
3.2.3 SELECTION OF INFORMANTS

The success of using a qualitative approach lies in the capability of finding participants that can contribute with profitable data (Saunders et al., 2012) and to interview people with expertise within the researched area (Jacobsen, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012). Due to the authors already established network within L’Oréal, the selection of case company implied an exclusive access to informants, which implied access to interviews with top managers within the areas of employer branding and talent management. The process in finding suitable informants was initiated after the first contact with the Nordic Learning for Development Manager, who provided information over managers involved in the talent management team and managers responsible for employer branding. By reviewing the organisational structure of the case company, in order to examine the managerial roles and their connections in the different levels of the local, regional and international offices, the managers that were most involved in Brandstorm was asked to be informants. The initial list over potential informants who were contacted included 12 employees; five managers from the Swedish headquarter, four managers from the Nordic HQ, and three managers from the international headquarter. Due to circumstances, primarily concerning time restraints, five of the respondents either declined to participate or was not available at the time. The criteria for choosing informants was primarily
grounded on; (1) their expertise and insights into student activities and mainly Brandstorm (2) that the informants had experienced at least one Brandstorm case competition and was involved in the 2016 years’ edition. Participants that has only been involved in this year's competition, which counts as one round in the below figure, was decided to be included as the interviews were conducted after all the national competitions were performed and their responsibility ended. Furthermore, in order to increase the validity of the study, it was considered important to interview several informants within the different functions involved in Brandstorm to be able to compare the empirical findings, which contributes to presenting a valid result (Saunders et al., 2012; Jacobsen, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants’ role at L’Oréal</th>
<th>Organisational level at L’Oréal</th>
<th>Function in L’Oréal</th>
<th>Years working at L’Oréal</th>
<th>Rounds involved in Brandstorm</th>
<th>Interview format</th>
<th>Interview guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Employer Branding Manager</td>
<td>International HQ Paris</td>
<td>Employer Branding Team</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skype Interview</td>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Talent Acquisition Director</td>
<td>Nordic Hub Copenhagen</td>
<td>Nordic Talent Acquisition Team</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Skype Interview</td>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist</td>
<td>Nordic Hub Copenhagen</td>
<td>Nordic Talent Acquisition Team</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Skype Interview</td>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Learning for Development Manager</td>
<td>Nordic Hub Copenhagen</td>
<td>Nordic Learning for Development team</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Skype Interview</td>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local HR Manager</td>
<td>Local Swedish Office</td>
<td>Swedish HR Team</td>
<td>0,25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Director</td>
<td>Local Swedish Office</td>
<td>Active Cosmetic Division Team</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Local Swedish Office</td>
<td>Active Cosmetic Division Team</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Selected informants at L’Oréal
3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative approach emanates from a non-standardised data collection, which has the advantage of evolving in different directions during the process (Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2011). The primary data that this study is based upon is conducted through in-depth interviews, which were performed with managers at the chosen case company, L’Oréal. In order to optimize the interviews, thus avoid spending unnecessary time from the informants, fundamental complementary data about the chosen case company was conducted from webpages and company reports. The secondary data has been localized through looking at the most cited theory and articles in the subject of employer branding and talent management, primarily by using the search engine Scopus and Business Source Premier. The importance of finding the correct references was vital, as it affects the reliability (Saunders et al., 2012; Jacobsen, 2010) why efforts have been made to find the original theories of employer branding and talent management to map the subject. Additionally, as the study has a managerial approach, the theory section is influenced by managerial theories to explain the subject of employer brand management and talent management.

3.3.1 PRIMARY DATA

The interviews performed for this study were non-standardised and semi-structured, as suitable for the purpose of exploring experiences, processes perceptions of a certain phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Jacobsen, 2002; Saunders et al., 2012). Semi–structured interviews were suitable as the aim of this study is to explore, thus gain a deeper understanding by obtaining rich information from the interviewees (Jacobsen, 2010; Yin, 2014). Further, semi-structured interviews offer the ability to let the interviewees be open to the subject and reduce the risk of biased answers (Yin, 2014). Since the empirical findings to a certain extend is based on the interviewees’ perceptions of the case company, it was considered important to decrease the risk of letting the informants affect each other's answers in any way. Consequently, the informants were not given an interview guide in advance, as the aim was to contain genuine and top-of-mind answers when it comes to questions regarding perceptions and associations, thus the interviews were held separately. Additionally, the informants were positioned in different countries and had various managerial roles within employer branding, HR and talent management at different levels. Therefore, it was considered crucial to adapt the interview guide slightly to capture each of the manager’s specific area of expertise, as it potentially could affect their view of Brandstorm. The interview guide then contained a composition of control questions, questions regarding employer branding management and talent management, and
lastly fundamental questions regarding the aim and practices of arranging Brandstorm as a joint activity. The employer branding and talent management questions were based upon the theoretical framework of this thesis, which contributes to simplify the analysis of the study (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Jacobsen, 2010) in order to examine the relationship between talent management and employer branding. Thus, as this study excludes the theoretical aspects of case competitions due to lack of prior research within this subject, the questions relating to the case competition Brandstorm was primarily asked in relation to talent management and employer branding as a tool for expressing these strategies and practices. The interviews with the informants at the international and regional levels were performed via Skype, as the informants were located in offices abroad and would have been difficult to conduct in person. The three interviews with the informants at the local Swedish level were performed face to face. All interviews initiated with the authors explaining the purpose of the study in the same manner to all informants. In order to assure the reliability in this study, thus decrease the risk of interpretation affects (Jacobsen, 2010), all interviews were recorded and transcribed in connection to the interviews. The transcription was then examined and reviewed by both the authors separately.

Table 2, below, illustrates the operationalisation of the concepts used in theory. The main concepts used in the study were chosen based on the phenomena this research is examining, a joint activity. Sub concepts within the main areas of employer branding and talent management, was considered suitable for the study and therefore further developed in the theoretical framework. Further, the main concepts were developed into conceptual definitions which in turn could set the measures and eased the forming of the relevant interview guides. Additionally, the operationalisation model was used to ensure that the initial measures had a theoretical foundation, which was the objective when developing the model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Theory definition</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer Branding</td>
<td><em>The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company</em> (Ambler &amp; Barrow, 1996)</td>
<td>To understand employer brand identity (Aaker, 2004; Balmer 2001) and employer brand image (Backhous &amp; Tikoo, 2004; Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal is perceived as an employer by their employees and potential employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Brand Management</strong></td>
<td>The management of all employer branding activities (Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>To understand the structure and management of employer branding internally (Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>How the employer branding responsibilities are divided within L’Oréal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Value Proposition</strong></td>
<td>Employer Value Proposition is the unique package of benefits the firm offer employees (Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011; Backhaus &amp; Tikoo, 2004)</td>
<td>To understand the offer a company creates based on their values (Maxwell &amp; Knox, 2009; Backhaus &amp; Tikoo, 2004; Elving et al., 2013)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal develops and use their EVP to attract talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand communication and brand engagement</strong></td>
<td>Brand communication refers to all internal and external communication a company performs, which is enhanced by brand engagement (Balmer &amp; Greyser, 2003; Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>To understand the importance of brand communication and brand engagement when working with the employer branding (Balmer &amp; Greyser, 2003; Sullivan, 2004; Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal engage their employees to have a more efficient brand communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External reputation</strong></td>
<td>The brand reputation is linked to the employer brand image and association with attractiveness of a firm (Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011)</td>
<td>To understand the implication of the external reputation a firm has based on their employer brand image (Barrow &amp; Mosley, 2011; Sullivan, 2004)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal measure the external reputation and why it is important to be perceived as an attractive employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talent Management</strong></td>
<td>“An organization’s effort to attract, select, develop and retain talented key employees” (Mäkeleä et al., 2010:134)</td>
<td>To understand how talents can be managed and recruited to a firm (Schuler et al., 2011; Beechler &amp; Woodward, 2009; Mäkeleä et al., 2010)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal use and integrate the concept of talent management within the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talent Pools</strong></td>
<td>A talent pool consists of high potential and high performing incumbents that the organisation can draw upon to fill pivotal talent positions (Collings &amp; Mellahi, 2009)</td>
<td>To understand how the usage of talent pools can optimize the recruitment of talents (Beechler &amp; Woodward, 2009; Collings &amp; Mellahi, 2009; Capelli, 2008a)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal manage and structure recruitment of talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talent positioning</strong></td>
<td>Talent positioning refers to having “the right people at the right place at the right time” (Tarique &amp; Schuler, 2010:128)</td>
<td>To understand what position a company has to take in order to attract the right people (Tarique &amp; Schuler, 2010; Beechler &amp; Woodward, 2009)</td>
<td>How L’Oréal finds and attracts talents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Operationalization of concepts
3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

There are four main criteria when conducting a rich data analysis; (1) all evidence should be examined in order to avoid loose ends (Yin, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012) why each of the interviews was listened to twice and the transcriptions were reviewed separately by both authors, (2) all interpretations should be carried out as it affects the result and (3) the analysis should focus on the most vital parts of the case (Yin, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012). This implied that the transcript of each interview were discussed by the authors in order to define common denominators and themes among the informants’ perceptions of the how the talent management and employer branding activity unfolds. Qualitative data is typically characterized by complexity and large volumes, highlighting the importance of categorising thus derive data to create themes to provide meaning in the context (Saunders et al., 2012). In order to make a clear analysis and ease the connection between theory, empirical findings and analysis, these categories were adapted to the theoretical framework, taking on a more deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2012). Accordingly, the data from the transcripts were therefore derived from two main categories of; employer branding and talent management, in order to present a coherent study. However, the answers that could not be split between these categories were derived to an additional category of the joint activity, Brandstorm. When structuring the data, it became clear that attractiveness permeated all the three categories, why it seemed difficult to derive it to an independent category. Furthermore, categorizing the data like this eases the forming of how the empirical findings should be presented (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). As the interview guides differed slightly between the interviews, the data was divided into different subcategories, which enabled visualising patterns and find interesting angles in the informants answers. These patterns resulted in the different themes in the analysis. The final categories from all transcripts were then compared, where the categories that included the most essential parts of the transcriptions related to the purpose was chosen to be presented in the analysis. Lastly, the analysis should include prior research and current information about the subject (Yin, 2014) where the results are compared to the theoretical framework (Bryman & Burgess, 2002) out of which new theoretical aspects were found.

3.5 LIMITATIONS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

This study is limited to one case, using a single case strategy implies that there is less capabilities for replication, as a multi case strategy could have offered a stronger support and theoretical propositions (Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). However, one of the reasons for
choosing a single case study strategy, when examine the phenomena, was to be able to collect in depth findings which can be done more efficient when focusing on one single case. Further, a market analysis of the top ten companies at the Universum’s list over the most attractive employers (see appendix 5) were carried out in order to establish whether to choose a multi case study or single case study strategy. This analysis showed that other case companies that could have been potentially included in this study, were not in the same industry as the first chosen case company, nor did their employer branding and talent management activities share the same characteristics as L’Oréal’s activity Brandstorm, why a comparative study was not considered interesting. As cases should be predicted to show similar results when performing a multiple cases study (Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2014) it was considered unfitting to choose a multi case strategy based on the character of the other companies and their employer branding activities. However, using a single case study is also characterized by lack of generalization abilities, and the results can therefore only be considered valid for the case of L’Oréal Group. Yet, the results can to some extent provide insight into the process and strategies of arranging talent management and employer branding activities.

It was considered crucial for the validity that all the informants received the same information regarding the study. Thus, as some interviews were performed via Skype and some face to face, this could potentially have affected the outcome in terms how the author's interaction with the informants affect their answers (Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, three of the interviews were performed in Swedish, which could imply that meaning has been lost in translation (Jacobsen, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012), the translations were therefore thoroughly reviewed by both authors of this study. The recording and transcription of the interviews can further assure the reliability. The validity could be considered strong, as the informants to a large extent did strengthen each other's statements. Finally, this study could potentially be biased by the fact that both authors has been employed by L’Oréal, and one of the authors still was when conducting the study. Yet, this could also be considered an advantage as the authors had better access and contacts within the case company. However, the employment could affect the level of critical stands directed towards L’Oréal as a case company, which has been taken in consideration when developing the analysis to avoid being biased to the authors’ best ability.
4. ANALYSIS & FINDING

4.1 EMPLOYER BRANDING

L’Oréal is an international organisation with French origin, which is expressed through the corporate culture. Prior research imply that the employer brand identity is strongly connected to and expressed through the corporate culture (Aaker, 2004; Balmer, 2001). This can be seen at L’Oréal, as all interviewees perceive L’Oréal’s identity as strongly characterized by fast movement and quick processes, which is a way of conducting business and at the same time a brand identity characteristic. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist explains “L’Oréal is an employer that put trust in their people. We do not have that many processes, so we put people before processes. It is much more about how the people handle the tasks”. Another trait that connects the corporate culture to the employer brand identity is the complex environment within L’Oréal, where the employees receive great responsibility straight away and “that is why L’Oréal is a fast track career path, which is very typical for L’Oréal” according to the Nordic Learning for Development Manager. The Commercial Director agrees and adds “I think L’Oréal is a very demanding employer, but also an employer that is keen on developing and always pushing the employee's forward and that creates the feeling of a fast pace environment, and either you like it and or you don’t”. This confirms the theory that the employer brand identity is developed internally (Barrow & Mosley, 2011), and it can both be positive and negative, depending on the receiver’s personal opinion. This also correlates to the idea that the brand identity is linked to the attractiveness and brand image of the firm (Lievens et al., 2007). Hence, if the brand identity characteristics, like fast track and complex environment, is perceived as something positive by a potential employee, the company will be more attractive and it will enhance the brand image. However, it can also be the other way around when the associations are perceived negative, as mentioned by the Commercial Director above.

All of the interviewees believe that L’Oréal’s employer brand image is responding to the employer brand identity, and the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director explains “I believe that they [students] see L’Oréal as fast pace and being innovative, but they see other things as well of course, hard work, international career, a tough French culture”. This explanation of the brand image correlates to the brand identity, which can be seen as successful brand image, as the brand image should reflect the brand identity (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). L’Oréal’s brand image can be considered affected by the employer branding activities the company arranges. The Global Employer Branding Manager argues that the international case competition,
Brandstorm, effect the brand image around the world, which in turn has created awareness and attracted students to apply to L’Oréal. The reputation of L’Oréal is key when the Global Employer Branding Manager talks about the case competition; “I think the case competition creates and builds a great reputation for L’Oréal that will spread awareness about the company”. Continuing looking at the student’s image of L’Oréal, The Nordic Talent Acquisitions Director points out “I also hear that graduates and students see L’Oréal as a bit out of their reach. It seems like their [students’] perception of L’Oréal is that it is very hard to get into, and to me we need to change our perception and be more approachable and visible in our approach in what we do. Because we want the best talents and it is not that easy”. This is also confirmed by the Local Trade Manager who explains that, “it appears as students put L’Oréal on a pedestal and they seem anxious to approach me as a representative during campus activities, but maybe we as representatives need to be more open to inviting students to approach us”. L’Oréal’s brand image amongst student can therefore be linked to symbolic attributes, rather than instrumental attributes (Dutton et al., 1994; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The symbolic attribute characterizing L’Oréal is mainly high status, which reflects in the students’ thoughts of L’Oréal being “out of reach”. However, is this instance, the high status of L’Oréal might imply negative effects as it could prevent students from applying to the company, according to the Nordic Talent Acquisitions Director.

4.2 EMPLOYER BRAND MANAGEMENT

4.2.1. EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

L’Oréal’s employer brand is managed globally by the employer branding team, who defines the international structure and framework. Further, the employer branding strategies emanates from the employee value proposition, which later on gets adapted when the local offices add their expertise. Prior research suggests that a competitive advantage need to be identified in order to create a successful EVP strategy (Universum EVP, 2016; Maxwell & Knox, 2009), which is something the Global Employer Branding Manager confirms; “We need to understand, what is our value proposition that distinguish us from other employers?” L’Oréal’s EVP is based on three values, which is aligned with Backhaus and Tikoo’s (2004) discussion that the EVP should reflect the organizational identity and the values it provides. L’Oréal’s EVP, according to the Global Employer Branding Manager, is the following;
1. To be an inspiring employer - “We consider ourselves to be an inspiring workplace, because of our story, as we were founded by a pioneer chemist, and we have a business model that is done by the creation of brands and the acquisition of brands”.

2. To be an exciting company – “L’Oréal has 5 different divisions and 32 international brands and we offer a very divest possibility of careers to our employees”.

3. To offer a school of excellence – “We are innovating and always pushing the limits and although we are leaders in beauty we want to be the best at everything we do, so we are definitely seen as a school of excellence for marketing and sales profiles.”.

L’Oréal’s EVP focuses on symbolic attributes, in terms of the traits inspiring, exciting and innovating, rather than instrumental attributes. This correlates to Elving et al.,’s (2013) argumentation that a company should focus on symbolic attributes when creating an EVP, as symbolic attributes has a stronger effect on the brand image. Further, the EVP should express a company's competitive advantage as an employer, which is the aim of the employer branding process (van Mossevelde, 2014b; Elving et al., 2013). However, employer branding within L’Oréal has previously not been in focus, but the subject has gained importance both internally and externally during the last five years. The Nordic headquarter has mandate to localize the employer branding strategies and deploy the employer value proposition. The difference in working with employer branding at different levels within the company, according to the Global Employer Branding Manager, is that “on the international level we are 100% of our time dedicated to employer branding, and on local level the team is split by recruitment and employer branding”. Currently, the Nordic employer branding strategies are under construction as they are rebuilding their forms of communication. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Director claims that “L’Oréal have to develop strategies on how to become more local, how do we attract more men, how do we make sure that the message gets out and defining our unique selling proposition”, the quote above shows that the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director has analysed the local market to understand what the target group want and need. Yet, the EVP is developed on a global level which the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director then adapts to the fit the local market, this could contradict prior suggestions on how to develop a successful EVP and strategies, as a company should perform an external analyse of the operating market before setting the employer branding strategies (Universum EVP, 2016; Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). With that said, it is not possible to change the strategies or the EVP in a greater extent on a local level, this could have a negative effect on the local attractiveness of the company.
4.2.2 BRAND COMMUNICATION AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT

All brand communication the company performs affects the employer brand (Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Johnson & Roberts, 2006), which the Global Employer Branding Manager is well aware of. One example is the process of arranging the case competition Brandstorm, which is an employer branding activity. The process includes internal lobbying and communication of the concept in order to get the employees engaged to participate and fill the different roles at the campus visits and the finals of the case competition. Brand engagement is vital for L’Oréal when arranging different activities, which is aligned with Barrow and Mosley’s (2011) thoughts of the subject. They argue that brand engagement will enhance the employer brand communication as it will appear sincerer. The Nordic Learning for Development Manager explains; “people are generally very happy to work at L’Oréal and are proud of it, therefore they want to join the activities we arrange. However, the huge challenge that everyone is aware of is the heavy workload, so spending time on campus to introduce Brandstorm and be part of the jury is of course a challenge for the employees”.

There are two main criteria when choosing the employees to participate at the campus activities, firstly the employees’ expertise in the matter, but more importantly the employees’ ability to embed and promote the company, as they become brand ambassadors. The Nordic Learning for Development Manager describes how she select brand ambassadors for Brandstorm… “I often choose men to accompany me, as we want to attract more men to the company. I also try to think about the dynamics between the campus representatives to represent L’Oréal in the best way”. As of yet, L’Oréal do not have any set guidelines for the employees when being a brand ambassador, however this is work in progress, as the Global Employer Branding Manager explains; “we do not have guidelines yet, we are in the development of this. We are discussing how to guide our employees to tell their stories and share their experiences, in a very informal way without strict guidelines, otherwise it will become fake”. This is aligned with Sullivan’s (2004) argumentation that employees should be authentic and share their own stories, as it can lead to enhanced brand engagement. Further, the Global Employer Branding Manager is aware that brand communication appears to be more genuine when it is expressed by an employee, which is aligned with Barrow and Mosley’s (2011) research as well. However, the employees at L’Oréal might need some structure when being brand ambassadors, the Trade Marketing Manager, who is judging Brandstorm this year, confirms that they have not been given any guidelines when representing the company; “We have not received any information about our roles; we have been given the same information
as the students basically”. The Trade Marketing Manager’s quote implies that Brandstorm is not based on the associations and aspirations of the employees, opposing Backhaus and Tikoo’s (2004) theory on what a successful employer branding activity should be based on.

4.2.3 EXTERNAL REPUTATION

The external reputation of L’Oréal is very important according to the Global Employer Branding Manager, as L’Oréal’s reputation is strongly connected to the employer brand image, which is aligned with Barrow & Mosley’s (2011) theory. L’Oréal’s way of understanding and measure their reputation and brand image is mainly through surveys carried out by Universum. L’Oréal’s measurements are aligned with the growing trend of using these type of services according to Sullivan (2004). Universum uses surveys to gain data from around 20,000 students (Universum, Rankings, 2016), and the Global Employer Branding Manager argues; “As 50% of our recruitments are students and graduates, we are very aligned with Universum and the results of the survey to understand how the students globally see us.” He continues to explain that these surveys have shown that L’Oréal is perceived as “a company where you can have a career with great mobility, big responsibility, and with an international scope, but also as a place where you get trained, receive a good education, coaching and development”. Further, L’Oréal has been announced to be the “most attractive employer” in the Nordics year 2015 (Universum, Ranking, 2016), which has also been the objective, the Nordic Learning for Development Manager explains: “The objective was of course to become number one, as we were number three two years ago. Brandstorm is definitely a tool for it, in the sense that students get to experience the culture as much as we can advertise the actual work inside the company and the L’Oréal mind-set”. Being number one on Universum’s list is way for L’Oréal to increase their credibility and also to be highlighted in a positive context, which is the outcome of being exposed on ranking lists according to Sullivan (2004). The Global Employer Branding Manager and the Nordic Learning for Development Manager argues that L’Oréal’s reputation gets increasingly positive when arranging employer brand activities, especially when arranging the case competition Brandstorm. This correlates to Backhaus and Tikoo’s (2004) theory suggesting that employer branding activities can be an effective tool for companies to improve their reputation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Looking at Brandstorm, the Global Employer Branding Manager explains that the media coverage is extra high for L’Oréal during the six months’ period of the competition. Additionally, the brand that the case revolves around each year gets more recognition and free advertising, in terms of attention on social media. This aligns with Sullivan’s (2004) theory that a company can reach public recognition by being
mentioned in various media. The Global Employer Branding Manager explains “every year we have high media coverage starting from the launch to the international finals in Paris, so we have around two million euros in media coverage and including all work done in social media channels”. Concluding, Brandstorm is an employer branding activity with the aim of creating a great reputation for L’Oréal as an employer in order to attract talents. The aim of attracting talents is shared with talent management team, the Nordic Learning for Development Manager explains; “The aim for me is double, worldwide it is an employer branding tool, putting L’Oréal on the spot when it comes to business students and business schools. Locally on the other hand, the [talent] recruitment part of Brandstorm, is the main objective of the game”.

4.3 TALENT MANAGEMENT

Finding talents is getting increasingly important for the success of L’Oréal according to the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director, corresponding to the drivers of talent management regarding today’s changing business climate and the demand for highly skilled employees (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Shuler et al., 2011). One of the objectives when arranging Brandstorm is to recruit new talents; “every year we recruit more than 130 profiles, last year we recruited 150 profiles coming from the competition worldwide”, according to the Global Employer Branding Manager. The talent management teams at L’Oréal handles all talent acquisitions and student activities. In the beginning of 2016, a Nordic talent acquisition team consisting of two employees was put together to optimize the talent acquisitions in the Nordics. “It is a part of our target to attract more Nordic talents, that is why we are in the main schools in the Nordics to get the talent directly after the graduation” says the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist argues that finding talents is all about finding the right people with the right mind-set and capabilities. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Director agrees and argues that “what is really important to say is that, yes, it is hard work, but we play hard as well, so it is all about passion. You need to have your passion with you, either you have it within your area of expertise or for the brand itself. So of course we lose some people on that, but in the end they would not be right for L’Oréal anyway.” L’Oréal’s definition of talents is aligned with theory which emphasize on the individual's abilities and competencies, implying that talents are defined in terms of what they do and how they solve tasks (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). The talent management approach within L’Oréal is mainly the development of talent pools, but also the recruitment of “A-performers” and top students. Still, the dissimilarity from the traditional “A-performers” theory is that
L’Oréal does not perform evaluations, which aims to terminate “C performance” (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Nevertheless, L’Oréal differentiate talents to other employees, further they also divide talents into three categories; graduates, students and young professionals, similar the performance based approach (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). The motivation differs between these groups, according to the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director; “students are more short-term and have a ‘what’s in it for me-attitude’. It is often about international experience, getting your hands dirty and work hard while getting a first great job”.

4.3.1 FINDING THE BEST TALENT AND CREATING TALENT POOLS

One of the tools L’Oréal uses to find talents is the case competition Brandstorm, which has proven to be an excellent tool for finding high performing students. The competition requires great engagement from the participants, which makes it easy for L’Oréal to spot the best talents hence the ones that performs superior in the competition. The Nordic Learning for Development Manager explains that recruiting and building talent pipelines are the biggest benefits with Brandstorm. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Director agrees; “having students working on the case in the competition is a unique opportunity for us, as it is the best assessment centre that I can get, it does not get better than that.” The fast pace environment within L’Oréal requires short processes, especially when recruiting, the Local HR Manager claims “it is really important to be agile and fast. When we are not fast, we are not able to get the best talents because someone will get them before us”. This aligns with Sparrow’s (2007) theory on finding talents before finding positions, as competitors might otherwise recruit the talents faster. Further, L’Oréal’s approach on finding talents fast can be a result of Cappelli’s (2008a) idea that talents are getting more mobile and flexible, which puts more pressure on the companies to have strong relationships with the students through the talent pipeline. This is further the main reason for L’Oréal to reach out to the students via universities, as it allows them to get another level of commitment from the students, thus work with establishing talent pipelines. L’Oréal’s case competition is enrolled in the curriculum at a few universities and business schools in Sweden, the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director explains why; “I think it is much more committing to have a [business] relationship with a professor, both to us and for the students. The benefits are much more loyal relationships with the students”. The enhanced commitment from the students is something the Nordic Learning for Development Manager agrees on, and she also discuss the fact that L’Oréal can control students better when working directly with universities and collaborating with the professors. However, since the case competition is a part of the curriculum, it is mandatory for the students taking the course to
participate, which could explain the enhanced commitment as students are focusing on their grades as well. The close relationship with the students could gain both parties, according to the Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist; “This cooperation [between L’Oréal and universities] has turned out to give us better Brandstorm ideas and helped us find more talents. We are actually able to attract more talents when we work with universities, and it is a lot easier to build up a relation with the students, which is beneficial for both of us”.

In Sweden, L’Oréal offers internship to highly performing students each semester, why they are depending on finding the right profiles in time to fill the positions. This puts great pressure on the talent acquisition team, as it can be challenge to find profiles who matches the criteria. One of the criteria being that the talent has to be enrolled within the university during the internship period at L’Oréal, corresponding to Beechler and Woodward’s (2009) theory which suggests that it is beneficial to target talents during their period of study as they are more relevant for future recruitments. Further, the challenge of finding right profiles could lead to the potential mismatch between supply and demand of talents, which can result in positions not being filled when there is a demand (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Further, theory suggest that the talents-on–demand approach implies a more efficient use of investments and resources (Capelli, 2008b). This can be seen at L’Oréal when the supply of talents matches the demand and it results in effectiveness within the organization when the positions are filled. Contrastingly, when there is a potential mismatch of a talents for a certain position it can result in increased costs in terms of resources and efforts to find new talent. Additionally, not filling a position can lead to an allocation of the workload within the teams, affecting the existing employees. Further, using talent pools is a way to shorten the recruitment processes and it eases the pressure on HR (Capelli, 2008b), which contradicts the empirical findings. The Nordic Learning for Development Manager claims that using Brandstorm as a recruitment tool is a quite heavy process compared to other tools; “I recruit more students from other type of activities that would not require as much efforts and investments”.

4.3.2 TALENT POSITIONING AND HOW TO ATTRACT STUDENTS

When searching for talents in the Nordics, the talent acquisition team is responsible for handling the split between the four countries, and the strategy on how to do this is still evolving; “We try to focus equally on the four Nordic countries to be as present as possible and to keep it consistent, but of course it is hard sometimes as there are different conditions in the different countries and their universities” says the Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist. The Nordic
Talent Acquisition Director adds “the focus we have on Denmark is the focus on getting the right people in the right positions. And since Denmark is the biggest country, it makes sense that we spend more time here. Actually, almost 50% of the employees employed in the Nordics are based in Copenhagen”. This correlates with theories suggesting that companies are sometimes biased in their search for talents, and may favour certain profiles and nationalities (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Schuler et al., 2011). In the case of L’Oréal, it appears to be the location of the Nordic headquarter in Copenhagen that results in the increased engagement in finding talents in Denmark. As mentioned previously, in Sweden, Brandstorm is connected directly with students through selected universities, where the case competition is also included in the curriculum, which is not the case for the other Nordic countries. The Nordic Talent Acquisition Director argues that many teams entering the Nordic competition consists of international team members or exchange students. These students might not be ideal candidates for further recruitments from a Nordic perspective, as she explains: “I see a lot of international teams participating, for me it is not my pipeline. However, it’s great if they win, as they can be a pipeline for example China’s or Malaysia’s talent acquisitions teams, that is perfectly fine, I am happy to share my pipeline with them, but of course, I would rather have more local teams”. Theory suggests that adapting the search for talents to the local markets will result in better suited talents (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Mäkelä et al., 2010; Shuler et al., 2011) why it could be argued that it may be beneficial for L’Oréal to adapt the competition or adjust the conditions for participants to find talents to better serve the Nordic demand for recruiting talents. However, this contradicts the reason for creating talent pools, as it should be used to spot talent, no matter where they end up in the organisation. It also opposes theories on that international pipelines contributes to more efficient way of handling talent management in a global organisation (Farndale et al., 2010; Capelli, 2008b).

Addressing a clear career path and show the tools for development is getting increasingly important for companies when it comes to attracting talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Mäkelä et al., 2010). When it comes to visualizing career paths, L’Oréal’s offer is on point. The message is mainly about communicating the given responsibility, the Nordic Talent Acquisition Director explains that L’Oréal focuses on encouraging talents to “be the entrepreneur of your own work. You get great ownership from day one. You invest in your career, and if you outperform your position, the world is open to you.” Further, students from different fields of study can enter the case competition, which enhances the awareness of the
different functions and also possibilities at L’Oréal, hence it is a great tool to attract a variety of students, according to the Nordic Learning for Development Manager.

Moreover, Beechler and Woodward (2009) claim that another solution to find talents is via universities and master programs, one of L’Oréal’s antecedent to collaborate with universities is the location itself, as that is where the students are when studying. L’Oréal’s talent management strategies primarily include cooperating with the talent network NOVA, and CEMs which is an add-on Master program, where L’Oréal is the partner company. Additionally, L’Oréal arrange assessments days and other case competitions, thus they are present at business fairs at the top ranked universities and business schools in the Nordics as; “it is a good opportunity to talk to students face to face and show them what L’Oréal has to offer”, according to the Nordic Talent Acquisitions Specialist. L’Oréal appears to be an excellent empirical example, which supports the theoretical suggestions on that joint partnership, and collaborations with universities will enable contact with high performance students (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The activities that show most effect in terms of attracting talents are the case competitions, why the Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist argues; “this or next year, we aim to do more case competitions with the different schools. We are already working with how to make the students help us with the different problems we have and to also give them more insights to the company”. Brandstorm is not only beneficial for L’Oréal, but is also seen as a great experience for the students with positive outcomes. The Global Employer Branding Manager discuss the fact that the students are exposed to and practice a “real life” business case, which can help them in future job roles, preferably at L’Oréal. This confirms theories of finding relevant talents by integrating and educating the students in the company, before hiring (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The Commercial Director confirms that the students’ development is in focus; “the judging part of it is also about developing the students’ skills. I was very surprised to see that so many of the students lacked skills in presenting. This is an area that I think they would need more educational support in developing these skills, which is something we can help students with”. This suggests that universities and private companies can both benefit from these types collaborations, as companies can assist with complementary education and training, which will profit the students.
Over the last five years L’Oréal has revised the company’s employer branding and talent management strategies. Employer branding was previously not as prioritized as it is today, and the empirical findings shows that the employees share a similar perception of L’Oréal’s brand identity, which could be an effect of the increased focus. A shared perception of the brand identity amongst employees can be seen as something positive, as a strong brand identity translates better into keeping a consistent brand image. Further, having a distinctive corporate culture could be considered to strengthening the brand identity. L’Oréal’s brand image mainly reflects symbolic attributes, rather than instrumental, and they want to convey attributes as inspiring, exciting and innovating, which according to Elving et al., (2013) is more beneficial when promoting the employer brand. These symbolic attributes are also the foundation of L’Oréal’s brand identity and is expressed through the Employer Value Proposition (EVP). The Global Employer Branding Manager implies that the powerful EVP has contributed to give L’Oréal a competitive advantage as an employer. However, a strongly etched EVP that is created on a global level can be somewhat negative for local offices, as their knowledge of the market drivers is not always taken in account when creating the corporate EVP. Hence, this could be an explanation to when global firms choose to use symbolic attributes when creating the EVP, as it is more relatable and consistent internationally, than the instrumental attributes such as salary and working hours, as they might differ between markets. Yet, communicating a clear career path, which has been argued to be an increasingly important factor when attracting talents (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Mäkelä et al., 2010), could be perceived as both a symbolic and instrumental attribute. This questions Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail’s (1994) framework on symbolic and instrumental attributes, why this study instead suggests that symbolic attributes in fact can be perceived as conveying both symbolic and instrumental associations.

According to Beechler & Woodward (2009), collaborations with universities is an excellent way get in contact with top students, and this study argues that L’Oréal is an excellent empirical example using this strategy, especially seen in the case competition. This type of activity allows the talent management team to meet students, assess them and at the same time evaluate their performance on site in the case competition. Attracting top students is beneficial when widening the talent pool, where again, a case competition is a good example of an employer branding activity to achieve this. Still, the usage of talent pools can have implications, in this case L’Oréal’s talent management team could be considered favouring
certain profiles and nationalities when hunting talents, as they would rather assess a student participating in Brandstorm that are able to work within the Nordic, than recruiting talents to other local headquarters within the organisation. Therefore, this could again be an argumentation for why employer branding and talent management should be more adapted to a local level, to attract local talents. However, this is not the case for the joint activity Brandstorm as it lacks inputs from local employees. This contradicts theory suggesting that employer branding activities should be based on associations and aspirations from employees that has knowledge of the local office and market, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004). Further, using talent pools aim to ease the workload for the HR and talent management functions, as the talents are already in the talent pool, this study shows that the workload when arranging a joint activity is greater for the talent management team than the direct benefits of it in terms of recruitment. Nevertheless, a joint activity could have a positive impact on the employer brand image which could be lead to attracting more talents overall. A positive brand image could potentially be measured though ranking lists, performed by independent organisations (such as Universum).

Concluding, this study illustrates the usage of a case competition as a joint activity, combining employer branding and talent management. Employer brand management aims to attract talents by enhancing the employer’s image and reputation, thus market the company as a good employer. Further, talent management also aims to attract talents, thus this study shows that the focus is on assessing them for potential future recruitment. As employer branding and talent management has its roots in HR, the common aim is to attract talents. Therefore, a joint activity between the functions is shown to enhance the attractiveness of the employer and thereby the recruitment of top talents, as seen in the modified model below (figure 3, next page). However, this study shows that employer brand management is more strategical, and the benefits of the joint activity is a good reputation which is more long term. Further, the study shows that talent management is executed on a more operational level in a joint activity, where the outcome is more direct in terms of recruitment and expansion of the talent pool.
6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore how employer branding and talent management can be combined in a joint activity in order to attract students. The study concludes that one of the most beneficial and effective ways for companies to find talents and top students is via universities. This strategy enables enhanced engagement from the students and it strengthens the relationship between the company and the students, which can lead to attracting and recruiting talents. The method of being enrolled in the curriculum might however have some implications, as the students may be engaged in the activity only to improve their grades, which is insufficient for the purpose of the activity.

The result also shows that a joint activity puts great pressure on the both employer branding and talent management functions, which stresses the need for clear strategies in exactly how the joint activity should be practiced and how the responsibilities should be divided between the functions. Further, the study shows that lack of information in how the activity should be practiced and combined can results in confusion of how the activity should be executed locally. It suggested in this study that a clear and anchored aim of the joint activity will enhance the outcomes.

Moreover, it can be argued that communicating an EVP based on symbolic attributes is the key to success, as it has the ability be adapted locally which can attract all kind of students, broadening the target applicants and contributing to building a strong talent pool.
consisting of top students. The study shows that students today values a fast track career path, in terms of getting great responsibility and tools for development. However, great responsibility is also synonymous with long working hours and a heavy workload, which traditionally is seen as instrumental attributes, thus could also be a sign of status or prestige, which are symbolic attributes. It can further be concluded that the perception of instrumental and symbolic attributes, such as the corporate culture, values and working life differs on a global versus level. It is suggested that a multinational company should focus on a EVP conveying symbolic attributes that can be adapted to be able to attract students and employees in different markets.

Concluding, this research suggests that a joint activity, combining employer branding and talent management, creates awareness and attracts talents. The common aim of attracting talents culminates in different outcomes for the two functions. When managing the activity successfully, it could have positive impact on the brand image, which ultimately enhances the reputation of the company as an attractive employer.

6.1 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on exploring employer branding and talent management from a company perspective, however it would be of interest to examine how a joint activity is perceived from the perspective of the students participating in the activity. Additionally, in order to measure the outcomes and effects of a joint activity, it is suggested that future research could take on a quantitative approach examining the amount of students that was offered a position after participating in a joint activity, thus how they perceive the experience. Moreover, it would be interesting to perform a multi case study examining the relation between employer branding and talent management. A multi case study would enable a comparison of how a joint activity is practiced in other companies, allowing generalizations. Lastly, this study was performed by exploring how employer branding and talent management is practiced through a case competition. Suggesting that future researcher can explore how talent management and employer branding can be combined in other types of activities targeting students.
7. REFERENCES

7.1 LITERATURE


Lievens, F, & Highhouse, S (2003), The relation of instrumental and symbolic attribute to a company’s attractiveness as an employer *Personnel Psychology*, Volume 56, Issue 1, Pages 75-102


### 7.2 INTERNET


7.3 INTERVIEWS

Global Employer Branding Manager at L’Oréal International Headquarter, Paris, March 8, 2016, Stockholm, Skype interview

Nordic Learning for Development Manager at L’Oréal Nordic Headquarter, Copenhagen, March 30, 2016, Stockholm, Skype interview

Nordic Talent Acquisition Director at L’Oréal Nordic Headquarter, Copenhagen, April 7, 2016, Stockholm, Skype interview

Nordic Talent Acquisition Specialist at L’Oréal Nordic Headquarter, Copenhagen, March 1, 2016, Stockholm, Skype interview
Local HR Manager at L’Oréal Swedish Headquarter, Stockholm, April 6, 2016, Stockholm, personal interview

Commercial Director at ACD at L’Oréal Swedish Headquarter, Stockholm, April 5, 2016, Stockholm, personal interview

Trade Marketing Manager at ACD at L’Oréal Swedish Headquarter, Stockholm, April 4, 2016, Stockholm, personal interview
APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE EMPLOYER BRANDING TEAM

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS - L’ORÉAL

1.2 What is your role at L’Oréal?

1.3 How long have you been working for L’Oréal / at your position?

1.4 What does your team look like? The employer branding team.

2. EMPLOYER BRANDING

2.1 How do you perceive L’Oréal as an employer?

2.2 Do you think there is a difference between how you as an employee perceive L’Oréal and how students perceive L’Oréal?

2.2 What is L’Oréal’s employer branding strategy? How do you work with employer branding?

2.3 What is L’Oréal’s Employer value proposition, and how do you communicate this?

2.3.1 Why do you think students should apply to L’Oréal? What is the communicated offer adapted to students?

2.4 L’Oréal was ranked as the no 1 most attractive employer in the Nordics by business students on Universum’s ranking list;
   2.5.1 What associations do you think students have towards L’Oréal?
   2.5.2 Have you had objectives related to this ranking list? What is your strategy to become number 1?

2.5 What are the effects of L’Oréal’s employer branding activities?
   2.5.1 How do you measure this?

2.6 How do you work with your employees as employer brand ambassadors?

2.7 Why is it important for L’Oréal to attract students/persons at an early stage?

2.8 How do you communicate L’Oréal as an employer brand externally and internally?
2.7 Do you keep a consistent employer brand strategy on local levels? Are there guidelines to the local headquarters?

3. BRANDSTORM - DEVELOPING THE CASE

3.1 Can you please explain the concept Brandstorm to us with your own words?

3.2 What is the aim with Brandstorm?

3.3 What does the Brandstorm process look like internally?

3.4 How does the communication process work when working with Brandstorm - as it is an international project?

3.5 Why does L’Oréal work with case competitions as an employer branding tool?
   3.5.1 What are the outcome of hosting Brandstorm?

3.6 How and why do you work directly with universities directly? What are the benefits vs challenges?

3.7 What are the challenges with arranging employer branding activities like Brandstorm? Are there any negative effects?
APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE TALENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS - L’ORÉAL

1.2 What is your role at L’Oréal?

1.3 How long have you been working for L’Oréal / at you position?

1.4 What does your team look like?

2. EMPLOYER BRANDING

2.1 How do you perceive L’Oréal as an employer?

2.2 Do you think there is a difference between how you as an employee and students perceive L’Oréal?

2.2 How do you work with employer branding?

2.3 What is L’Oréal’s Employer value proposition?

2.3.1 Why do you think students should apply to L’Oréal?

2.4 What are the effects of L’Oréal’s employer branding activities?

2.4.1. How do you measure these effects?

2.5 L’Oréal was ranked as the no 1 most attractive employer in the Nordics by business students on Universum’s ranking list, how did you reach that position?

3. TALENT MANAGEMENT

3.1 We have seen that you divide potential employees in three groups, student, graduates, professionals - Why divide it like this?

3.2 Why do you work directly with universities?

3.3 What makes Brandstorm a unique case competition?

3.4 What is the aim with Brandstorm?

3.5 What are the outcome of hosting Brandstorm for you?
3.6. Do you think the different functions participating in Brandstorm within L’Oréal has different objectives with Brandstorm?

3.7 Are there some negative aspects of hosting Brandstorm or something you want to change, in that case, what mandate do you have?

3.8 How much efforts and resources do you put in the competition in relation to the outcome?

3.9 What other activities does the talent management strategy include that is directed towards students?

3.10 Have the recruitment processes of students or talent acquisition process changed since you started to actively work with talent management?
1. GENERAL QUESTIONS - L’ORÉAL

1.2 What is your role at L’Oréal?

1.3 How long have you been working for L’Oréal / at you position?

1.4 What does your team look like? The employer branding team.

2. EMPLOYER BRANDING

2.1 How do you perceive L’Oréal as an employer?

2.2 Do you think there is a difference between how you as an employee perceive L’Oréal and how students perceive L’Oréal as an employer?

2.2 How do you work with employer branding?

2.3 What is L’Oréal’s Employer value proposition, and how do you communicate this?

2.3.1 Why do you think students should apply to L’Oréal?

2.5 L’Oréal was ranked as the no 1 most attractive employer in the Nordics by business students on Universum’s ranking list;

2.5.1 What is your strategy to become number 1?

3. BRANDSTORM

3.1 Can you please explain the concept Brandstorm to us with your own words?

3.2. What makes Brandstorm a great tool for L’Oréal to attract students?

3.3 What is the aim with Brandstorm?

3.4 What is your involvement in Brandstorm?

3.5 What are the outcome of hosting Brandstorm?

3.6 How do you work with your employees as employer brand ambassadors?
3.7 Are there some negative aspects of hosting Brandstorm?

4. RECRUITMENT
4.1 We have seen that you divide potential employees in three groups, student, graduates, professionals.
   • Why divide it like this?

4.2 Why is it important for L’Oréal to attract students/persons at an early stage?

4.3 Does students as a target group differ from graduates/professionals?

4.4 How and why do you work directly with universities? What are the benefits?

4.5 Why do you think Brandstorm is beneficial for L’Oréal in terms of recruitment?

4.6 Do you think it is important that the applicant’s values/identity are reflected in L’Oréal’s values/identity, how is this expressed?
   4.6.1 How many percentage of the students you hire have been participants in Brandstorm?
   • What are the qualifications of going from a participant to a potential intern?

4.7 Have the recruitment processes changed since you started to actively work with employer branding?
INTERVIEW GUIDE LOCAL ACD TEAM

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS - L’ORÉAL

1.2 What is your role at L’Oréal?

1.3 How long have you been working for L’Oréal / at your position?

1.4 What does your team look like? The employer branding team.

2. EMPLOYER BRANDING

2.1 How do you perceive L’Oréal as an employer?

2.2 Do you think there is a difference between how you as an employee perceive L’Oréal and how students perceive L’Oréal?

2.2 How do you work with employer branding?

2.3 What is L’Oréal’s Employer value proposition, and how do you communicate this?

2.3.1 Why do you think students should apply to L’Oréal?

2.5 L’Oréal was ranked as the no 1 most attractive employer in the Nordics by business students on Universum’s ranking list;

2.5.1 What associations do you think students have towards L’Oréal?

3. BRANDSTORM

3.1 Can you please explain the concept Brandstorm to us with your own words?

3.2. What makes Brandstorm a unique case competition?

3.3 What is the aim with Brandstorm?

3.4 What is your involvement in Brandstorm?

3.5 What do you believe are the outcome of hosting Brandstorm?

3.6 What are the benefits of working closely with Universities?

3.7 Do you think L’Oréal’s employer branding reputation differs depending on the brand that is in focus during the Brandstorm competition?
APPENDIX 5

UNIVERSUM’S RANKING LIST 2015 THE NORDICS

NORDIC’S MOST ATTRACTIVE EMPLOYERS 2015

Business

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</tbody>
</table>

Top 90% Employers must be in the top 90% of the Universum Ideal Employer Ranking in at least 2 of the 4 markets to qualify.

38,000 Business & Engineering Students from the Nordic’s leading universities
4 Nordic Economies: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden

Most Attractive Employers Nordic Universum 2015