MASTER THESIS

To attain the academic degree of
Master of Arts in Business
from the
Degree Programmes
International Marketing & Sales Management
of *CAMPUS* 02 University of Applied Sciences

EMPLOYER BRANDING POSITIONING CONCEPT IN THE B2C RETAIL SECTOR IN SOUTH EUROPE

With regard to the position of an Area Manager at ALDI in Italy

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Graz, 3th May 2020

Declaration of authenticity

I hereby certify that I have written the present thesis independently and without help from any third parties. I have not used any sources other than those which are clearly indicated and have duly provided details of the sources of both direct and indirect quotations.

The present piece of work and parts thereof have to date not been presented to this or any other examination board in the same or similar form, nor have they been published. The present version is the same as the electronic version submitted.

Graz, 3th May 2020

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Nadine Paar, BA

Principle of equality

For readability purposes, gender-specific formulations have not been used in the present piece of work. It is, however, hereby expressly stated that when the masculine form is used to denote people, both sexes are being referred to.

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have made a significant contribution to the success of my studies and the preparation of my master thesis.

First of all, I would like to thank Mrs. Mag. Claudia Pukl, MA, who professionally supervised me and reviewed my master thesis - especially for the helpful suggestions, the constructive criticism and the many inputs, which made a significant contribution to the academic quality of this thesis. The valuable criticism from the commission of the *CAMPUS 02* University of Applied Sciences also made a great impact on my success with my thesis.

Further thanks are owed to the company ALDI S.r.l. in Italy, for the opportunity to write my work with them and to my company advisor Mrs. Lucia Arlunno, for providing the necessary information and insights into the company.

Furthermore, a big thank you to the participants of my survey, for their time to fill out my questionnaire. Without them I would not have been able to complete my primary research.

Special thanks go to my family, especially to my parents as well as my friends, who have always motivated me to keep going on. Especially I would like to thank them for the understanding they have shown for the lack of time together in the last years.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, who supported me in all aspects of my studies, always believed in me and who was the impulse to go decide for a study at the University of Applied Sciences.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Hervorhebung von Unternehmen als Arbeitgeber durch zielgerichtete Employer-Branding-Maßnahmen. Die Rekrutierung von geeigneten Mitarbeitern hat sich in den letzten Jahren stark verändert. Während es früher die Mitarbeiter waren, die sich bei einem Arbeitgeber beworben haben, so müssen sich heutzutage Unternehmer aktiv um qualifizierte Mitarbeiter bemühen. Dazu bedarf es durchgedachte Strategien, um in Zeiten des Fachkräftemangels als sogenannter *Employer of Choice* wahrgenommen zu werden und die besten Talente für sich zu gewinnen. Viel zu oft betrachten Unternehmen Employer Branding nur aus Sicht des Personalmarketings und möchten sich dadurch gut nach außen hin verkaufen. Die eigentliche Essenz ist jedoch, die wahren Werte im Unternehmen zu leben und auf diesem Werte-Fundament aufzubauen. Die Aktivitäten müssen zur Unternehmenskultur passen und die Mitarbeiter sollten sich mit den Werten verbunden fühlen, damit sie loyal sind und motiviert arbeiten. Um die Bekanntheit und Attraktivität des Arbeitgebers zu steigern, die Werte des Unternehmens intern als auch extern zu transportieren und die richtigen Bewerber für sich zu gewinnen, ist die Strategie des Employer Brandings gefragt. Der theoretisch erarbeitete Teil dieser Arbeit bildet die Basis für die erfolgreiche praktische Erarbeitung eines Employer Branding Konzeptes. Das Herzstück bildet dabei die Entwicklung der *Employer Value Proposition* (EVP), also das Alleinstellungsmerkmal einer Arbeitgebermarke. Die theoretisch erarbeiteten Schritte zur Entwicklung der Arbeitgebermarke sind dabei so definiert, dass sie auf jedes Unternehmen, unabhängig der Branche, umgelegt werden können. Der Praxisteil dieser Arbeit befasst sich mit der Entwicklung eines Employer Branding Konzeptes für das Unternehmen ALDI in Italien. Die Erarbeitung des EVP richtet sich dabei besonders an potentielle Kandidatinnen und Kandidaten für die Funktion als Regionalverkaufsleiter. Im Zuge dieser Konzepterstellung wird das Image von ALDI als Arbeitgeber in Italien hinterfragt und unter Berücksichtigung der Zielgruppe mittels einer Primärforschung analysiert. Die Ergebnisse dieser Primärforschung zusammen mit einer vorangegangenen Sekundärforschung dienen dabei als Grundlage für die definierten Maßnahmen, welche die Wahrnehmung von ALDI in Italien als Employer of Choice unterstützen.

Executive Summary

This master thesis deals with the highlighting of companies as employers through targeted Employer Branding measures. The recruitment of suitable employees has changed significantly in recent years.

Whereas in the past the employees were the ones who applied to an employer, nowadays entrepreneurs have to actively look for qualified employees. This requires well thought-out strategies to be perceived as an Employer of Choice in times of shortage of skilled workers and to attract the best talents.

Far too often, companies view Employer Branding only from a Personnel Marketing perspective and want to sell themselves well to the external market. The real essence, however, is to live the true values within the company and to build on this foundation of values. The activities have to fit the corporate culture and the employees should feel connected to the values so that they are loyal and motivated to work in a long-term manner. The Employer Branding strategy is needed to increase the awareness and attractiveness of the employer, to convey the values of the company both internally and externally and to attract the right applicants.

The theoretical part of this work forms the basis for the successful practical development of an Employer Branding concept. The core of this work is the development of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) - the unique selling point of an employer brand. The theoretical steps for the development of the employer brand are defined in such a way that they can be applied to any company.

The practical part of this thesis deals primarily with the development of an Employer Branding concept for ALDI in Italy. The elaboration of the EVP is especially directed at potential candidates for the position of Area Manager. In the context of this concept development, the image of ALDI as an employer in Italy is discussed and analyzed by means of primary research, taking into account the target group. The results of this primary research together with a preceding secondary research serve as a foundation for the defined measures which support the perception of ALDI as an Employer of Choice.

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List of abbreviations

ALDI	=	Albrecht Diskont
B2C	=	Business To Consumer
CEO	=	Chief Executive Officer
EB	=	Employer Branding
EU	=	European Union
EVP	=	Employer Value Proposition
FAQ	=	Frequently Asked Questions
GDP	=	Gross Domestic Product
H0	=	Null hypothesis
H1	=	Counterhypothesis
HR	=	Human Resources
HRM	=	Human Resource Management
IBM	=	International Business Machines
IHRM	=	International Human Resource Management
KG	=	Kommanditgesellschaft (Limited partnership)
KPI	=	Key Performance Indicator
MD	=	Mida Discount
N/n	=	Amount of people
OECD	=	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDCA	=	Plan-Do-Check-Act
PESTEL	=	Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Ecological, Legal
REWE	=	Revisionsverband der Westkauf-Genossenschaften (Auditing Association of Westkauf Cooperatives)
S.p.A.	=	Società per Azioni (Public limited company)
S.r.l.	=	Società a responsabilità limitata (Limited liability company)
S/E	=	South/East
SWOT	=	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats

US	=	United States
USA	=	United States of America

1. Preface

1.1 Initial Situation

HOFER KG has established itself as a well-known employer in Austria and is one of the most popular food retailers with over 12,000 employees. With the international expansion to Italy in 2018, a completely new market with a differentiated approach is opening for the discounters. In contrast to Austria, the Italian market is highly fragmented. About 35% of the market is shared by the five largest food retailers, due to the strong market regulations. In comparison to Austria, the giants REWE, Spar and Hofer already have a market share of over 85%. Due to the high degree of awareness of the company in German-speaking countries, it is easy from the employer's point of view to recruit qualified employees for the company. In contrast, ALDI S.r.l. has not yet positioned itself as an attractive employer due to its short market presence. Furthermore, the Italian labour market is in a difficult situation regarding high unemployment and the gap between the North and South of the country (cf. Arlunno/Schindl 17.06.2019). In 2018, the average unemployment rate in Italy was over 10%. This can be explained by the fact that there are not enough jobs available in the South of the country. The highest unemployment rate of over 20% was recorded in the three regions of Calvary, Sicily and Campania. While in Calabria in 2018 every fourth woman was counted as unemployed, the proportion of unemployed men was around 19.6% (cf. Statista 2019c). This problem was caused by the economic crisis in 2008, followed by a peak in unemployment in 2014 of 12.7% on average. The situation improved for the first time in 2015 and the unemployment rate began to fall (cf. Statista 2019c).

In the North of the country, the situation is different. Trentino-South Tyrol recorded a relatively low unemployment rate of 3.8% in 2018 (cf. Statista 2019c). Due to the good availability of jobs, there is a strong competition between companies in North Italy. Moreover, people in the South are willing to move to the North for simple and low-paid jobs, such as sales jobs at the cash desk (cf. Arlunno/Schindl 17.06.2019).

At present, ALDI S.r.l. employs many expatriates for management positions with the aim of successively replacing them with Italian employees. Furthermore, the company intends to recruit more employees in the future (cf. Arlunno/Schindl 15.10.2019).

1.2 Challenges

The company ALDI S.r.l. is known in Italy by about one out of three people. Although this is already a significant increase in awareness compared to 2017, this figure can still be increased in order to become more attractive as a retailer as well as an employer. In comparison to the biggest competitors Lidl Italia and Eurospin, ALDI S.r.l. has not yet established itself strongly in the minds of the Italians (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019b).

The company also notices this low degree of awareness as an employer. Especially in management positions such as Area Manager, not enough qualified applicants can be attracted who are flexible, have good German language skills as well as experience in leading people. Even though the unemployment rate in Italy is high, the company has difficulties in finding suitable employees (cf. Arlunno/Schindl 15.10.2019).

The company is also struggling to increase the commitment of existing employees to ALDI in Italy. Compared to the ALDI SÜD Group in the annual global employee survey in 2019, ALDI in Italy needs to take action to strengthen its commitment (cf. Arlunno/Schindl 15.10.2019).

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Company Objectives

From the point of view of Employer Branding, the corporate goal can be summarized in three points and priorities:

1) ALDI S.r.l. in Italy aims to raise the awareness as an employer from 2% to 4% by the end of 2020.
2) The company seeks to increase the number of applications from qualified German-speaking applicants with experience for the position as Area Manager in Italy from 3 to 5 applications per calendar week by the end of 2020.
3) ALDI S.r.l. aims to increase the commitment of existing employees from 75% to 79% by the end of 2022.

1.3.2 Thesis Objectives

The aim of this master thesis is to develop an Employer Branding Positioning Concept for the B2C retail sector, in particular for the position as Area Manager in the Southern European market based on the example of ALDI S.r.l. in Italy.

1.4 Frame of Reference

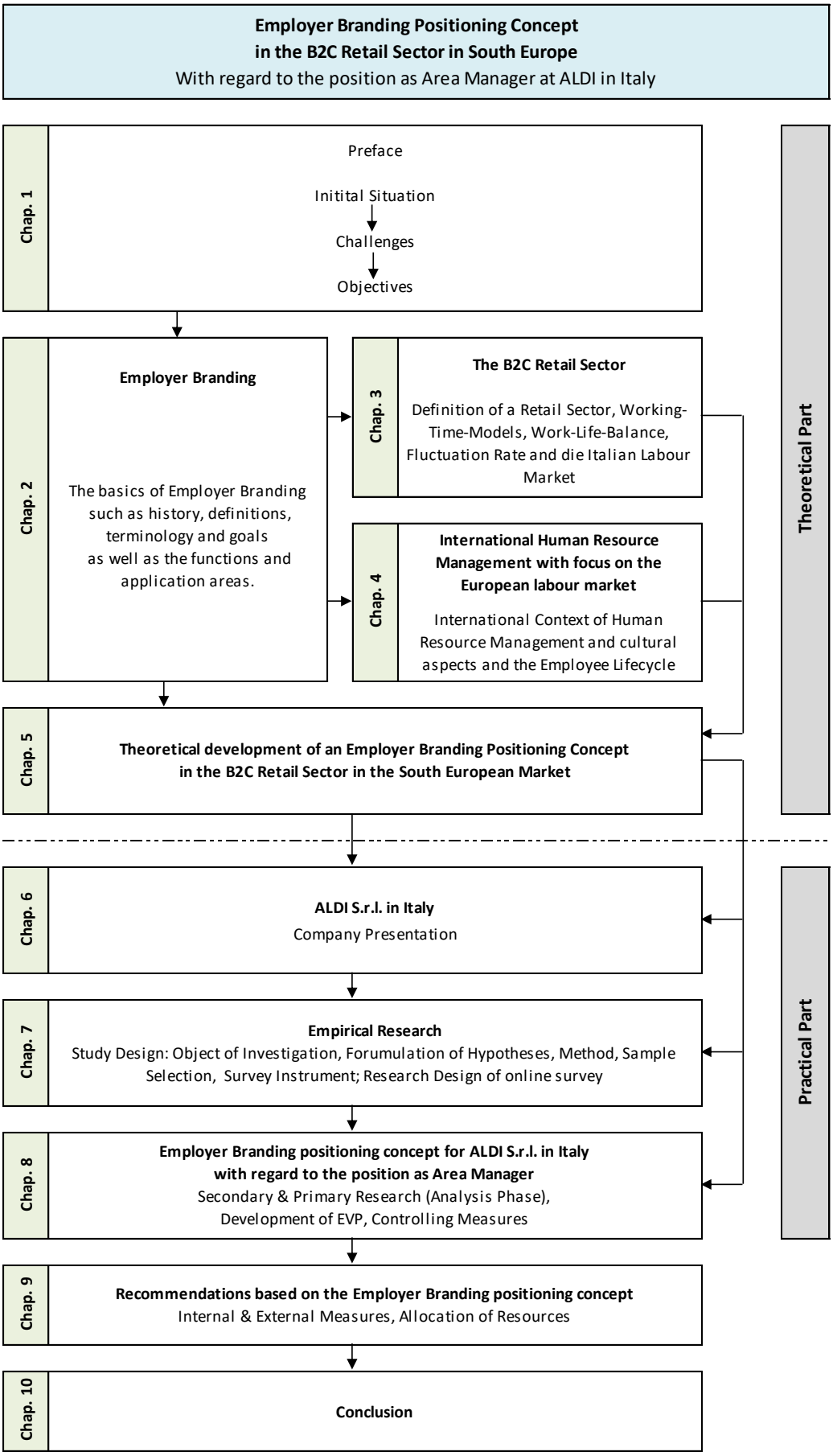

Figure 1: Frame of reference (own presentation)

2. Employer Branding

Employer Branding has gained considerable importance in recent years. If there is a mention of an attractive employer, loyal employees, Human Resource Management or corporate culture, there is no way around the term *Employer Branding*. This keyword has established itself as a top priority for companies that want to market themselves as an outstanding employer. After all, a company's own brand is not only important for customers, moreover is a central success factor in the competition for the best employees. Because the success of any company stands and falls with the suitability of its employees. Therefore, it is essential for Human Resource Management to find employees who fit into the organization, follow the same values and are willing to commit to the company on a long-term basis.

The following chapters are intended to give the reader a general insight into the topic of Employer Branding. The reader is introduced to the historical development of Employer Branding as well as the definition, the terminology and its functions and areas of application.

2.1 The idea of Employer Branding

The idea of Employer Branding first originated through the experience of Simon Barrow as Product Brand Manager at Knorr (now Unilever) and Colgate-Palmolive (1967 - 1972). When Barrow started an HR-oriented workplace at Colgate at the age of 28, he was confronted with HR management issues. In personnel tasks such as recruiting and leadership, the first obstacles were encountered because of a lack of strategy. This led Barrow to develop his own disciplines. From that point on, Barrow spoke for the first time of the term Employer Brand (cf. Maurya/Agarwal 2018, p. 315f.; Sundberg 2019).

In English language literature, the term Employer Branding first appeared in 1996 in the article *The Employer Brand* in the Journal of Brand Management and is derived from the two names Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow. Simon Barrow is seen as the founder of Employer Branding, together with the British scientist Tim Ambler, who is active as a professor at the London Business School (cf. Ambler/Barrow 2016, p. 20f.). Barrow and Ambler have defined Employer Branding as follows: *“The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. The main role of the*

employer brand is to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and to improve recruitment, retention and commitment." (Ambler/Barrow 2016, p. 20).

The article was positively welcomed by an increasing number of companies, placing themselves in the centre of the market as attractive employers. At least the companies thought they understood the point of the article, but Ambler and Barrow had a different focus. The focus was primarily on Human Resources and Brand Management. In this context, the human should be treated as the most important resource and a brand as the highest capital of a company. Philip Kotler, a Marketing Professor from the US believed, that long-term relationships were more valuable than short-term ones. He claimed that markets were changing from simple transactions between customer and suppliers to long-term value-based relationships. This would be essential to build loyalty and increase confidence and understanding of each other. Based on this knowledge, Ambler and Barrow applied the principles of Brand Management to the field of Human Resource Management. Companies are supposed to recognize themselves as a brand and create a stronger relationship with their employees by being present as an Employer Brand and developing a positive attitude, loyalty and trust towards their employees (cf. Grupe/Scheuermann 2014, p. 99f.).

2.2 Definition of Employer Branding

Employer Branding belongs to Corporate Branding, but nowadays it is used in various ways as a synonym for numerous marketing measures. The term was originally derived from the field of Brand Management, as mentioned in the previous chapter. When referring to a brand, it describes an imaginary image of a good or service in the minds of customers. This approach is applicable to a company as well. Depending on the perspective from which a company is viewed, different stakeholder groups like suppliers, customers, shareholders and employees arise (shown in Figure 2) (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 5f.).

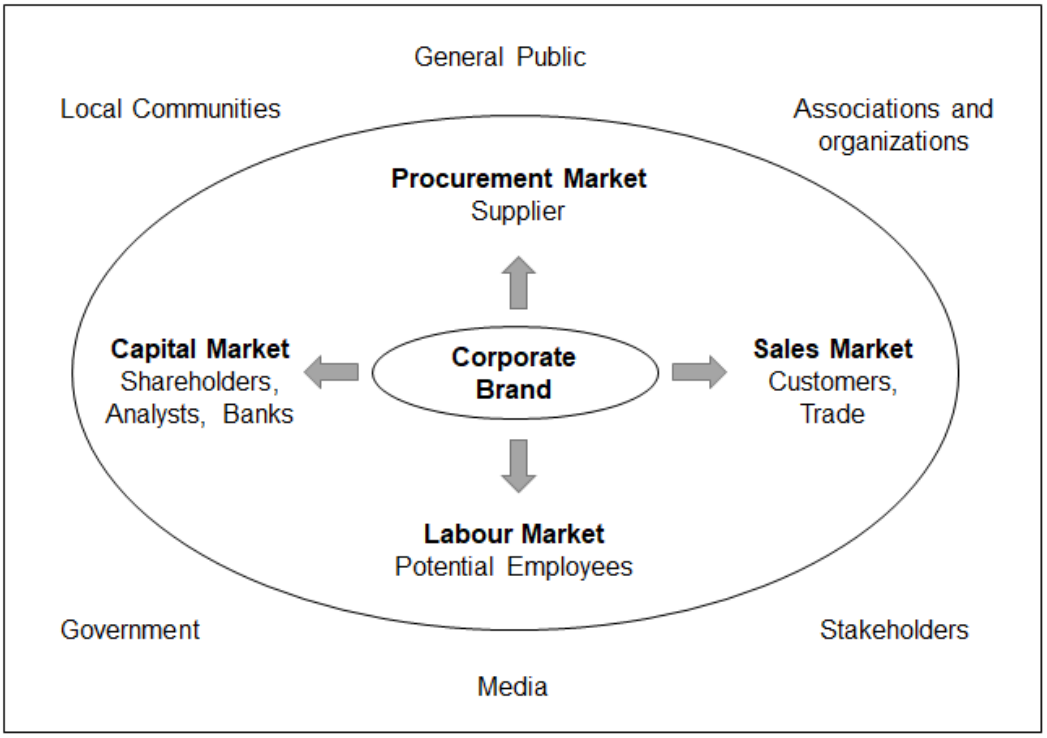

Figure 2: Stakeholders of a Corporate Brand (based on Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 6)

Today there are countless definitions of Employer Branding. The first definition comes from Ambler and Barrow in 1996, which was quoted in the previous chapter.

This was followed in 2004 by a definition by Backhaus and Tikoo: Employer Branding is described as the process of establishing a recognizable and exclusive employer personality and the Employer Brand as a conceptualization of the company that distinguishes the employer from its competitive environment. The authors Stotz and Wedel-Klein have agreed on the following definition in 2013: Employer Branding, as a part of Human Resource Management, is used for internal and external communication of an employer to emphasize the specific characteristics of the employer (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 8).

Another approach to describe Employer Branding is to take a closer look at the two words individually:

- **Employer:** A person or business that employs one or more people, especially for wages or salary,
- **Brand:** According to Kenning, a brand is a name, a symbol or a combination of both that is associated with a product or a service to make it appear unique (cf. Kanning 2017, p. 137).

2.3 Terminology of Employer Branding

In professional jargon, terms often appear which are quite close to the topic of Employer Branding (EB). In order to make them more understandable, they will be briefly explained in the following paragraphs for better readability and comprehensibility of this thesis.

2.3.1 Corporate Brand

Corporate Brand is defined as the value of recognition of a company and the image that exists in the minds of people. The Corporate Brand is the basis of the Employer Brand and deals with all areas of the company, including customers, suppliers, products and other stakeholders. One area of it is Employer Branding, which deals with personnel-relevant tasks (cf. SFG n.d.).

2.3.2 Personnel Marketing

For many people the distinction between Personnel Marketing and Employer Branding is not clear, therefore the following chapter will answer the question. The goals and tasks of the two areas are clearly differentiated in the following and it will be shown where similarities exist. It can be clearly stated that the target groups of the two areas strongly overlap. Both aim to approach potential applicants. Whereby Personnel Marketing is directed to actual applicants, Employer Branding additionally takes existing employees into account. Potential applicants should be made aware of the attractive benefits of the company and existing employees should increase their loyalty and social identity. If considering the goals of Personnel Marketing, it becomes immediately clear that they are formulated very concretely. It is aimed to target qualified applicants for a specific open position. Thereby it is necessary to emphasize the attractiveness of the company. The objectives of Employer Branding are different. They are more abstract and do not serve to fill a specific vacancy with top quality employees, but to create a holistic, unique and attractive Employer Brand. Employer Branding may serve the purposes of Personnel Marketing, but it is not limited to the application process only. This is demonstrated by the fact that it also focuses on existing employees to create long-term loyalty. The time horizon is, in comparison to Personnel Marketing, medium to long-term, i.e. several years. In contrast, Personnel Marketing refers to the short to medium term (weeks and months). However, the two areas support each other mutually. On the one hand,

Personnel Marketing assists Employer Branding in communicating information about the Employer Brand externally and internally. Employer Branding, on the other hand, determines parts of the Personnel Marketing in terms of design and content creation (cf. Kanning 2017, p. 135f.).

2.3.3 Employer of Choice

An Employer of Choice is a preferred employer in an industry sector for which the majority of the labour market is willing to work because it best matches the wishes of a potential candidate (cf. Taylor 2017, p. 163). As a result of the strong demand for highly qualified personnel, applicants have the choice of which employer they would like to work for, compared to the previous years. This situation requires an employer to present themselves in an attractive way by implementing targeted Employer Branding measures to attract the most talented people (cf. SFG n.d.).

2.3.4 High Potentials

People with excellent education and experience, e.g. abroad, are called High Potentials. They stand out massively from the average employee. In addition, these people have high leadership qualities. Flexibility is also a characteristic of these persons, especially when it is necessary to change their employer in order to make the best use of their potential (cf. SFG n.d.). They are furthermore characterized by above-average examination rates, short duration of studies, practical training, high salary expectations and a strictly timed career prospects (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 438).

2.3.5 War for Talent

The term War for Talents originates from Steven Hanking of the McKinsey company and a 1997 conducted survey of 400 CEOs, 6000 senior executives and 77 companies. The study found out that the starting point for this struggle is the shortage of highly qualified employees. The reason for this lies in the fact that there are more and more older people and far fewer young qualified junior staff. The study is now more than 35 years ago and very little has changed except that the battle for talented individuals has become even more complex and tough (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 440f.; Morgan 2017, p. 26).

The War for Talents is the competition to win the best talented people for the company. Due to the lack of talented personnel, it is no longer the employees who have to seek for a suitable job. Instead, companies need to make an effort to appear

as attractive as possible to a potential employee. Excellent employees are fundamental for the success of a company. Once an employer has attracted a talent, it is important to ensure through targeted measures that the employee is able to develop within the company to guarantee that he or she does not switch back to the competition (cf. SFG n.d.).

2.4 The Functions and Areas of Employer Branding

The functions of Employer Branding extend across many corporate divisions. On the one hand, Employer Branding has a positive effect on the value-added chain of Human Resources, on the other hand, it leads to beneficial outcomes in the company, when both divisions interact with each other. EB can be described as a holistic strategic solution. Depending on the perspective from which the company is viewed, different functional areas arise. This can be either from the point of view of the employer or from that of the employee (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 27f.).

2.4.1 Internal Employer Branding

If Employer Branding is considered from an internal perspective, the employees of a company are at the first position. The development of an emotional bond is considered as top priority. Qualified and suitable employees should be retained in the long-term. In addition, the quality of the applications received should be improved. The employees should feel themselves as part of a community to which they belong. The values of the individual employee shall overlap with those of the company. This is the best way for employees to convey the positive image to the external environment and contribute to its enhancement (cf. Kanning 2017, p. 134f.).

In order to achieve these results, there are three areas of action from the employers' perspective that contribute to becoming an attractive employer. Figure 3 illustrates those areas: through preference formation, differentiation and emotionalization (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 28f.).

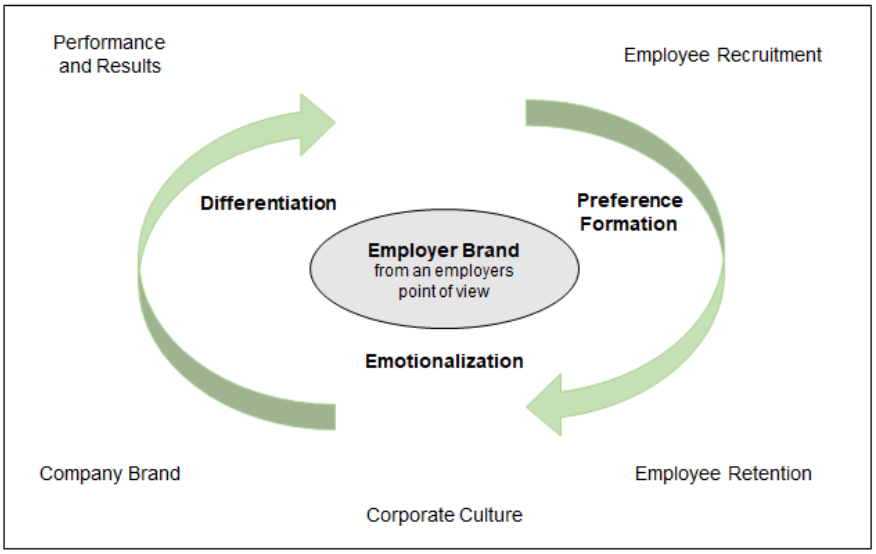

Figure 3: Functions and Areas from the employer's point of view
(based on Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 28)

Preference Formation

One aim for a company is to become an Employer of Choice. This means to be preferred as a potential employer by the target group while they are in the selection process. Employer Branding serves as a strategic measure for a company to present itself as an Employer of Choice and to distinguish in a positive way from the competition in the fight for the best talents on the job market. The use of this measure is intended to have a long-term positive effect on the company by making the recruiting process more effective and improving the quality of applications. The company is supposed to attract the attention of the candidate even before the job search. This can be achieved by a conspicuous website, effective promotion and communication on the job market, through recommendations or special events like info days, or by word-of-mouth propaganda from already recruited employees. If these measures lead to success, the number of high-quality employees who apply will be significantly higher. Furthermore, their personalities will fit in with the values of the company much more. If the employee's expectations are satisfactorily fulfilled after recruitment, this results in greater motivation and a higher performance. The self-confirmation of having chosen the right decision by applying for the company equally increases the willingness for a long-term relationship between employee and employer. A company should only communicate values that can be observed. It is therefore especially important that a promise is fulfilled and practised even after the employee is hired. If a brand promise is not kept, the company experiences a negative effect that multiplies rapidly. The benefits of good internal Employer

Branding also include cost savings, which are generated by the fact that many more applicants apply for a vacant position and contact the company by their own efforts. Moreover, fewer people apply only because of high salaries or wages, rather because they can identify with the values of the company (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 28f.).

Differentiation

In order to get inside the minds of people, a company needs to differentiate itself strongly from its competitors. Only if a company manages to stand out from the mass of enterprises it can be considered as an Employer of Choice and ranks first in the memory of potential and current employees (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 28f.).

Emotionalization

According to Dr. Manfred Kirchgeorg, a professor of the Leipzig Graduate School, the choice of employer is more often an emotional decision than expected. Employer Branding is intended to provide potential employees with emotional support in deciding. Employees can identify better with a brand if the brand is emotionally charged and matches the values of the (potential) employee. This emotional commitment leads to more loyalty and in-depth relationships on the side of the employee. Fluctuations due to dissatisfaction are reduced and important factors such as know-how and experience remain within the company (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 28f.).

2.4.2 External Employer Branding

In this chapter, the reader is introduced to the most important functions of Employer Branding from an employees' perspective. Over the last decade, research on Employer Branding has focused mainly on the external side. The goal of external Employer Branding is to create a positive perception of the employer brand within the target group in order to be recognized as an Employer of Choice for the recruitment process (cf. Backhaus 2016, p. 193f.).

Figure 4 shows the three most important areas: Orientation, trust and identification.

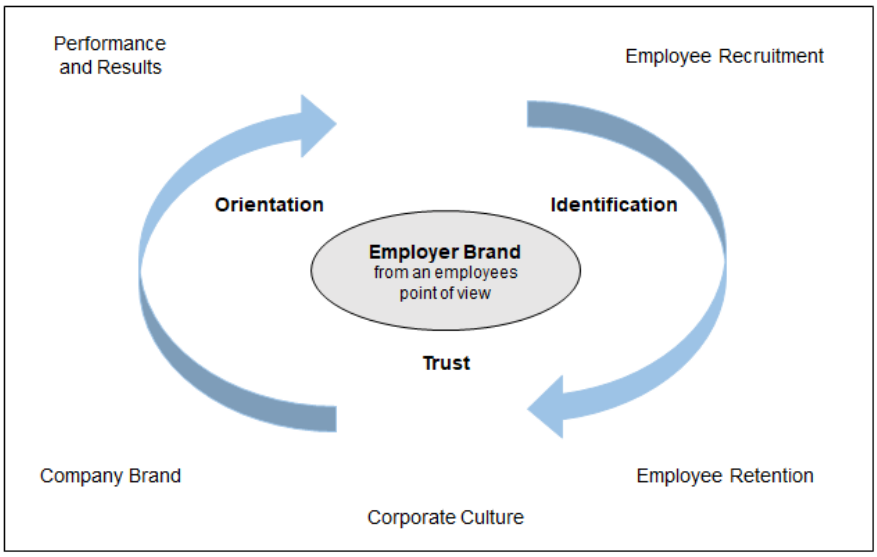

Figure 4: Functions and Areas from the employees' point of view
(based on Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 30)

Orientation

If a person faces the job market search and selection process, it is not easy to orientate oneself due to the huge number of offers. Therefore, it is important for a company to stand out from the mass. A strong Employer Brand helps to make this possible. Due to the large amount of information that is flooded onto the job seeker, it is impossible for this person to gather and handle all the information. The Employer Brand should serve as a message carrier, bringing functional and emotional information to the potential employee. Strong brands therefore also serve as orientation for the prospect in the job market jungle and to be considered as an Employer of Choice on the shortlist of potential employers. Once a potential employee has identified with the values and attitudes of the company with all the skills and competencies, the company will be placed on the shortlist. This enables an applicant to know in advance how a company thinks, which values are important and how the corporate culture is lived. The new employee is familiar with the situation and is highly motivated and willing to perform from the very beginning (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 30f.).

Trust

The choice of a new employer is an essential decision in life. This results often from the employee's experience from previous positions. Negative experiences leave traces such as fear of wrong decisions or general mistrust of value promises. This increases the importance of an employer's brand being as transparent and honest as possible on the labour market. For an employee, trust is the basis of a satisfied

attitude and loyalty. A company should actively live the values that it communicates to the external community within the company so that trust never gets lost. This not only prevents the company from not being taken seriously, but also avoids the risk of high staff turnover. At the same time, a large basis of trust in the brand also increases the quality of an Employer Brand for current and potential employees (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 30f.).

Identification

As already mentioned with regard to trust, it is absolutely crucial for an employee to be able to identify with the Employer Brand and the values of the company. Therefore, the objective view of the workplace is secondary. The emotional component ranks first. In this way the role of identification receives special attention. Only someone who feels a sense of identification with the company is likely to apply. If the wishes, requirements and expectations of the applicant are fulfilled, this leads to satisfaction and loyalty. From this point on, the employee acts as an ambassador for their employer and will recommend them to others. For the employees, this is a way of presenting themselves in their environment and an improvement of their own image in society (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 30f.).

2.4.3 Benefits of Employer Branding

One advantage of good Employer Branding is the increase in equity. Whereas in 1985, the material values were around 56%, today they are only 20%. This means that 80% of a company's values are intangible. In other words, what is known as 'good will' includes both customers and employees. Attracting, motivating and retaining great people is an important factor to increase these intangible company values (cf. Ambler/Barrow 2016, p. 20f.; Sundberg 2019).

Clear advantages also arise in the hiring of new employees. The costs for recruiting new personnel are lower, since targeted Employer Branding measures ensure that the brand is better known and has a stronger presence on the job market. Potential employees therefore contact the company on their own initiative and costs for job announcements and promotion are less. Existing employees are more productive and more motivated. They know independently what their tasks are, and they are less reliant on middle management. By identifying with the Employer Brand, the risk of switching to the competition is kept low. Loyal employees are also less sensitive to potential changes. They remain faithful to the company, even when hard times

are coming. Resources are better used and not wasted. Especially it has to be mentioned that satisfied employees are willing to share their knowledge, information, ideas and expertise with other employees. This enables a faster introduction process for new colleagues (cf. Ambler/Barrow 2016, p. 20f.).

3. The B2C Retail Sector

Since the company, for which the practical part of this paper is being prepared, is operating in the B2C retail sector, this chapter provides a better insight into this industry. Working time models, the fluctuation rate as well as the Italian labour market are explained in more detail.

3.1 Definition and meaning of a B2C Retail Sector

A retail sector refers to the sale of goods in relatively small quantities from companies to individual end-consumers for use or consumption. In order to be successful in any market, retailers must consider the significant political, social, and cultural aspects of that market. A retailer's competitiveness is determined by the ability to procure the range of goods demanded by consumers, and offer them in the right way, in the right location and with the right price (cf. Cuthbertson/Reynolds 2014, p. 11).

Regarding employment in the retail sector in Europe, by company size in 2010, almost two thirds of employees work in small and medium-sized companies (fewer than 250 employees). Large retail companies (250 or more employees) employ 37% of the retail workforce. In the Southern European labour market, the share of employees working in large companies is almost 20% in Italy, 30% in Spain and more than 40% in Croatia (cf. Cuthbertson/Reynolds 2014, p. 20).

Retail companies employ a lot of younger people (aged 15 - 24), often those entering the labour market for the first time. However, in the South European market, young people employed in retailing in 2012 are less than 15% (cf. Cuthbertson/Reynolds 2014, p. 22).

3.2 Working Time Models

The retail sector offers an extraordinary variety of employment opportunities in terms of engagement: part-time, full-time, temporary contracts, permanent-contracts and self-employed. The majority of retail employees in Europe are employed full-time. In the South European market, part-time-working counts less than 20% (cf. Cuthbertson/Reynolds 2014, p. 23f.).

Referring to Italy, there are many alternative working time models. The most traditional way is full-time employment. In addition, as elsewhere in Europe, there are part-time contracts. Other common models are fixed-term contracts, on-call work, job sharing or project-based contracts (cf. Consiglio/Moschera 2016, p. 48f.)

Concerning working time of employees in Austria, the public working time legislation permits employees with children the right to request part-time work (under certain conditions) and two weeks paid leave per year to care for ill children. In Italy, employees have the possibility to apply for reduced working hours, but employers can deny it for serious business reasons. Furthermore, in Italy, employees can take time off to treat emergencies, such as to care for their ill child. Contrary to Austria, this spare time is not being paid. In detail, only 31% in Austria and 17% in Italy can use flexitime (cf. Wiß 2017, p. 1415).

3.3 Work-Life-Balance

Family-friendly working time arrangements support employees in combining work and family life, in order to increase their Work-Life-Balance, and simultaneously, their satisfaction with the employer (cf. Trost 2019, p. 264). Employers might offer additional benefits, such as family-friendly working time hours, to contribute to increasing the employment rate of women or to motivate and reward employees who invest in company-specific skills. Employees with only company-specific competencies are faced with a higher unemployment risk because it is difficult to find a new job that needs those abilities. For employers, the significant motives for providing family-friendly working time regulations are the recruitment and retention of qualified employees. Though, these employee-oriented working conditions depend largely on employer or manager, the size of the company, firm-level policies and on collective negotiations because legislation requires only minimum standards. Family benefits target solely female employees and not employees who are mainly

male. Due to their company-specific skills, male employees are already more committed to the firm (cf. Wiß 2017, p. 1406f.).

The role of an employee, of representatives, the support for managers and employee involvement differ between countries. In the South European labour market, for example in Italy, which represents a masculine supply system, collective bargaining coverage is high, but employee representatives are low and working time flexibility for both employers and employees are weak. This low employee representation in Italy with men as the dominating breadwinner, is possibly less suited to encourage family-friendly working time arrangements (cf. Wiß 2017, p. 1410f.).

3.4 Fluctuation Rate

For more and more companies, filling key positions has become a major challenge. Especially small and medium-sized companies suffer from the consequences of high fluctuation. According to a fluctuation study by Deloitte, an increasing shortage of qualified personnel is predicted for the future. 110 managers from Austrian companies took part in the study. In Austria, the fluctuation rate reaches 11%. Especially key positions, like strategically relevant personnel positions that contribute to the success or failure of a company, are affected. For companies, it is more sustainable and cost-effective to invest in retaining existing employees than to seek new ones. Unfortunately, too few companies deal with this issue intensively and hardly know in which areas and groups of people there is the highest fluctuation. The average fluctuation costs in companies with more than 1000 employees are around 17,200 euros per job. In comparison, the costs for companies with less than 100 employees are about 14,900 euros per position. This difference results from the maximum costs, which are much higher in companies with more than 1000 employees. Another explanation for the higher costs can be found in the more complex structures of large organizations. In addition, the training and induction of new employees requires more resources. As already mentioned, the highest turnover rate is recorded in key positions (25%), followed by early fluctuation (13.5%) and undesired fluctuation (approximately 19%). Although an increase in fluctuation is to be expected in all divisions, the areas of sales and distribution with 22%, the field of IT with 11% and logistics as well as technology with 10% are affected most. The least fluctuation can be noticed with 5% in marketing as well as in assistant functions. In terms of age, 25 to 34-year-olds are the group with the

most fluctuation with 64%, followed by people aged 35 to 44 with 29%. The reasons for increased fluctuation are diverse. The most common reason for leaving the company is the poor quality of the management (19%). The second most frequent cause is the issue of salary with 18%, followed by a lack of promotion opportunities with 17%. The lack of positive employee experiences in particular leads to the highest fluctuation (13%) among people aged between 24 and 44. Only a critical examination of leadership qualities can lead to more satisfaction, but not a higher salary. An increase in salary may be binding, but in the long run it is not a motivation. Therefore, above all, investment in leadership is essential for a positive development. Further training measures offer space for personal growth and self-realization. Increased employee orientation in processes promotes collaboration within the organization. Team building measures are another way of increasing the sense of loyalty to the company. Sustainable concepts for employee retention to increase satisfaction are important investments to counteract high fluctuation. Successful companies offer their employees good career opportunities, meaningful work content, flexible working time models and suitable remuneration systems combined with an outstanding management culture. The employees should be the focus of all activities as a target group, since this is the only way to ensure positive development in the company (cf. Deloitte 2019, p. 3f.).

3.5 Labour Market in Italy

The Italian republic in Southern Europe is one of the wealthiest countries with one of the largest gross domestic products (GDP) in the world. In 2018, the GDP per capita in Italy was around 34,320.75 U.S. dollars. Italy as a member of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has one of the highest living standards in the world. The economy of Italy is heavily dependent on exports (such as wine) and tourism. For this reason, the majority of all workers are employed in the service sector (cf. Statista 2018). Looking at the distribution of the workforce in 2019, almost 71% of the population worked in the service sector, around 26% in the industrial sector and approximately 4% in agriculture (cf. Statista 2020).

Since 2012 the Italian trade balance has been positive again, which is an indicator of more exports than imports. The most important and largest import and export partners of Italy are Germany and France. Due to the economic crisis in 2008/2009, for example, the unemployment rate increased significantly (cf. Statista 2018). As a

noticeable consequence, Figure 5 shows that 12.7% of citizens were unemployed in 2014. Still worse are the differences between Northern and Southern Italy, as described at the beginning in chapter 1. However, the country seems to be on the way to recovery, with a positive development since 2015. In 2018 the unemployment rate was about 10.2% (cf. Statista 2019b).

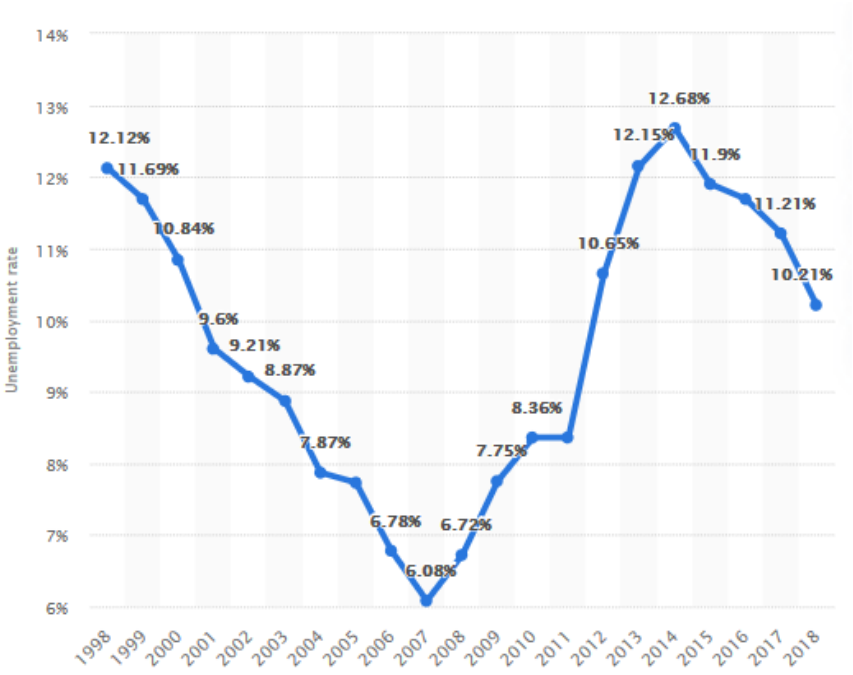

Figure 5: Italy: Unemployment rate from 1998 to 2018 (Statista 2019b)

According to forecasts, this trend is expected to continue until the end of the decade (cf. Statista 2018).

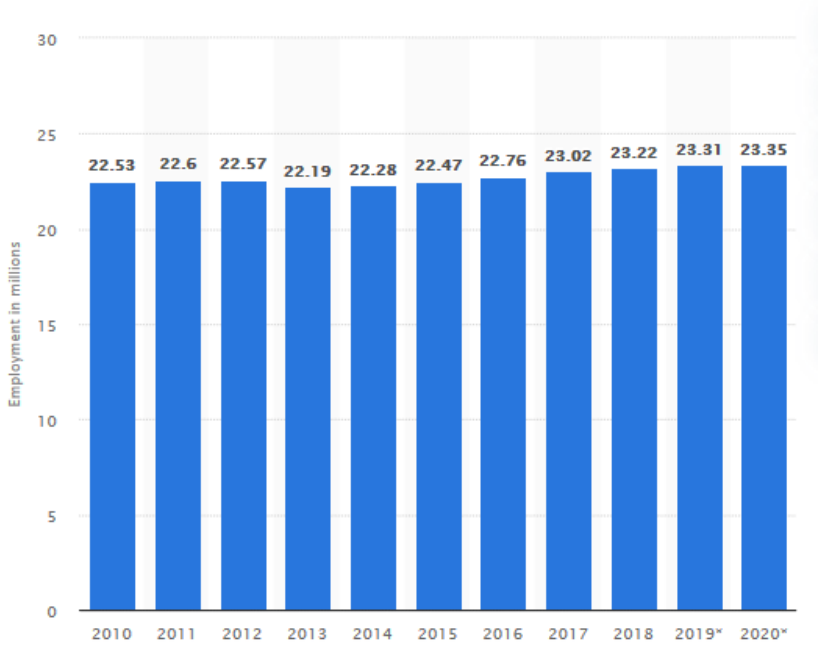

Figure 6: Italy: Employment from 2010 to 2020 (Statista 2019a)

The graph in Figure 6 shows that the rate of people in employment will increase significantly by 2020. Therefore, more than 23.4 million of people expected to be employed in 2020.

4. International Human Resource Management with focus on the South European labour market

The following chapter provides an insight into Human Resource Management in an international context. The cultural dimensions according to Geert Hofstede are brought closer to the reader and furthermore, the influence they have on the work of Human Resource Management is explained. In addition, the differences between Austria and Italy with regard to the cultural dimensions are discussed in more detail.

4.1 Human Resource Management in an international context

Perhaps the most dominant force influencing work and companies is the ongoing globalization and internationalization of businesses. The growth of international companies leads to increased transparency of traditional business boundaries, which in turn leads to high rates of economic change, a growing number of diversity of participants, rising complexity and uncertainty. The political, environmental, social, technological, ecological and legal environment (PESTEL) in which businesses operate presents ongoing challenges and opportunities. To ensure the continued success and survival of the enterprise, an efficient and effective way of organising work is needed. As a result of these global developments, Human Resource Management (HRM) is increasingly becoming a more significant part of organizations' efforts to manage their entire workforce across the world as cost-effectively as possible (cf. Brewster et al. 2016, p. 2f.; Crawshaw/Preston/Hatch 2017, p. 24f.).

For most companies, the personnel costs are the largest single item of operating costs. In addition, the capabilities and the knowledge incorporated in an organization's Human Resources are crucial to the performance. For these reasons, HRM is becoming a key factor for the survival, performance and success of companies regarding both the cost and benefit sides of managing people internationally (cf. Brewster et al. 2016, p. 4.; Crawshaw/Preston/Hatch 2017, p. 24f., p. 109).

International Human Resource Management (IHRM) is about understanding, researching, applying and reviving all Human Resource activities in their internal and external contexts as they influence the process of managing HR in companies throughout the global environment to improve the experience of various stakeholders. In order to be successful as a company in the international market, a balance is needed between the pursuit for global coherence as a company and the ability to adapt to the local environment in which they operate. The ways that people are usually managed, and the HR policies and practices vary significantly within as well between different countries. That is why IHRM is required to adopt new approaches and measures to cope with the challenges that arise in the new environment. Therefore, HR managers who work in a global environment are generally exposed to the impact of multiculturalism, regional and global change and dynamics to a much larger extent than HR managers operating in single country organizations. In order to overcome these challenges in different countries successfully, the following key figures are some that need to be considered:

- The work with a more complex organizational structure,
- the diversity regarding the management style,
- the scope to which independent trade unions take part in decision making and the way managers and unions interact,
- the level of sophistication of HR practices that are implemented and the scope to which HR has a strategic character,
- the increasing amount of diverse stakeholder groups, which are taken into account of,
- the rising external influences and risks, which are to understand and manage,
- the higher involvement in people's life because of the need to expatriate employees with their families,
- the language differences that lead to communication difficulties as well as cultural and institutional traditions and assumptions,
- the tendency of people to move from employer to employer when developing their careers,

- the presence of more multicultural teams, including senior management teams (cf. Patel/Budhwar 2017, p. 109f.; Torrington et al. 2017, p. 37f.).

4.2 The impact of a diverse workforce on HRM practices

Due to international developments of companies, labour markets and customer bases, companies have gradually experienced the need to focus on issues concerning diversity in different countries. Therefore, the diversity of employees working in an international company has a great impact on the competitiveness in new global markets and, consequently, on HRM practices. For this reason, the following chapter describes this impact of diversity on internal and external measures to be taken, regarding Employer Branding, in more detail (cf. Otaye-Ebede/Priola/Yerby 2017, p. 194f.).

The concept of diversity focuses on the social categories, such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion and sexual orientation. Other dimensions, such as social class and work or management status, are often included. Companies are not neutral in relation to social categories. However, often they are not aware of the relevance of socio-demographic aspects to their functioning. Still, the personality characteristics of individuals affect how they do their work, how they interact with others and how others interact with them. Though, social categories are not recognised in the same way or at the same level in different societies (cf. Otaye-Ebede/Priola/Yerby 2017, p. 193f.).

Furthermore, the unique sets of deep-lying values and beliefs of each country, which are reflected how societies operate, people work and are managed at work. This cross-cultural tradition is rooted in the culture and values of different regions and how they affect employees' perceptions and understanding of work (cf. Patel/Budhwar 2017, p. 111f.).

Therefore, the diversity between numerous countries is determined even by cultural factors. HRM practices, as well as the Employer Branding, are strongly affected in various ways by the expanding cultural diversity of the workplace. In order to address the demographic changes in the workforce, it is essential that HR managers need to know how cultural factors influence these HRM practices, and that they take measures to that effect. Cultural assumptions indicate the type of interactions and behaviors which should lead to effectiveness. They generate different ways of seeing the same event and therefore different problem-resolution strategies. This is

because employers and employees from different cultures are diverse from each other in the processes and behaviors (cf. Torrington et al. 2017, p. 37f.; Brewster et al. 2016, p. 60f.).

Companies that consider this cultural diversity, are introducing different measures to meet the different needs of employees. For example, by offering benefit options to families like extended maternity leave, on-site childcare provision, flexible time or job sharing. By offering skill upgrading and training designed to facilitate the acceptance and learning of new techniques to older workers, or by offering a multi-faith prayer room for their religiously diverse workforce are additional options (cf. Otaye-Ebede/Priola/Yerby 2017, p. 210).

In order to emphasize the bond between employees and employers through cultural differences, populations of diverse nations need to be treated in a diverse manner. The results of extensive studies among employers and employees working in different countries are being mapped. The dominant aspects of business culture across the world have thus been categorized into readily understood types which demonstrate how they vary one from another. The most influential work of all the work carried out by researchers working in this field, is those by Geert Hofstede, which is explained in detail below (cf. Torrington et al. 2017, p. 51f.).

4.2.1 Cultural dimensions according to Hofstede and their influence on HR

In the first half of the twentieth century, social anthropologists developed the thesis that all societies are subject to the same basic problems. In 1954, Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson defined the problems common to all societies in four basic problem areas (cf. Hofstede 1993, p. 27f.).

Twenty years later, Geert Hofstede examined around 117,000 questionnaires from 50 countries from IBM employees who were asked about work-related value attitudes (cf. Halkos/Petrou 2019, p. 315f.). The statistical analysis of the collected data clearly showed that the results corresponded exactly with the views of Inkeles and Levinson, in the four basic problem areas:

- Social inequality and relationship to authority
- Relationship between individual and group
- Notions of masculinity and femininity

- How to deal with uncertainty, in terms of controlling aggression and expressing emotions (cf. Hofstede 1993, p. 28; Scholz 2013, p. 966f.).

From this, Hofstede derived four dimensions by which aspects of a culture can be described and measured:

- Tolerance of power distance
- Individualism versus collectivism
- Masculinity versus femininity
- Avoidance of uncertainty (cf. Hofstede 1993, p. 29; Scholz 2013, p. 967).

These four basic dimensions were expanded by a fifth, the *Long-Term Orientation* as opposed to the short-term orientation. In 2010, Geert Jan Hofstede, in collaboration with Michael Minkow, added a sixth dimension, the *Pursuit of Pleasure* as opposed to restraint (cf. Hofstede 1993, p. 29; Scholz 2013, p. 967).

4.2.2 Definition of the six cultural dimensions and their influence of culture on HR

Dimension 1: Tolerance of Power Distance

This dimension expresses the extent to which a society accepts unequal distribution of power. In organizations, this tolerance is reflected in the values and behaviour patterns of organization members with both low and high power potential. The power distance tolerance depends on the geographical location, population density and prosperity of a country. It is higher in tropical countries than in temperate climates. Similarly, the power distance tolerance is higher in countries with high population concentration. By contrast, high prosperity usually means a low power gap tolerance (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 971f.; Vollero et al. 2019, p. 4).

<u>Influence on HR:</u>

In the context of Human Resource Management, countries with a low tolerance of power distance offer perspectives such as flat hierarchies, reduction of status differences and flexible project organizations. In contrast, a high tolerance of power distance leads, for example, to centralization, a steep hierarchical structure and large wage differences (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 972f.).

Dimension 2: Individualism

This dimension describes the relationship between an individual and a group. Individualistically oriented countries expect the individual to be emotionally independent of an organization, usually have a high degree of job mobility, a high level of self-awareness and a preference for individual decisions. A collective orientation, on the other hand, has a rather low work mobility, a pronounced *we consciousness* and a preference for group decisions (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 967f.; Vollero et al. 2019, p. 3f.).

Influence on HR:

In a more individualistic culture there is a risk of higher fluctuation. If an employee cannot achieve his or her individual goals, he or she will leave the company. Therefore, all personnel management systems should be directly geared to individualistic cultures (cf. Scholz 2013, p.969f.).

Dimension 3: Masculinity

This dimension indicates the extent to which the values referred to as *masculine*, such as self-assertion, performance, ambition and competition, come to the foreground in a society. If this index is low, *feminine* values such as a preference for occupational security, relationship orientation and quality of life are used (cf. Scholz 2013, p.970f.).

Influence on HR:

For HR, this means that in masculine countries, hierarchy, competition and performance motivation come to the fore. A feminine-oriented HR work places more value on a pleasant working atmosphere and contact with managers (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 970f.).

Dimension 4: Avoidance of Uncertainty

A secure future is considered as a basic need of human life, whereas insecurity creates fear. Social regulations, ordinances, rules of conduct and management techniques within the company serve to reduce this uncertainty. This dimension therefore describes the extent to which a society tries to avoid uncertainty in daily life (cf. Scholz 2013, p.971.).

Influence on HR:

In the context of Human Resource Management, a low level of uncertainty avoidance is accompanied by a low level of written rules, standardization and specialization. A high degree of uncertainty avoidance, on the other hand, means greater standardization (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 971).

Dimension 5: Long-Term Orientation

Countries with a long-term orientation are more focused on the constraints that will enable them to provide constant benefits in the future. Perseverance, good order, thrift and virtue are predominant. In countries with a less long-term orientation, on the other hand, it is more important to maintain one's status, to have sufficient leisure time and to have one's expectations of benefits fulfilled (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 973f.).

Influence on HR:

In short-term oriented countries, Human Resources work should be focused on employees and managers who want to develop their own status. In long-term oriented countries, on the other hand, the attitudes of employees should be geared towards long-term corporate goals (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 973).

Dimension 6: Pursuit of Pleasure

This dimension describes the two opposites of pleasure and restraint. Striving for pleasure can be understood as a tendency to generously satisfy basic human needs, which are also oriented towards fun and the enjoyment of life. With restraint, however, the principle applies that the satisfaction of needs should be suppressed and regulated by social norms (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 975).

Influence on HR:

The cultural value *striving for pleasure* is essential for personnel management in order to adjust to Generation Y and Generation Z. In this environment, it is not only important what companies do, for example, in terms of work-life balance. It is also relevant in the long-term to what extent striving for pleasure is fixed in basic income and thus finds acceptance. Only if this occurs, the Personnel Management implement appropriate measures with regard to contradictory values such as performance orientation and striving for pleasure (cf. Scholz 2013, p. 976).

Table 1 provides a comparison of the cultural dimensions and their index values of selected European countries.

	Individualism	Masculinity	Avoidance of Uncertainty	Tolerance of Power Distance	Long-Term Orientation	Pursuit of Pleasure
Greece	35	57	112	60	45	50
Italy	76	70	75	50	61	30
Austria	55	79	70	11	60	63
Portugal	27	31	104	63	28	33
Spain	51	42	86	57	48	44

Table 1: Comparison of cultural dimension in South Europe (based on Scholz 2013, p. 968)

The values marked in red are the lowest in the respective dimension. The highest values in the comparison of the selected European countries are marked in green. It is noticeable that Spain is in the middle range in all dimensions. Greece has also achieved average values in all dimensions except the highest value in uncertainty avoidance. Portugal has the lowest value in three dimensions (individualism, masculinity and long-term orientation), followed by Austria with two low (avoidance of uncertainty and tolerance of power distance) and two high indices (masculinity and pursuit of pleasure) and Italy with one low (pursuit of pleasure) and one high index (individualism).

4.2.3 Comparison of cultural dimensions in Austria vs. Italy

As the practical part of this work deals with the Italian market, this chapter focuses on the differences of the cultural dimensions according to Hofstede between Austria and Italy. The blue bar in Figure 7 represents Austria, the purple bar Italy.

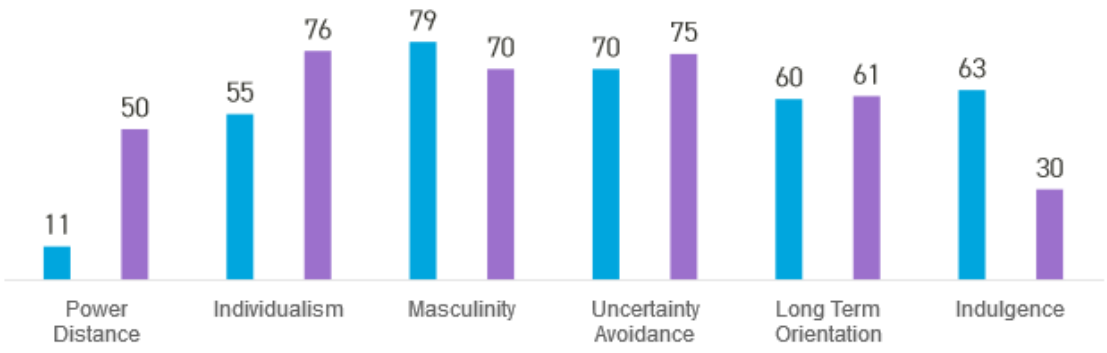

Figure 7: Comparison of cultural dimensions in Austria vs. Italy (Hofstede Insights 2019)

Power Distance Austria vs. Italy

Austria has a very low value of 11 points for the power distance. Power is therefore distributed equally and social differences are very small. This is a sign of independence and equal rights among the people. Hierarchies exist only for convenience, as managers and employees work closely together. Managers count on the experience of their team members. There exists good and direct communication. Higher-ranking employees accept lower-ranking employees and vice versa. The power distance is in a high range for Italians with an index value of 50, particularly in the Northern Italy. There are strong hierarchies, which have been implemented in the Italian culture. In the professional context, this means that employees in Italy are highly dependent on their superiors. As a matter of principle, employees do not dispute and follow instructions unconditionally. In contrast, the Northern Italians tend towards more equality and a tendency to decentralize power distance. The younger generation prefers to live an open leadership style and dislikes controls. Furthermore, working in a team is a top priority (cf. Hofstede Insights 2019).

Individualism Austria vs. Italy

Austria has a medium-high individualism with 55 index points. This shows that Austrians attach great importance to their individual success. In social terms, they place great value on their own family and selected close friends. In working life, the relationship between employee and employer is a contract of shared benefit. If employees are recruited or encouraged, it is based on their earnings and performance. Management can also be described as the individual's management. With a similarly pronounced index value as Austria, Italy has a strong ego focus with 76 points, especially in Northern Italy or in rich cities. This means that Italians can feel alone even in large crowds. Therefore, family and friends are also placed in the centre of the Italians life. However, friends at work are often used to be introduced to important and wealthy people. Due to the strong sense of ego, education and art are highly valued by Italians. It is a way of making personal wishes and dreams come true - for them this means happiness. In the South of Italy, however, it can be observed that social networks are very important. According to Southern Italians, people in Northern Italy have a cold attitude towards relationships (cf. Hofstede Insights 2019).

Masculinity Austria vs. Italy

With 79 points, Austrian culture is characterized by a high degree of masculinity and is thus among the top 10 masculine countries. Values like success, ambition and competition are strong values. In addition, the gender roles are not equally distributed. People live to work - managers are decision makers. Justice and strong performance are at the very top. Conflicts are solved by fighting them out. The best example of this is when the election battle takes place. Italy is also very masculine-oriented with a value of 70 index points and is also among the top 10 masculine countries. The Italians are already growing up very success driven and competitive. Already in their childhood they are taught that it is important to emerge as winners in life. The Italians like to show this success through prestige objects such as expensive cars, yachts and trips to tropical countries. Competition among colleagues is equally high, as this is the greatest opportunity to achieve this success (cf. Hofstede Insights 2019).

Uncertainty Avoidance Austria vs Italy

With 70 points, Austria has a rather high value here as well. Uncertainties are gladly avoided in Austria. Rules are established for this purpose, and strict beliefs and codes of conduct are followed. Unconventional ideas are not accepted. The statement "time is money" is being lived, which also means that people have an impulse to work hard. Punctuality and exactness have top priority and innovations are often ignored due to the fear of loss of security. Decisions are only made after people have carefully analysed and weighed up all the pros and cons. The use of academic titles serves to avoid uncertainty and reflects the high index. With 75 points of uncertainty avoidance, it can be said that the Italian does not feel comfortable in uncertain situations. The formality of the Italian nation is important. This is reflected in Italian civil and criminal law. It is complicated, full of clauses and codes. The high level of uncertainty in professional life leads to a tendency to get lost in detail. This is a great burden for Italians, as planning processes are not flexible and general conditions cannot be easily adapted. In addition, the combination of high masculinity and a high degree of uncertainty avoidance makes life even more stressful and difficult. In order to ease these situations, the Italian needs relaxed moments during the day, e.g. through leisurely meals and regular coffee breaks. Italians are also very passionate people because of the high index number. It indicates that Italians show strong emotions. In order to express those

emotions, they need to be shared with others, usually through body language (cf. Hofstede Insights 2019).

Long-Term Orientation Austria vs. Italy

With 60 index points, the Austrian culture is very pragmatic. Their long-term orientation represents perseverance, thriftiness, status awareness and is geared towards success. Traditions are adapted to changing conditions, among other things. Italy can be equated to Austria with a value of 61 (cf. Hofstede Insights 2019).

Indulgence Austria vs. Italy

Austria can be described as a tolerant country with a value of 63. People in Austria are eager to realize their dreams and wishes in order to have fun and enjoy life. A positive basic attitude and a lot of optimism support the fulfilment of these wishes. Leisure time has a high value among Austrians. Likewise, acting out of passion and spending money to fulfil wishes characterises the Austrian. In contrast to Austria, Italy has a low value of only 30, which is a sign of restraint in Italian culture. Marked by pessimism, the Italians also place little value on leisure time or the fulfilment of wishes. Because they feel restricted by norms and laws, they do not perceive it as right to indulge themselves (see Hofstede Insights 2019).

4.3 Generations and their characteristics

To examine not only the cultural differences, but also consider different generations, an overview of their specific characteristics and motivations is briefly given in the following.

4.3.1 Traditionals

Those born until 1945 are called Traditionals. They are characterized by high discipline and loyalty as well as a sense of duty. Their work is their priority. In working life, they have the attitude to work hard and to treat their employer with respect and loyalty. They identify themselves through their position and are glad being recognized for their experience and commitment. In communication, they prefer personal conversations (cf. Kriegler 2018, p. 95f.).

4.3.2 Babyboomer

The Babyboomers were born between 1945 and 1964. They have the characteristics that they are very career-oriented and consequently work is very important to them. They appreciate being part of a team. Relationships are important, as well as regular exchange with others. A structured working style underlines their personality. They are motivated by the feeling of being needed and respected. Preferably they interact with others via telephone (cf. Kriegler 2018, p. 95f.).

4.3.3 Generation X

The Generation X were born between 1965 and 1977. They are seen as pragmatic and independent people with an entrepreneurial spirit, where time is more important to them than money. They are multitasking capable and result oriented in their work. A flexible work structure with a lot of freedom for personal development is essential to them. A healthy work-life balance is equally vital. Their most popular means of communication are via e-mail and mobile phone (cf. Kriegler 2018, p. 95f.).

4.3.4 Generation Y (Millenials)

Generation Y or also called Millenials are those born after 1978 (cf. Kriegler 2018, p. 95). They have witnessed many things, such as the arrival of the Internet, the beginning of Social Media and also the strong awareness of the natural environment. The values, the style of work and the attitudes are remarkably different compared to Generation X (cf. Naim/Lenka 2018, p. 433). They are very self-confident, stand in life and the present counts for them. They believe that work needs to be fun and a kind of lifestyle. Self-reliance and independence are especially important. Their motivation comes from the wish to make a difference, they like to network and share experiences with similar-minded people. Due to new media and Web 2.0, this generation is the most networked one (cf. Kriegler 2018, p. 95f.).

4.4 The Employee Life Cycle

The so-called Employer Branding Lifecycle in Figure 8 illustrates the phases that an employee goes through during his or her entire career in a company. From the first contact to the company (e.g. for obtaining information about the company), the current employment relationship up to the employee's retirement from the company (cf. Schooling 2015; Morgan 2017).

Figure 8: Typical Employee Life Cycle (Morgan 2017)

For Human Resource Management, the employee life cycle serves as a roadmap to visualize the steps an employee goes through in a company and how this individual can be addressed in the best possible way in all steps. Once as a candidate, then as an employee and finally as a former employee. Employer Branding also plays an important role in the employee life cycle. Not, as assumed, only during the attraction phase and in recruiting, although there are touchpoints in all six areas. Only the continuous communication and application of all Employer Branding measures across all personnel areas enables the company to communicate the promise of the Employer Brand with all its values convincingly and effectively to the employees. Understanding this employee life cycle also serves as an approach to attracting and retaining the best talents (cf. Schooling 2015).

In the following, all six phases of the employee life cycle are described in more detail.

4.4.1 Phase 1: Attraction Phase

It is not important how great the company's products are and what problems they solve for the user, because as long as the company does not have the best employees, it will always be the second choice as an employer compared to others. Therefore, the attraction phase is one of the most important in terms of EB. The reputation of the brand is essential to attract the best candidates to the company. In order to achieve this, a great corporate culture must be built up, which subsequently attracts the best talents (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

4.4.2 Phase 2: Recruitment Phase

The second most important phase for EB is about selecting the right employee for the vacant position. Nowadays, due to the high demand for top executives, recruiting has become a real competition against each other. In order to address potential employees, this has to take place via several channels. The so-called multi-channel strategy makes it possible to address a specific target group for an open position. Existing employees can, for example, use word-of-mouth propaganda to draw the attention of family members and friends to vacant positions. There are furthermore numerous social platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, XING and others, depending on the country, to reach potential employees (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

4.4.3 Phase 3: Onboarding Phase

In the onboarding phase, the new employee is taken on board in the best possible way. During this phase, the new colleague gets his workplace, training and in many companies also a mentor who guides the new employee through the initial phase. The new employees learn what is expected of them in particular and what tasks they are expected to fulfil (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

4.4.4 Phase 4: Development Phase

In the development phase it is important that the employee constantly develops professionally, so that this employee as well as the whole team are able to improve over time. Processes are developed and further training is provided. Each employee should feel accountable for his or her area of responsibility and should be willing to develop himself or herself further (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

4.4.5 Phase 5: Retention Phase

The retention phase is an important part for a company since good retention measures can avoid high costs through fluctuation. The corporate culture plays an essential role in this, it is decisive for success or failure. The corporate culture should always be positive. Otherwise, a poor working atmosphere leads to high employee turnover. A new recruiting process leads to much higher costs than the use of measures for employee retention. All undertakings carried out for this purpose can be considered as a good investment. In order to prevent a bad corporate culture, it is important to make sure that the right employees are hired during the recruiting process who fit in with the values of the company. Furthermore, the interaction in every organization should be open, helpful and transparent. Ongoing meetings with employees also help to find out early on when dissatisfaction is coming up (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

4.4.6 Phase 6: Transition Phase

The last phase in the employee life cycle involves the employee leaving the company. This may be due to the employee's own wishes of termination, retirement or dismissal by the company. Whatever the reason, HR managers must ensure that the departure does not disrupt normal operations or negatively affect other team members. It is therefore vital at this stage that a final review is held with the employee who is leaving, in which both sides try to obtain honest feedback. During this interview, the reasons for the employee's termination should be re-discussed and explained. To ensure normal business on the following days, the other team members can be invited to have a talk in order to avoid uncertainty (cf. French 2019; Fjell 2017).

5. Theoretical development of an Employer Branding Positioning Concept in the B2C Retail Sector in the South European Market

The Employer Brand follows a strategic orientation of the company with the aim of forming the image of an employer in a certain way. Furthermore, it serves the purpose of strengthening awareness of the Employer Brand (cf. Trost 2013, p.14f.). Before operational measures regarding Employer Branding are taken, a well elaborated strategy should be developed (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 79f.). The Employer Brand addresses the question of the *why*. Why should a qualified and talented person be interested in a particular company? The Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is providing the answer. It is the core of the Employer Brand and at the same time the employer's promise to the potential employees as well as to the current ones. In order to define this EVP and establish the Employer Brand, it is necessary to follow a specific process cycle. The cycle in Figure 9 contains the five phases to develop an Employer Branding Positioning Concept (cf. Trost 2013, p.14f.).

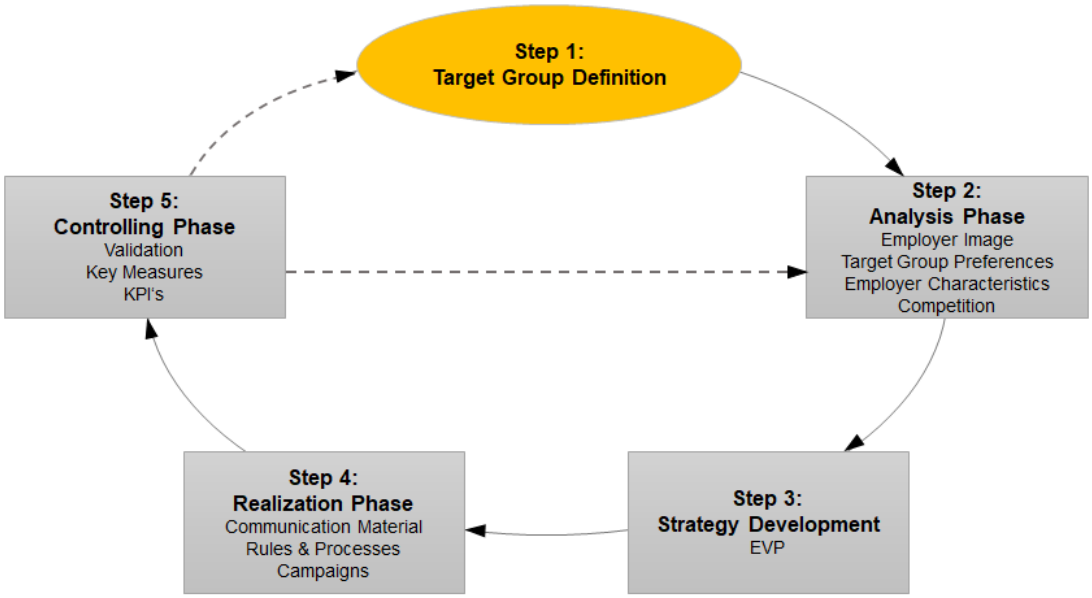

Figure 9: The Employer Branding cycle (based on Trost 2014, p. 39)

The first step of the development of the concept is about the definition of the target group that has to be addressed. Afterwards, the analysis phase begins, where the own company, the competitors and the current image are analysed. Phase three is the core of the concept development, namely the definition of the EVP and therefore

the heart of the Employer Brand. In the following implementation phase, communication materials are developed, and processes are defined and modified. The final phase concerns controlling, in which the defined measures are continuously monitored and optimized. The chain-dated line in Figure 9 shows, that the Employer Branding cycle is implemented as a recurring activity in the company. This is essential since the Employer Brand image should be continuously reviewed (cf. Trost 2014, p.38f.).

In the following subchapters, the reader is introduced to the individual phases of the Employer Branding cycle.

5.1 Step 1: Target Group Definition

The first step is to work out what the company wants to stand for as an employer among its target groups. In order to make this possible, it is necessary to determine which target group is to be specifically addressed by Employer Branding measures. In reality, a company addresses several target groups of the Employer Brand at the same time. However, it is recommended that target groups are prioritized in order to decide to which target group more attention should be given. A higher priority is placed to employees who are difficult to recruit. They are weighted more highly in this process. Communication measures are also being implemented more intensively for these future employees. On the one hand, this increases the effectiveness of these measures and, on the other hand, it saves resources through the optimal use of communication activities. With the help of existing documents and data, a delimitation of the target groups can be carried out. Expert interviews from different areas of the company are an additional useful source for this purpose. The criteria according to which target groups are differentiated can be, for example, job-related, geographical as well as personality related. Job-related criteria refer to experience in working life (e.g. young professionals, people with first work experience or experts), by functional area (e.g. administration, purchasing, marketing), by educational background (e.g. technical studies, business administration) or a combination of several criteria. A vital step is to find out what significance the respective target group has for the company and how successful they are recruited. Indicators, such as the share of the target group in the existing personnel or the future personnel demand can be taken into consideration. The recruitment success is calculated from the amount and/or quality of the applications. A helpful tool for identifying the relevant target group is the target-group-matrix,

made up of the dimensions mentioned above. The target-group-matrix consists of 4 fields (see Figure 10), which are differentiated regarding the target group types described below (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 115f.)

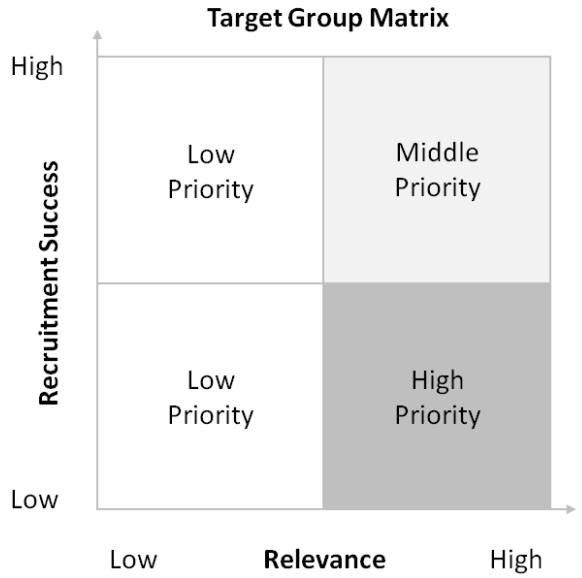

Figure 10: Matrix for Prioritization of target groups (based on von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 117)

Target groups with high relevance and low recruiting success

This target group has the highest priority in terms of Employer Branding and deserves therefore special attention. Due to the low level of recruitment success, it is vital to define specific communication measures for those target groups (e.g. a target group-oriented advertising campaign) (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 115f.).

Target groups with high relevance and high recruiting success

More attention should also be paid to this target group when setting up the Employer Brand. However, in contrast to target groups with high relevance and low recruitment success, separate communication measures are not necessary (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 115f.).

Target groups with low relevance and high recruiting success

Less attention should be paid to this target group due to its minor significance. As a result of the high recruitment success, no special communication activities are necessary (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 115f.).

Target groups with low relevance and low recruiting success

Less attention should as well be paid to this target group because it does not have a high priority for the development of the Employer Brand. External service providers such as recruitment agencies can be used to counteract the low success rate of recruitment measures in this case (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 115f.).

5.2 Step 2: Analysis Phase

The second step in developing an EVP is to conduct a comprehensive internal and external analysis. The careful analysis and evaluation of the gained attributes are essential for the establishment and further development of an Employer Brand. It provides the framework for later Employer Branding measures and gives insights into the EVP. It is important to ensure that the different perspectives of the company analysis and the target group analysis are perfectly matched (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 81f.). This analysis includes the image of the employer and its characteristics, the preferences of the target group as well as the competition (cf. Trost 2013, p. 18).

During the situation analysis, the following questions are answered:

- Where do we stand at the moment?
- Where do we want to be in the future?
- How can we get to that point?
- Are we on the right track? (cf. Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.36f.)

To carry out an internal as well as external analysis, the analytical tools SWOT and PESTEL are very well suited for this purpose (cf. Pisano/Rieple/Pironti 2017, p. 44).

5.2.1 Analysis Methods (SWOT, PESTEL)

This chapter introduces the reader to the two analysis tools SWOT and PESTEL.

SWOT-Analysis

The SWOT analysis is part of the company situation assessment and serves as an ideal tool to analyse the internal and external situation (cf. Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.36f.).

SWOT-Analysis		External Analysis	
		Opportunities	Threats
Internal Analysis	Strenghts	**SO**	**ST**
	Weaknesses	**WO**	**WT**

Table 2: SWOT-Analysis (based on Stotz/Wedel-Klein, p. 81)

The term SWOT comes from the English language and stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) represent the internal factors of a company:

- Where the company is doing well
- Where the company has weaknesses (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 81f.)

The external factors are known as Opportunities (O) and Threats (T). They provide information about possible chances and dangers through the external environment:

- How to develop a strength on the market
- Risks that have to be taken into account (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p. 81f.)

However, the internal and external factors can also be considered in a combination:

- **SO:** Internal strengths are used to take advantage of external opportunities
- **ST:** Internal strengths are used to avoid external risks
- **WO:** Internal weaknesses must be reduced in order to take advantage of external opportunities
- **WT:** Internet weaknesses must be minimized in order to prevent external risks (cf. Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.36f.)

Strengths can include a company's brand image, government funding, a strong relationship with employees, a good infrastructure, a clear understanding of the local market, well-defined goals of the business and strong innovation. On the other hand, weaknesses can be led to less future-oriented thinking, insufficient talent management and retention measures or a lack of knowledge on the international market. Market opportunities offer possibilities for expansion, entry into innovative technologies or an involvement in large-scale investments. The risks facing a company on the market include the unavailability of good talents, new market entries by big players or strong competition. Technological changes can also become a danger for any company, as they always involve costs (cf. White 2017, p. 257).

PESTEL-Analysis

Another method of analysis is the PESTEL analysis. The PESTEL analysis is one of the best-known strategic tools and is used to assess the macroeconomic environment in order to describe specific market conditions and developments and their effects. This environment refers to circumstances that affect many companies, regardless of the company's industry. It includes six categories: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal. The initial letters of these factors thus give the name PESTEL (cf. Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f.).

Factors from the macro environment can turn out to be both opportunities and threats for a company. If factors from the macroeconomic environment are discovered early enough, this can result in a competitive advantage. In some cases, good forecasts even ensure the survival of a company and decide on success or failure (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 5f.).

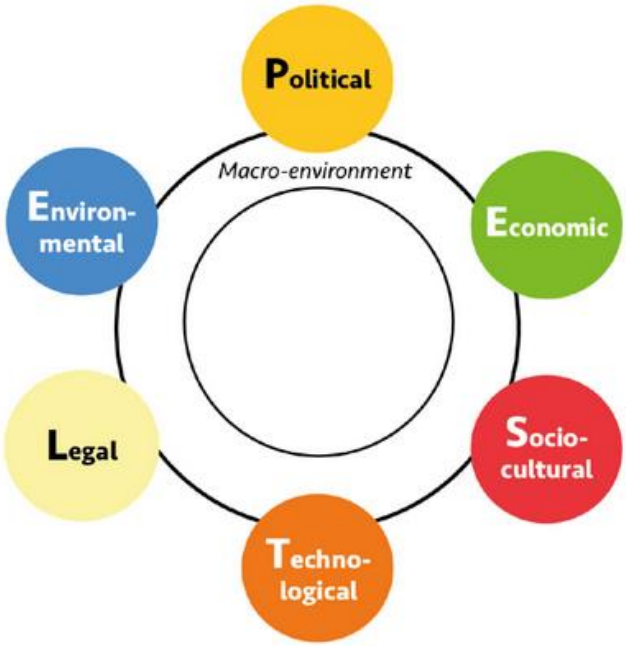

Figure 11: The variables of the PESTLE analysis (del Marmol 2015, p. 9)

In most cases the PESTEL analysis is used when new business plans or marketing strategies are developed, or the realization of new projects is planned. The overall objective is to identify unavoidable macroeconomic changes that may have a significant impact on the company's development (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 5f.).

For a better understanding, the six macroeconomic factors are briefly explained below.

- **Political factors:** Government decisions can have a major impact on companies. For example, the stability of the political system (e.g. public unrest, civil wars) might have a significant influence on a company. Foreign policy could introduce restrictions on exports or import duties. Such restrictions make it more difficult for a foreign company to enter a new market (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

- **Economic factors:** Economic factors provide information on the economic development of a country. It is essential to obtain information on current economic growth, as products are only bought if there is sufficient disposable income. Key figures on population size, interest rates, exchange rates, inflation rates, unemployment-rate or import and export business are some of these examples. High rates of unemployment can be an indication that the population lacks income results in reduced consumption (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

- **Socio-cultural factors**: To measure the sociological factors, structural characteristics of the population (age, gender, social class) are used as a criterion. Values and attitudes of customers, employees or suppliers may also be considered and provide information about trends and developments, e.g. regarding health awareness. Cultural characteristics such as language, norms and religion are counted as well (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

- **Technological factors:** The analysis of technological developments is vital for every company to survive on the market. Through constant adaptation to the latest information and communication technology, work processes in a company can be improved. This revolution has enabled companies to develop new business models and branches that have a positive influence on differentiation from the competition (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

- **Legal factors:** The legal requirements of a country determine the scope for action on the market. Different legal systems or people's legal awareness vary widely within the EU. For instance, certain countries may have different competition or environmental laws that apply to specific products or

measures. Such information is essential for the application of marketing activities (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

- **Environmental factors:** Environmental factors provide information about the conditions and infrastructure of a country. For example, it gives important insights on location (climate, size), infrastructure (connections to airports, motorways or harbours), on the availability of resources (raw materials, mineral resources) or on emissions. The climate, for instance, has a strong influence on the demand for products, transport or packaging of goods (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.; Goworek/McGoldrick 2015, p.44f).

In fact, the PESTEL analysis should only consider those factors that actually have an influence on the company, as otherwise incorrect assumptions could have a negative impact on the development of the strategy (cf. del Marmol 2015, p. 10f.).

5.2.2 Important Analysis Fields

In the following paragraphs there are analysis fields that should be considered for the development of an Employer Branding Positioning Concept with the use of the above-mentioned tools (SWOT, PESTEL).

Employer Characteristics

The characteristics of the employer represent the special features that a company offers its employees. These characteristics are the answer to the question why an employee prefers to work for a company. Such attributes reflect if a company is attractive for its already existing employees and prospective ones. For the EVP and the Employer Branding it is important that they are based on the characteristics of the employer. All contents that are communicated must be reflected in this attributes in reality. Only this ensures credibility and trust in an employer. If the values transported to the labour market deviate from reality, a high fluctuation, especially during the probationary period, is a consequence of it. After all, the employees and managers are the ones who make a significant contribution to the Employer Brand by communicating the properties to the external environment based on their experience. Employer Branding is an instrument to improve the attractiveness of the employer by taking into account and actively creating the employer's characteristics (cf. Trost 2013, p. 19f).

Table 3 shows the possible characteristics, divided into six categories, that an employer could offer.

Benefits	Tasks	Company	Colleagues	Values	Purpose
Reward	Interesting tasks and projects	Products/ Services	Staff personality	Corporate culture	Environment & Climate
Career opportunities	International assignments	Technological/ Market leadership	Staff qualification level	Leadership quality	Social responsibility
Work/Life balance	Innovation	Company success	Co-operation	Trust & respect	The health of others
	Influence	Location	Diversity	Work flexibility	Quality of life
		Public reputation			
		Job security			
		Customers			

Table 3: Employer characteristics (Trost 2014, p. 43)

In all those areas, an enterprise can reflect on the qualities that apply to them as an employer. Employees also orientate themselves on those attributes when evaluating the attractiveness of a workplace.

Target Group Preferences

The first step of the EB cycle was to define the target group to which the Employer Branding concept should be addressed. Now the aim is to find out how the target group thinks and what is crucial to them. For the EVP it is important to know the preferences of its target group. Only in that way the EVP can lead to a successful outcome. For instance, people with different educational backgrounds also have different preferences. Usually people with a technical background prefer a familiar environment in the company. For persons with an economic background, it is more important to know the career opportunities that a company has to offer. In reality, a company has several target groups, so it is difficult to address them with the same activities. Moreover, individuals within the same target group also may have different preferences. It is therefore essential to find out which things are equally important to all those people. This can be made possible if a company also treats the different generations according to their values or according to their educational background. In this way, the employer may avoid the risk of addressing people in the wrong way. As an example, campaigns addressed to Generation Y (people born after 1978)

should also be conducted by people from Generation Y. They understand the preferences of their own age group the best (cf. Trost 2013, p. 20f.).

Competitive Position

One of the aims of the Employer Brand is to distinguish oneself from the competition in the long-term. The focus lies on what makes an employer special compared to others. For example, flexible working hours can make an employer attractive to a certain extent, but not immediately unique compared to the competition, if they equally offer attractive working time models. This point therefore loses its unique proposition. An employer should not only take its individual strengths into account, but also compare them with its direct competitors. In addition, it should be continuously monitored how the competition presents itself on the labour market in order to make sure that the own EVP differentiates on the market. Attention should be paid to the point that businesses which are competitors in the economic sense are not necessarily competitors on the labour market. For example, food retailers and tool retailers do not compete in a business sense, but they do compete on the labour market when it concerns the best talents with comparable qualifications. Another example is that food retailers do not compete with online food retailers in terms of employees. The requirements on employees are completely different for each of them. Studies have shown that candidates who are interested in company A are also often interested in company B. These parallels, which can be found for example in the career profile or curriculum vitae, might give an indication of the closest competitors (cf. Trost 2013, p. 21f.).

Employer Image

The employer image describes the image that an employer currently has on the labour market. When defining the EVP, a company should not move too far away from its previous employer image, otherwise the company loses its credibility. However, if there is something special that is newly offered on the labour market, then this should be communicated to the external community through marketing campaigns. Campaigns are a way of addressing employer characteristics to the target group, especially when it comes to trying to distancing oneself from the typical employer image. For example, steel producers have the image of a traditional company where people earn low wages and work under risky conditions. The fact that such a company could also provide exciting jobs with attractive working

conditions, good salaries and challenging tasks can be well communicated through a campaign to strengthen the employer's image (cf. Trost 2013, p. 22f.).

5.3 Step 3: Strategy Development of the Employer Value Proposition

Once the analysis phase is complete, the strategy development process continues. An important step in the positioning process is to determine what the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) will consist of in the long-term. The preceding analysis phase provides information in this regard. In addition, it has to be decided whether the Employer Brand is to be interpreted in a more general or target group-oriented manner. The international context should moreover be taken into account. This means that a company in different countries should distinguishes itself from the general Employer Brand (cf. Trost 2013, p. 40f.).

Employer Value Proposition

One of the most important components of the EB is the Employer Value Proposition. It is also known as the Employee Value Proposition (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 130f.).

As Figure 12 demonstrates, the EVP is a unique promise of a company to deliver the benefits an employee can expect. Furthermore, the EVP serves as a differentiation from the competition and is intended to convey the company's strengths to the outside of the market (cf. Trost 2019, p. 83f.; Scholz 2013, p. 489).

As the core of an Employer Brand the EVP answers the question why a qualified and motivated person should be interested in a certain company.

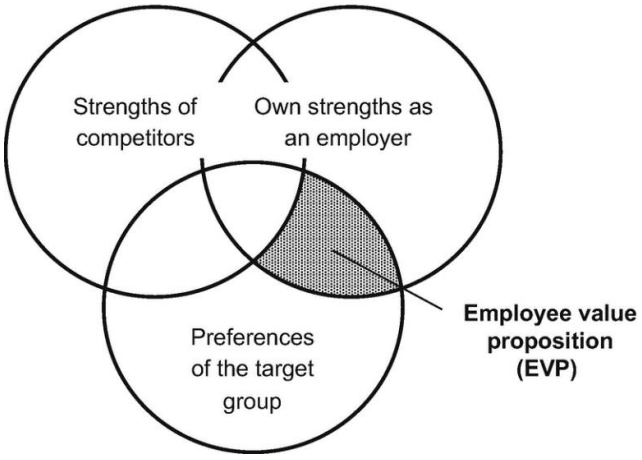

Figure 12: The simplified logic of an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) (Trost 2019, p. 83)

The EVP aims to present an authentic and aspiring image of the company that will encourage those individuals who fit well into the company's culture and corporate values to apply and already existing employees to stay motivated in their jobs. Therefore, the core serves as a promise to the potential employee and to existing ones. The EVP is comparable with the Unique Selling Proposition from Product Marketing and represents a unique position mark of an employer (cf. Trost 2013, p.14f.). An EVP serves as a compass in all hiring and HR marketing activities and provides guidance on whether those activities are appropriate to the Employer Brand or not (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016a, p. 130f.). Therefore, it can be seen as a set of features and benefits as well as an experience of an enterprise that tries to present its attractiveness, recruiting and retention efforts to the labour market (cf. Taylor 2017, p. 163).

In order to develop the EVP of a company, a comprehensive analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses as an employer, as well as those of its competitors, is required. Furthermore, the advantages of the target group have to be determined in order to address them in the most target-oriented way (cf. Trost 2019, p. 83f.).

The following diagram shows a simplified illustration of the definition of the EVP.

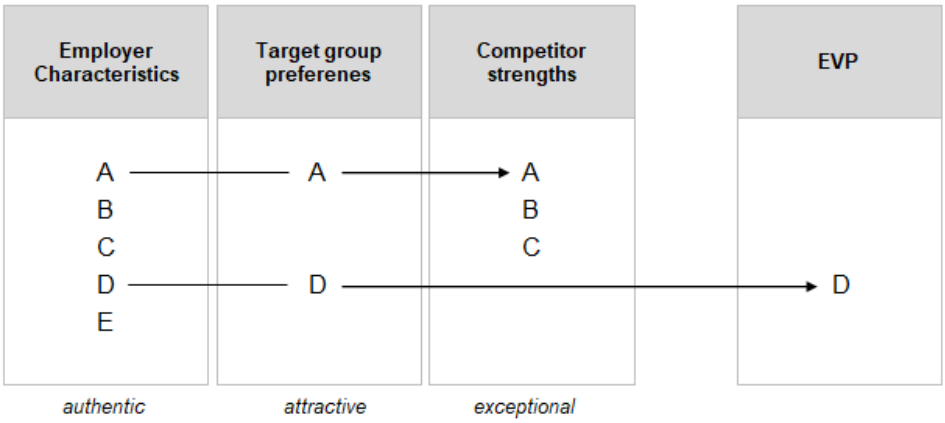

Figure 13: Defining the EVP (Trost 2014, p. 40)

The first pillar shows the employer characteristics. It is intended to communicate to the target group why it is worth working for a certain position or employer. External communication must therefore be convincing and especially authentic. It should not contain unrealistic promises. In times of Internet and Social Media, it would be the worst thing a company could do when promises in reality do not fit the EVP. Especially for the retention of new employees, it would be a huge mistake, as they would leave the company within the probationary period. Employer characteristics

should therefore match the preferences of the target group. Of course, different target groups also have different preferences. In addition, each employee has his or her individual expectations apart from the majority. But basically every target group has an identical image in a certain way, what makes an employer appear attractive. Finally, the strengths of the competition have to be considered. Many companies are viewed positively by applicants because they offer a pleasant working environment. However, this would not distinguish an employer from its competitors, who are likely to offer a friendly environment as well. It is therefore necessary to differentiate oneself from the competition through other advantages and functions in order to position the company as an attractive employer. If these three dimensions (employer characteristics, target group preferences and competitor strengths) are fully understood, the base for the EVP could be formed. In Figure 13, five characteristics of an employer, identified by the letters A to E, are listed. The letters represent good qualities, such as attractive salaries, a good work-life balance, flexible working hours or other benefits (as shown in Table 3). The second column shows that, for example, only characteristics A and D are relevant to the target group and are considered as being attractive. At the same time, however, this does not mean that only one employer can offer attribute A, but perhaps a competitor as well. This is illustrated in the third column. At the end, it is only attribute D that makes the employer to the most unique compared to the competition. This figure serves as a simplified illustration and is much more complex in practice than in this example (cf. Trost 2013, p. 40f.; Trost 2014, p. 38f.).

To identify the relevant information for defining the EVP there are possibilities such as focus groups and interviews with current, new and future employees or an analysis of employer studies. Career sites of competitors serve as useful benchmarks to evaluate and compare the strengths and weaknesses of the own company (cf. Trost 2019, p. 83f.).

5.4 Step 4: Realization Phase

Once the analysis phase and the strategy development have been completed, the most important foundation stone has been laid. The fourth step involves the realization of the concept through Employer Branding measures.

There are numerous possibilities to face out the Employer Brand both internally and externally, which can be used individually or in combination with each other. It is

recommended to combine different methods in order to achieve the highest possible output. To ensure that all measures are consistent across all channels when communicating the EB, it is essential that a uniform image of the EB can be created (cf. Kanning 2017, p. 167f.).

In the following, several different internal and external measures are explained to the reader.

5.4.1 External Measures

In the past, it was common to advertise for talented people in traditional media like print media. Furthermore, many other companies have created their own career websites to advertise vacancies. These sites have also been used for Employer Branding purposes. Today, a great opportunity to attract new employees is to attend career fairs (cf. Trost 2014, p. 45f.).

The participation at trade fairs can be helpful to present the company as a well-respectable employer. Interested people can easily approach the company and find out what the employer has to offer. It is especially valuable when there are employees at the trade fair booth who are either from the personnel department or from the areas where personnel is being sought. Potential applicants have the chance to talk directly to their future colleagues. Having a conversation with employees seems more authentic and honest than just talking to the HR department. Furthermore, the EB can be positively influenced if the company seeks to cooperate with educational institutions or non-profit organizations. It is important that the cooperation fits to the company's values and that existing employees feel a sense of commitment (cf. Karriere 2020).

In times of digitalization, the Internet has had a great influence to address the right target group. Especially Social Media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and XING are the most up-to-date form of communication between companies and the labour market in Austria. They serve as useful tools for the self-presentation of the company (cf. Trost 2014, p. 45f.).

Figure 14 shows the classification of various means of communication with the target group though various channels.

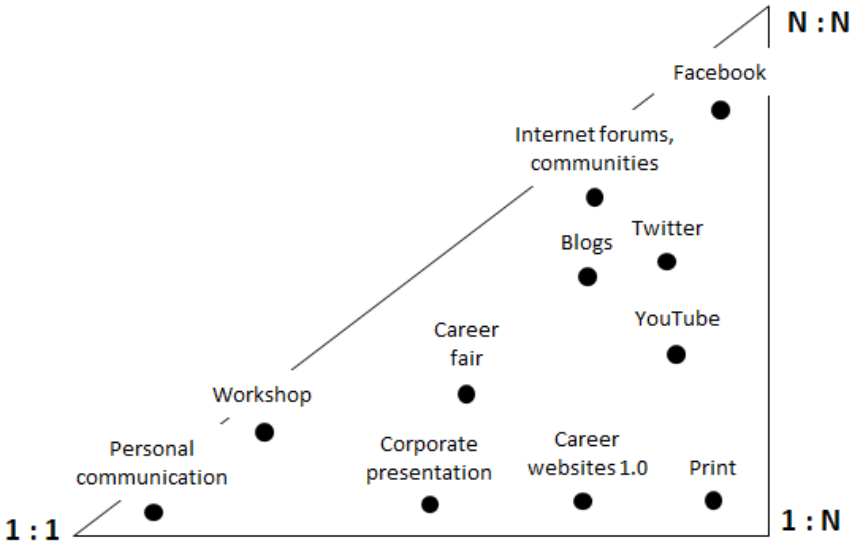

Figure 14: Classifying various means of communication with the target group (Trost 2014, p. 46)

The diagram shows an extreme way of interaction between a company, the existing employees, candidates and other individuals. The three corners of the triangle represent the way in which all participants communicate. A very personal form of communication represents the 1:1 contact, e.g. through a personal one-to-one interview between employer and applicant. The 1:N communication describes the interaction between one party, which can be either the employer or a single person, to several persons (N). With N:N communication, many people communicate with each other at the same time. Several people (N) can communicate with many other people (N). A good example of this is Social Media where people communicate interactively with each other. Whether they are people who belong to a company, prospective applicants or the general public (cf. Trost 2014, p. 45f.).

With the help of numerous channels, targeted communication can take place. Topics can be insights into daily work, the presentation of the corporate culture with its values as well as events that are open to the public. The most important point is to stick to the truth when talking about the company. At the latest when a candidate becomes an employee, he or she notices whether the truth was told in the previous communication or not. If false promises are made, this can damage the image very quickly (cf. Karriere 2020).

5.4.2 Internal Measures

The internal measures regarding EB are intended primarily to address existing employees. The aim is to confirm them in their selection of employer and to implement the benefits promised to the external environment. Starting with an open

corporate culture, the company tries to get in touch with employees to better understand their concerns, worries and suggestions. In this way, it signals employees that they are the highest capital in the company and that their opinions are highly valued. This reduces the fear of employees expressing their opinions. They feel even more connected to the company and an important part of it. For many employees it is essential for them to be able to continuously improve their skills. A pool of internal as well as external training opportunities supports the development of employees and their qualifications, which can be utilized for the company. This is a benefit for the employee as well as for the employer. Employees to whom these further training opportunities are offered remain loyal to the company for a longer period of time. Likewise, they can expect to have opportunities for advancement within the company through continuing education. The newly acquired knowledge provides additional benefits to the entire organization. A further measure for internal Employer Branding is the process of reintegrating an employee into the company, e.g. after of a long absence due to maternity leave or illness. This can be realized by introducing substitution options during the absence or by setting up a company day-care centre for their children, for example. It allows parents to return to work earlier. Most companies offer the possibility of flexible working hours. This contributes immensely to the work-life balance of an employee, as the employee can decide for themselves when to start and end work. The elimination of core-time during working hours reinforces this work-life balance even more. In addition, the offer of home office and part-time work is a great opportunity for employees to be more flexible. In order to further strengthen the community of cooperation as well as motivation, there are numerous health measures that the company can provide. Starting with fresh fruit at the workplace, ergonomic workplaces, a generous offer of healthy meals or sporting activities in form of internal sporting events, training courses or discounts on fitness contracts - there are no limitations (cf. Karriere 2020).

5.5 Step 5: Controlling Phase

The controlling phase serves to find out whether the Employer Branding measures are successful or not. Unfortunately, many companies neglect the importance of controlling the measures to strengthen the Employer Brand. Reasons for this are ignorance of relevant key figures or even a lack of a basis of data up to a deficiency of knowledge for implementation. The information that can be obtained through the

controlling process to support the management to assess if the defined goals have been achieved. If the targets have not been achieved, the reason for the non-achievement needs to be determined. It may be necessary to rethink the communication to the target group and the strategy and if required, to conduct a new analysis. Controlling may also be seen as a contribution to optimizing effectiveness and efficiency. Employer Branding Controlling should not be mistaken for a redevelopment or revision of an existing Employer Branding concept (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 215f.).

Before measuring success, a company first needs to know which key figures are particularly relevant. This can be, for example, from an increase in awareness of the company to more high-quality applications. In addition, Employer Branding measures are differentiated internally (directed to existing employees) and/or externally (addressed to future employees or interested parties) and are measured therefore differently. In many cases, one of the company's goals is to achieve cost savings in recruiting through successful Employer Branding measures. Not always all company goals fit together, which can lead to a conflict of objectives. Before defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), an employer must agree on what is to be measured. In order to identify the most important relevant key figures, a clear definition of the key figures, which is uniformly valid for all stakeholders involved, has to be established. Terms and formulas should be explained across the company so that a standardized procedure for determining the key figures is guaranteed. Of course, not all KPIs are equally suitable for every area of the company, therefore it should be made clear for all responsible persons under which conditions each KPI is applicable (cf. von Bothmer/Graf, p. 189f.).

To evaluate the effects of internal measures, the following indicators are well suited:

- Employee satisfaction
- Fluctuation rate
- Employer confidentiality (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p.141f.)

In order to measure external measures, the following indicators provide information on the success or failure of the EB activities:

- Number of applications
- Number of initiative applications
- Quality of applications (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p.148f.)

An employer could also be measured by its psychographic branding objectives:

- Employer attractiveness
- Employer image
- Employer awareness (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p.220f.)

In order to give the reader an understanding of the above-mentioned key figures, they are explained in more detail below.

Employee satisfaction

The employee satisfaction index provides information on how current employee happiness is valued. Aspects such as communication, improvements, recognition, development opportunities, leadership qualities as well as dealing with employees are evaluated (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p.141f.).

Fluctuation rate

The fluctuation rate is an indicator of weaknesses in the personnel department. The ratio provides information on how many newly hired employees terminate their employment relationship during the probationary period. The value is calculated by dividing the terminated employment relationships during the probationary period by the number of hires (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 217f.). A high fluctuation rate leads to high costs of absence and replacement and can weaken the competitiveness of a company (cf. Stotz/Wedel-Klein 2013, p.143).

Employer confidentiality

Employer confidence shows the extent to which a person is familiar with the respective employer. For instance, a person is aware that the company is looking for employees. Furthermore, the company can be easily differentiated from other employers with their special characteristics (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 220f.).

Number of applications

This key figure indicates the number of applications received per announced position. The value is calculated by dividing the number of applications by the number of advertised positions (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 217f.)

Number of initiative applications

Initiativ applications are applications that cannot be clearly assigned to an advertised vacancy. It is therefore recommended that this key figure should be determined as a separate key figure. This ratio is calculated by multiplying the number of unsolicited applications by the number of total applications (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 217f.).

Quality of applications

If a company wants to measure the quality of applications, i.e. how many applicants qualify for an advertised position, the number of qualified applications is divided by the number of total applications (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 217f.).

Employer attractiveness

Employer attractiveness is the perceived value a prospective staff member expects from working for a company (cf. Christiaans 2013, p. 13f.). This indicator measures the attractiveness of a company as an employer. Measurements can be made by surveys on the level of attractiveness or intention to apply for a job (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 220f.).

Employer image

The employer image is often associated with the term employer attractiveness. However, it implies the unique image in a person's mind about a company as an employer. A good employer image may be a decision-making factor for future employees when deciding for an Employer of Choice (cf. Christiaans 2013, p. 13f.). The employers' image can be measured by surveys on the perception of the employer's characteristics (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 220f.).

Employer awareness

Employer awareness measures the familiarity or confidence with the company as an employer. A distinction can be made between aided and unaided awareness. In the case of aided awareness, a question is asked specifically about the awareness of a certain employer. In the case of unaided awareness, for example, employers in the same industry are listed (cf. von Walter/Kremmel 2016b, p. 220f.).

6. Company Presentation: ALDI S.r.l. in Italy

The following chapter introduces ALDI as a company. Based on the focus of this work, an overview of ALDI S.r.l. in Italy is given below.

The History of ALDI

The company was founded in Germany in 1913 as a German multinational company. ALDI SÜD was managed by Karl Junior Albrecht and ALDI NORD by Theodor Paul Albrecht. Today the company has more than 6,200 retail stores in 11 countries and 4 continents. The 148,900 employees are spread across the continents of Europe, the USA, China and Australia. European headquarters are located in Austria (Sattledt), Slovenia (Ljubljana), Italy (Verona), Slovakia (Biatorbágy) and in Switzerland (Schwarzenbach) (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a). ALDI S.r.l. is a subsidiary of the HOFER KG, which has its operations in Austria. The HOFER KG and its subsidiaries form the HOFER Group. The HOFER Group and the ALDI SÜD Germany Group form the ALDI SÜD Group. Within the HOFER Group, ALDI S.r.l. is assigned to the HOFER S/E cluster (cf. Arlunno 17.10.2019).

ALDI S.r.l. in Italy

In 2014 the Italian market was analysed for the first time for the new market entry. Therefore, a concept for the retail stores was developed in 2015. One year later, the regional head office in Verona was built, with responsibility for operational sales - followed by a logistics center at the end of 2017 in Oppeano. In addition, the branch concept was designed, implemented and optimized in 2017 in order to be optimally prepared for the Italian market. The new store concept was rolled out for the first time in 2018 and the first 10 retail stores were opened in Northern Italy on 1 March 2018. By the end of 2018, the company had opened over 50 new retail stores in Italy and employed around 1300 people. One year later, the company opened 20 additional stores. Through the construction of a second logistics center in Landriano, the number of employees increased to 1600 people, 1400 of whom are working in sales. The responsibility for operational sales of ALDI S.r.l. in Italy is managed from Verona, Italy (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a; Arlunno 14.10.2019).

Offer of ALDI S.r.l.

ALDI S.r.l. has about 1900 articles in its assortment. The company focuses on daily freshness and selected products that combine quality and comfort. 75% of the groceries originate from selected Italian suppliers (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a).

Brands

The brands consist of a mixture of 85% own brands and 15% branded articles. The range offered by ALDI S.r.l. has been specially adapted to the Italian market. The simple and intuitive shop concept with a smart assortment strategy is particularly well thought-out. For example, the fruit and vegetable department, which offers around 120 fresh articles, can be viewed from the outside. In the case of private labels, the highest value is placed on regional products. Around 17% of the assortment are national and international branded products. ALDI S.r.l. also has its own price strategy. Products with affordable prices, 12 own brands and a pre-selected assortment. Moreover, there are offered low-priced products every day (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a).

Company Values

ALDI S.r.l. follows the values of reliability, simplicity and responsibility:

- Reliability in relation to customers, employees and suppliers
- Simplicity in linear structures and with a focus on the company and its customers
- Responsibility with respect to the environment and human beings (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a)

Sustainability

The company's values are also reflected in the issue of sustainability. The company has received several product certifications and takes care of reproduction and waste recycling. For example, the company acts according to the PDCA cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act). This cycle serves the control and continuous improvement of the assortment and processes in the company. In this process, advice is given to buyers when buying products, sensory tests are carried out, a good relationship is established with the authorities (e.g. notification of dangerous products), audits and certifications are carried out (e.g. certification of suppliers, controlled production,

certified products) and product analyses are carried out (e.g. analysis of dangerous substances, pesticide monitoring, product range analysis) (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019a).

7. Empirical Research

This chapter introduces the reader to the practical part of this thesis. The study design and the research design are explained in detail and the rough findings of the empirical research are presented.

7.1 Study Design

The study design serves to present the most important background information regarding primary research. The object of investigation is introduced and hypotheses for the investigation are formulated. Furthermore, the method of investigation and the sample size as well as the instrument of examination are outlined.

7.1.1 Object of Investigation

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the goal of this master thesis is to develop an Employer Branding Positioning Concept for Area Managers for ALDI in Italy. In the first step (see Figure 15) a literature research was carried out by the author. Based on this background knowledge, the existing internal Employer Branding measures were evaluated by a secondary research. An already by the company conducted internal employee survey provided the basis for the research. The internal messages, existing channels as well as internal perspectives were examined. Furthermore, the secondary research served to gain insights into the external market, e.g. competition analysis on the labour market. The following primary research was intended to examine the actual level of awareness of the company as well as the current image towards the target group. The evaluated results of this research show both strengths and weaknesses of ALDI S.r.l. and its competitors in Italy. The analysis furthermore gives an insight into the most appropriate approach to communicate with the target group. In addition, the research is providing information about the attitude of the target group.

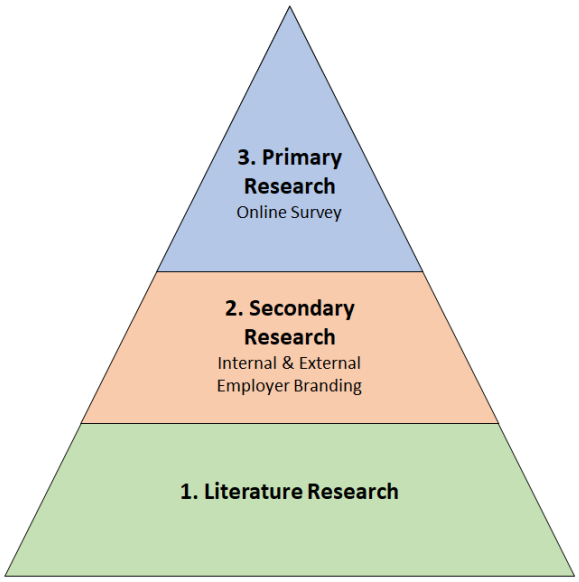

Figure 15: Procedure of the entire investigation (own presentation)

7.1.2 Formulation of Hypotheses

For primary research, the author builds up hypotheses. These hypotheses serve to express the presumed connection between two different facts.

To test hypotheses statistically, a null hypothesis (H0) is contrasted with a counterhypothesis (H1). H0 assumes that there is no correlation, whereas H1 must be verified or rejected (cf. Creswell/Creshwell 2018, p. 138f.)

Hypothesis 1:

H0: The willingness to change their place of residence for a higher working position at ALDI in Italy is strongly dependent for Italians.

H1: The willingness to change their place of residence for a higher working position at ALDI in Italy is independent for Italians.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: There is no correlation between the target group of 25 to 45-year olds and the use of digital media in job search.

H1: There is a positive correlation between the target group of 25 to 45-year olds and the use of digital media in job search.

Hypothesis 3:

H0: There is no interrelation between the attractiveness of ALDI in Italy and the willingness to work for them.

H1: There is a strong interrelation between the attractiveness of ALDI in Italy and the willingness to work for them.

Hypothesis 4:

H0: The better awareness ALDI in Italy has, the less attractive it is as an employer.

H1: The higher the level of awareness of ALDI, the more attractive the company is as an employer.

Hypothesis 5:

H0: There is no connection between the fluctuation of the employees from ALDI in Italy and the quality of the management.

H1: There is a strong connection between the fluctuation of the employees from ALDI in Italy and the quality of the management.

7.1.3 Method

The primary research was carried out by a so-called quantitative market research. In quantitative market research, quantitative data is generated and statistically processed in order to identify new results or test hypotheses. The statistical analysis of standardized and non-standardized data is thus referred to as quantitative research (cf. Bell/Brayman/Harley 2019, p. 376f.).

Quantitative research offers numerous advantages such as:

- Reliability, objectivity and comparability
- Fast processing of high data volumes
- Low cost investment
- Simple implementation (cf. Bell/Brayman/Harley 2019, p. 376f.)

Depending on the object of research, different quantitative research methods can be distinguished:

Standardized interviewing: This method involves closed multiple choice questions, e.g. online questionnaires

Standardized observation: This scheme refers to the observation of behaviour patterns

Experiments: The execution of an experiment is part of numerical data collection

Quantitative content analysis: Measurable data such as data, text and figures are analysed in terms of their content (cf. Bell/Brayman/Harley 2019, p. 208f.)

The author decided to conduct a standardized survey in order to reach the target group in the best possible way via an online survey.

7.1.4 Sample Selection

A sample is a subset of persons who are representing the statements of the overall population. Reliability and scope have an important significance. The selection of the sample is based on a systematic sampling procedure. Each element of the population has the same chance of being included in the sample. The elements of the population are ranked, which can be random or follow the characteristics of a certain variable, regardless of the object of investigation (cf. Bell/Brayman/Harley 2019, p. 195f.)

As a sample of this research persons with Italian citizenship between the ages of 25 and 45 were defined. Furthermore, an economic education, existing German language skills and a high degree of flexibility are characteristics of the sampled individuals. To obtain a representative result, 150 persons as a minimum were taken into account for the qualitative research.

7.1.5 Survey Instrument

As already briefly mentioned, a standardized survey by using an online survey tool named Surveymonkey was carried out. The standardized questionnaire were created by the author personally, based on the findings of theoretical secondary research and the hypotheses derived from it.

Chapter 7.2 provides more details on the channels used to send out the survey, the criteria required for participation and the time period during which the survey was conducted.

7.2 Research Design of the online survey

The overall research (secondary research and primary research) took 6 weeks, while the primary research was carried out in 2 weeks with the help of an online survey.

The questionnaire was distributed between 23 March 2020 and 6 April 2020 via the following channels:

- Facebook: in numerous Italian groups
- Instagram: Stories with link to the survey
- LinkedIn: in numerous Italian groups, related to working life
- WhatsApp groups
- Via the Italian embassy
- About Italian friends and acquaintances
- Through the Italian branch offices of the Chamber of Commerce
- Via Italian universities
- Austrian Student Union University of Applied Sciences Campus 02 Graz

The criteria for participation in the survey were clearly defined:

- Italian
- At the age between 25 and 45 years
- With existing German language skills

The target group was interviewed in English. The completion of the questionnaire for the respondents took about 5 - 7 minutes. The catalogue of questions can be found in Chapter 3 of the appendix.

The results were evaluated directly in Surveymonkey, as the paid version offered a comprehensive analysis option.

7.3 Rough Findings

Secondary research has shown that ALDI has some room for improvement from an internal perspective. Existing structures need to be rethought in order to achieve the best possible corporate culture. Above all, the values for which ALDI stands have to be questioned and taken into account in all communication with internal and external parties. The competition analysis shows the position of ALDI in terms of awareness and attractiveness. The career website of ALDI gives a very informative and appealing picture compared to its competitors. Despite all this, improvements suggested in the measures of this thesis can still be incorporated. The primary research provides a good comparison between the characteristics of a dream employer vs. ALDI in Italy. Furthermore, it was found out that people in Italy record a high degree of flexibility with regard to changes of residence. The interviewees have a digital affinity and inform themselves about a potential employer mainly via digital media. Interesting results are also shown by primary research of the attractiveness and awareness of ALDI as an employer in Italy and its competitors. The development of an EVP in Italy indicates that values, keywords and slogans are important for highlighting the company. The company's career site as well as Social Media support the communication to the target group best.

8. Employer Branding Positioning Concept for ALDI S.r.l. in Italy with regard to the position as Area Manager

8.1 Target Group Definition

In the context of this work it was agreed that the target group of the Employer Branding Positioning Concept would focus on addressing Area Managers in Italy. Above all, Area Managers between the ages of 25 and 45 who have a knowledge of German should be addressed. Furthermore, it is important for ALDI in Italy that the target group has a high degree of flexibility, as they have a high level of sales force activity.

German language skills are a prerequisite for potential employees, as part of the induction training takes place in Austria. An experienced Area Manager supervises a new colleague in Austria for about one month. Another two months the new employee works in a store in Austria. This gives the new employee a better

understanding of the different processes and structures and allows him or her to better understand activities in the store. To avoid difficulties in communication, the German language is an important point (cf. Arlunno 07.02.2020).

ALDI currently employs around 50 Area Managers in Italy. The demand varies between 12 and 15 new Area Managers each year. One Area Manager is responsible for about 60 employees in different stores and manages a total of 4 to 5 stores. The current average age of the Area Managers is 30 years (cf. Arlunno 07.02.2020).

An Area Manager serves as a bridge between the stores and the local subsidiary. Essential for this function are independence, organizational and communication skills. Good cooperation with the subsidiaries is indispensable. Continuous analysis of results and optimization of processes are also part of the responsibilities of an Area Manager (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019c).

In addition, an Area Manager should have the following key qualities:

- Leadership skills
- Strong customer orientation
- Good communication skills and solution orientation
- Administrative and organizational skills
- The ability to lead a team and to work in a group
- A positive attitude towards new challenges (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019c)

8.2 Analysis Phase: Secondary Research

In the following chapter, internal and external secondary research was carried out in order to determine the existing Employer Branding measures and their effects within ALDI in Italy (internal analysis) and to compare the measures taken by competitors by carrying out a competition analysis (external analysis).

8.2.1 Internal Analysis

As already mentioned in the introduction, in this chapter the Employer Branding measures were analyzed and the results of an employee survey conducted by ALDI in Italy were presented. In the following, a SWOT analysis was also carried out to show the strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and risks of the company.

SWOT-Analysis of ALDI in Italy

The SWOT-analysis in Table 4 shows how changes in the environment can meet strengths and weaknesses of the company and represent either an opportunity or a risk for the company. Based on the outcome, first steps could be defined how to deal with these changes in the environment. The numbers 1 to 3 serve to indicate the priority (low, middle, high), the emoticons show whether it is a strength/opportunity or a weakness/risk for the company. At the same time, the first goals or steps were defined.

Changes in the environment...		...meet a strength or weakness in the system...				..which represents an opportunity or threat...			..which is why we aim to...
		☺	☹	Strength/Weakness	Causes	☺	☹	Opportunity/Threat	First objectives
1	Increase in market participants (competition)		2	still low awareness of ALDI in Italy	Market entry in Italy since 2018 for the first time	2		International and fast growing company	Open new stores, increase marketing activities
2	Increase in digitalization	2		Strong digital presence through website, career platforms and social media	Digital media are actively used via different channels.	2		Company has strong (technical) capabilities in the digital environment	Continually expanding the digital presence.
3	High unemployment rate in Italy		2	Although the unemployment rate in Italy is high, ALDI has difficulty finding new qualified employees.	The company is looking for employees from Italy with experience and knowledge of German. These candidates are difficult to find.		3	The search for suitable employees can turn into a long unsuccessful investigation.	Change the language for the training to English in order to find more staff.
4	Use of online services, blogs, social media	2		Active social media activities, good follower base	Active on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram with daily posts	2		Although strong online presence of competitors high chances for increasing activities/frequency	Increase visibility on social media channels through a minimum of 1 post every day on each channel
5	Sustainability is becoming increasingly important	3		ALDI in Italy is strongly committed to sustainability, certification and awards.	Reduction of waste (reduction of packaging, increase of reusability, avoidance of plastic and disposable items), cooperation with non-profit organisations, certified products, promotion of regional suppliers.	2		Although competitors are also committed to sustainability, ALDI is very well positioned.	Continue existing measures and implement additional measures for the environment.

☺ = Strenght/Opportunity
☹ = Weakness/Threat

1 = low priority/focus
2 = middle priority/focus
3 = high priority/focus

Table 4: SWOT-Analysis of ALDI in Italy (own presentation)

The SWOT analysis presented above showed 5 perceived changes in the environment. Starting with the first point, the increase in market participants/competitors, what meets a weakness in the company ALDI. Due to the relatively short market entry in Italy in 2018, ALDI is still little known as an employer. Nevertheless, this is an opportunity for ALDI, as the company is a very fast growing one due to its internationality and the good experiences from the German speaking countries. Since its expansion into Italy and the opening of 10 stores, the company

has already opened more than 80 stores by spring 2020 and employs around 1700 people. By opening additional stores in the coming years and using strong marketing strategies, the company has a great chance to further increase its brand awareness in Italy.

The company is also confronted with digitalization. This meets a strength in the company, as ALDI is active in many digital channels and well positioned there. Moreover, the company has a good chance to increase its digitalization efforts, as ALDI has the technical prerequisites and know-how. Especially in comparison to the competition (see external analysis in chapter 8.2.2) ALDI has a very informative company website.

Social Media, blogs and other online services are becoming increasingly important in today's world. This change in the environment also meets a strength at ALDI, as the company is active in various Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. One opportunity that ALDI definitely has in this regard is to place even more postings on Social Media. In order to increase the visibility of the company, it would be better to have a daily cycle to be constantly present.

Another trend that is clearly visible is the issue of sustainability. ALDI could consider this trend as a great strength, as the company already implements numerous measures in this area. For example, the company is committed to reducing waste in Italy. Therefore, ALDI attaches great importance to reducing packaging quantities and increasing the rate of reuse. In addition, plastic and disposable items are avoided as far as possible. In terms of food waste, the company is collaborating with local non-profit organizations to minimize food waste.

Previous Employer Branding measures

Another starting point of this secondary research is an employer survey conducted by the company itself in the year 2019. This survey covered topics such as leadership, corporate culture, communication and cooperation. The survey was conducted among the company's employees. ALDI in Italy defines Employer Branding as follows: The discipline that defines, manages and promotes the image of a company as a place to work (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019d).

The employee survey showed that more than 50% of employees increasingly appreciate a quiet working atmosphere. Appropriate remuneration and benefits

(48%) as well as a safe workplace (46%) are also important. Career opportunities (38%) and stable financial strength of the company (36%) are in the middle range. An interesting job (27%), a good work-life balance (22%) and an excellent company reputation (20%) are less important for employees. However, corporate social responsibility (17%) and the use of the newest technologies (16%) are the least important factors when choosing an employer (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019d).

Channels used by ALDI in Italy

When looking for new employees, ALDI uses various channels to reach the target group. The company tries to increase the visibility of the company at trade fairs by designing eye-catching exhibition booths, for example. Getting to know new potential candidates is one of the goals of these trade fairs or events. The direct contact provides the advantage to get into conversation with potential candidates in order to convince them of the advantages of the company. This visibility and perception is further enhanced through cooperation with universities. Furthermore, billboards increase the awareness of ALDI. The benefits of these measures are a high level of accessibility to the target group. On the other hand there are also disadvantages such as high costs or uncertainties regarding reaching the right people. The measurement of effectiveness of such fairs is not easy to measure. Through traditional media, ALDI tries to reach further points of contact. Articles and special enclosures are published in regional newspapers. In terms of online activities, ALDI is represented in social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, ALDI has its own career site (carriera.aldi.it) with open job offers, using recruiting portals or placing online banners. The portals Indeed, Monster, Info Jobs and Jobrapido also serve as platforms for finding new employees in addition to the own career site. Already 60% of all vacancies were filled by job agencies. Additional topics for cross-media campaigns include new openings, job advertisements, information on welcome days, career fairs, information on education, corporate responsibility activities, video interviews, company goals, collaboration with others and video tutorials (cf. Aldi S.r.l. 2019d).

Benefits of ALDI for employees

ALDI offers numerous benefits for its employees. On the one hand, a comprehensive introduction to the new job is given to the employees' right at the start of their new job, which lasts for 3 months. The employees get to know all

processes of the company and even work in the store themselves. Something that is only possible in other companies after 8 - 10 years of experience, ALDI offers its employees right from the start: a high level of responsibility. Excellent career opportunities are a high priority as well for ALDI. Whether male or female, every employee has the same chances and the equal potential for growth. ALDI employs around 37% of women in management positions. Additional benefits for the employees are an own company car (even for private use), a mobile phone, a laptop, further education and training as well as paid overtime. An equally important advantage of ALDI in Italy is that 83% of the contracts are unlimited. A very good work-life balance and flexible working models complete this package. Regular teambuilding events are another part of ALDI's advantages (cf. Arlunno 06.03.2020).

8.2.2 External Analysis

The external analysis serves to analyze ALDI's immediate competitors in Italy.

The following discounters are in direct competition with ALDI in Italy:

- Lidl Italia
- Eurospin
- MD S.p.A.
- Penny Market Italia (cf. Arlunno 02.03.2020).

General information about ALDI and its competitors

Table 5 shows a comparison of the above mentioned competitors in Italy in terms of general information like their first market entry, locations, stores, number of employees, turnover, values, sustainability and their assortment (cf. Aldi Italia 2020a; Eurospin Italia 2020a; Lidl Italia 2020a; MD S.p.A. 2020a; Penny Market Italia 2020a, Statista 2019d).

General Information about the competition					
	ALDI Italia	**Lidl Italia**	**Eurospin**	**MD S.p.A.**	**Penny Market Italia**
Market entry	2018	1992	1993	1994	1994
Locations	International	International	National	National	International
Stores	80	650	1,150	780	386
Employees	1,700	16,500	10,000	7,000	4,000
Turnover in Euros	-	4.7 billion	5.7 billion	2.75 billion	1.2 billion
Values	equal rights	diversity, equal rights	principle of equality, respect and individual improvement	-	
Sustainability	high awareness of sustainability	high awareness of sustainability, dynamic company, using innovative technologies and renewable energies; working with charities and non-profit organizations	increasingly sustainable products , reducing environmental impact of stores, saving CO2 by using reusing packaging	photovoltaic systems in headquarters, LED lighting to reduce energy consumption to a minimum, using sustainable materials like recycled paper for printed brochures	-
Assortment	high-quality products, cooperation with regional suppliers, certifications	high-quality products, cooperation with regional suppliers, certifications	high-quality products with affordable prices; cooperation with local suppliers, certifications for cacao, fishing etc.	high-quality products, cooperation with regional suppliers, special management system to trace the supply chain and the origin of the products	high quality of food, seasonal fruit and vegetables, cooperation with regional suppliers

Table 5: General information about ALDI and its competitors (own presentation)

It can be noted that Lidl and Eurospin are the largest competitors in terms of employees and turnover. With the exception of Penny, all companies place a high value on sustainability. Purchasing goods from local Italian suppliers is important to all of them.

Social Media activities

Table 6 shows the various social networks on which ALDI and its competitors are active, how many followers they have and how frequent the contributions are. In terms of Social Media, Facebook is the most used medium by all companies with the highest number of followers (cf. Facebook 2020a; Facebook 2020b; Facebook 2020c, Facebook 2020d; Facebook 2020e; Instagram 2020a; Instagram 2020b; Instagram 2020c; Instagram 2020d; Instagram 2020e; LinkedIn 2020a; LinkedIn 2020b LinkedIn 2020c; LinkedIn 2020d; LinkedIn 2020e; Twitter 2020a; Twitter 2020b).

Social Media Activities			
	Social Media Follower	**Frequency**	**Topics**
ALDI Italia	Facebook (120,592) Instagram (15,100), LinkedIn (39,501)	Facebook: 4 times a week Instagram: 3 times a week LinkedIn: 2 times a week	Offers, product information, store presentations, videos and job offers, recipes, lotteries.
Lidl Italia	Facebook (2,200,000) Instagram (564,000) LinkedIn (197,000) Twitter (31,783)	Facebook: 1 time a day Instagram: 1 time a day LinkedIn: 1 time a day Twitter: 1 time a day	
Eurospin	Facebook (989,688) Instagram (169,000) LinkedIn (45,384) Twitter (5,411)	Facebook: 1 - 2 times a day Instagram: 2 times per week LinkedIn: irregularly, 2 - 4 times per month with breaks Twitter: no activity since July 2019 and March 2018	
MD S.p.A.	Facebook (303,654) Instagram (59,100) LinkedIn (18,594)	Facebook: 2 times a day Instagram: 2 times a day LinkedIn: irregularly, 1 - 2 times per month	
Penny Market Italia	Facebook (450,535) Instagram (26,600) LinkedIn (45,890)	Facebook: 1 - 3 times a week Instagram: 3 times a week LinkedIn: 2 - 3 times a day	

Table 6: Social Media activities (own presentation)

Comparison of Career Websites

A comparison of the career websites in Table 7 shows that ALDI and Lidl in particular provide a great amount of information, although only Lidl provides data on its awards as an employer (cf. Aldi Italia 2020b; Eurospin Italia 2020b; Lidl Italia 2020b; MD S.p.A. 2020b; Penny Market Italia 2020b).

Career Website			
	General information	**Benefits for employees**	**Awards as an Employer**
ALDI Italia	very informative and structured site with a lot of helpful information for applicant; events; free accessible job portal	company car, mobile phone, laptop, further training, comprehensive onboarding process, high responsibility from the very beginning, excellent career opportunities, unlimited contracts, flexible working-time-models	• no information available
Lidl Italia	very informative, detailed information about the development of employees, suggestions for application, videos from existing employees in many work areas	further training, structured onboarding process, the assignment of a tutor, equality for men and women, diversity, opportunity of paid apprenticeships	• The Top Employer of the Year for the 4th time in succession • Special training and development courses • Best Employer of Choice award • Most attractive employer of 2019 - a study by Universium Global, awarded by 40,400 Italian students • Online Talent Communication 2020 in the field of career website and Online Mobile Talent Communication among the top 5 employers
Eurospin	presentation of employees, information on training and open position, but creating an account is necessary for review open positions	professional training and personal development, safe and healthy working conditions with guaranteed minimum standards (code of conduct)	• no information available
MD S.p.A.	information about development of employees, suggestions for application; events, open positions, tips for application, future events	• no information available	• no information available
Penny Market Italia	overview about open positions	professional development of employees (Penny Academy), onboarding process, e-learning courses, 5% discount on purchase at all Penny stores, discounted gym membership	• no information available

Table 7: Comparison of career websites (own presentation)

8.3 Analysis Phase: Primary Research

In this part of the thesis the results of the quantitative survey, generated via Surveymonkey, are analyzed.

In chapter 7.1 the most important aspects associated with quantitative primary research were outlined. The aim of the survey was to obtain information on the image and perceived attractiveness of ALDI in Italy as an employer and to determine the willingness to work for the company. The attractiveness and awareness of ALDI's major competitors in Italy were also surveyed. Of particular importance was the question which characteristics are important to an employee when choosing an employer and whether the participants would be prepared to change their place of residence for an employer with an good image. Another part of the survey was looking at how future employees approach an employer.

Furthermore, this chapter examines the hypotheses that were formulated in chapter 7.1.2.

8.3.1 Evaluation of demographic data

The questionnaire was filled out by 273 persons, of which 158 participants qualified for the survey according to the necessary criteria (see chapter 7.2). Each of these 158 participants completed the survey in total. It was not possible for the respondents to skip answers and leave them blank.
Information or diagrams that are not visible in this chapter can be found in the appendix in chapter 4.

The following diagram shows the age distribution among the participants. The survey involved 64% aged between 25 and 35 years and 36% aged between 36 and 45 years.

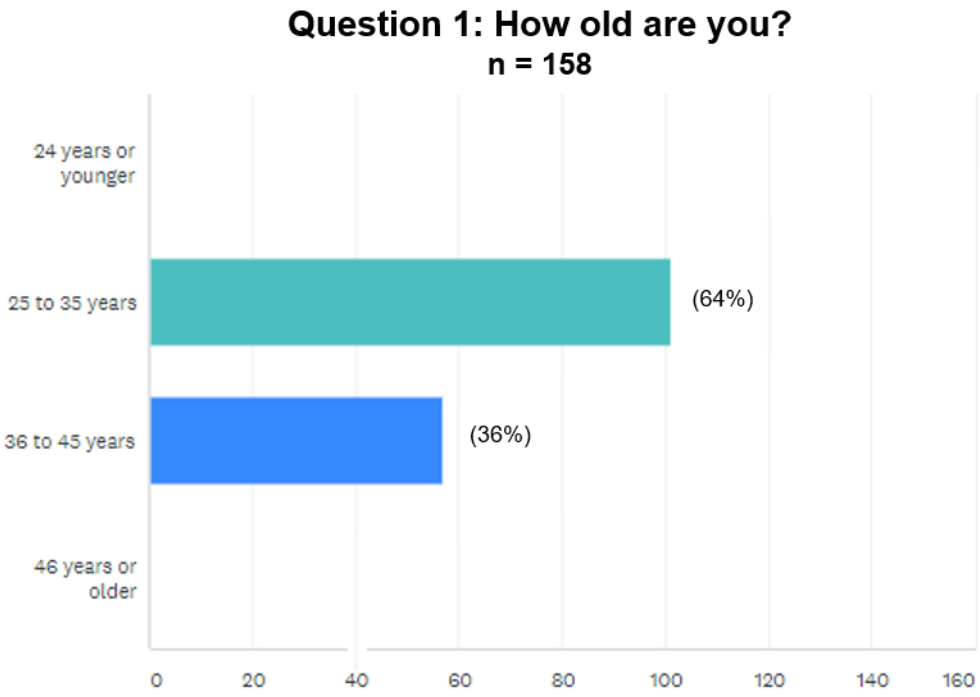

Figure 16: Distribution of age (own presentation)

The bar chart on Figure 16 shows that the majority with 64% of the Italians were aged between 25 and 35 years.

The next illustration shows the distribution of the genders. The participants had the possibility to choose between male, female and neutral.

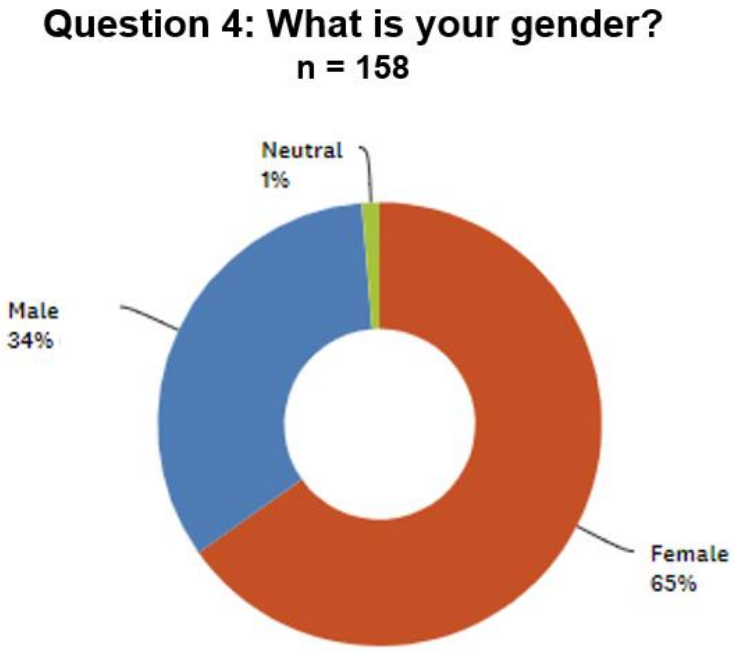

Figure 17: Distribution of gender (own presentation)

The majority of participants were female (65%), about one third male (34%) and 1% have chosen the option neutral.

With regard to educational attainment, it was found out that just over half (52%) of the respondents have a university or university of applied sciences degree as their highest qualification. Around 28% of Italians have a school-leaving certificate, 11% an apprenticeship and 8% a compulsory school leaving certificate. Only 1% of the interviewed persons had a school leaving certificate.

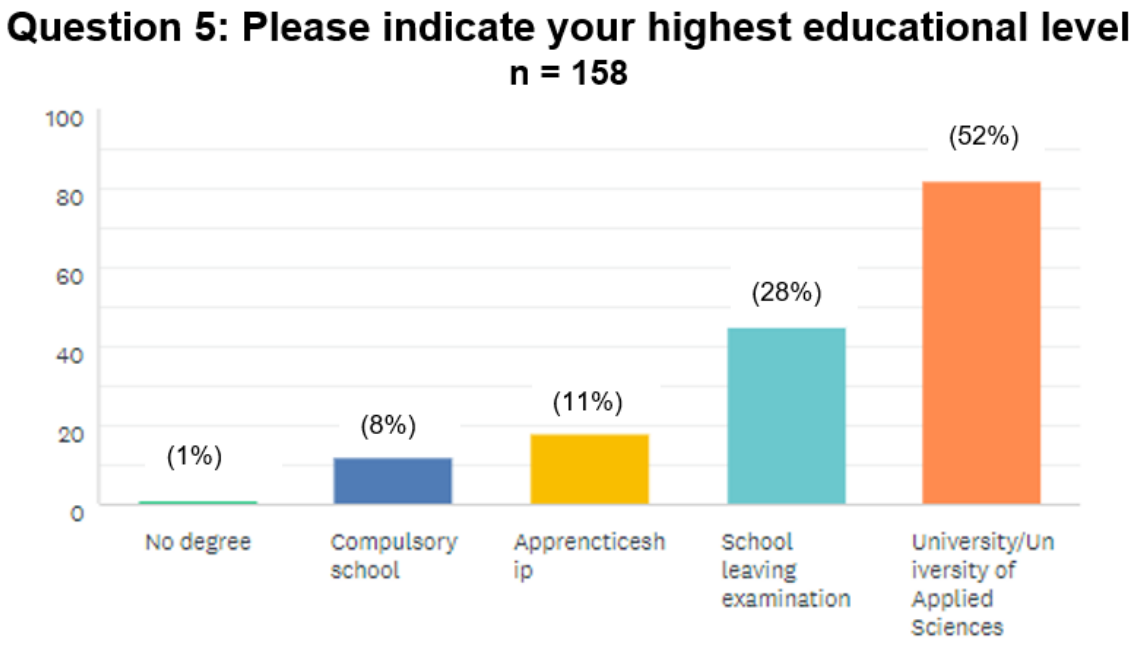

Figure 18: Highest educational level (own presentation)

The high participation of university graduates can be attributed to the fact that the survey was sent to Italian universities, to students and graduates with the help of the Austrian National Union of Students and to academic contacts within the author's environment.

As Figure 19 shows, 57% of the respondents were employed full-time, followed by jobseekers with 15% and 13% part-time. The respondents who selected *Others* were added to the respective selection option, as their asnwer was applicable there.

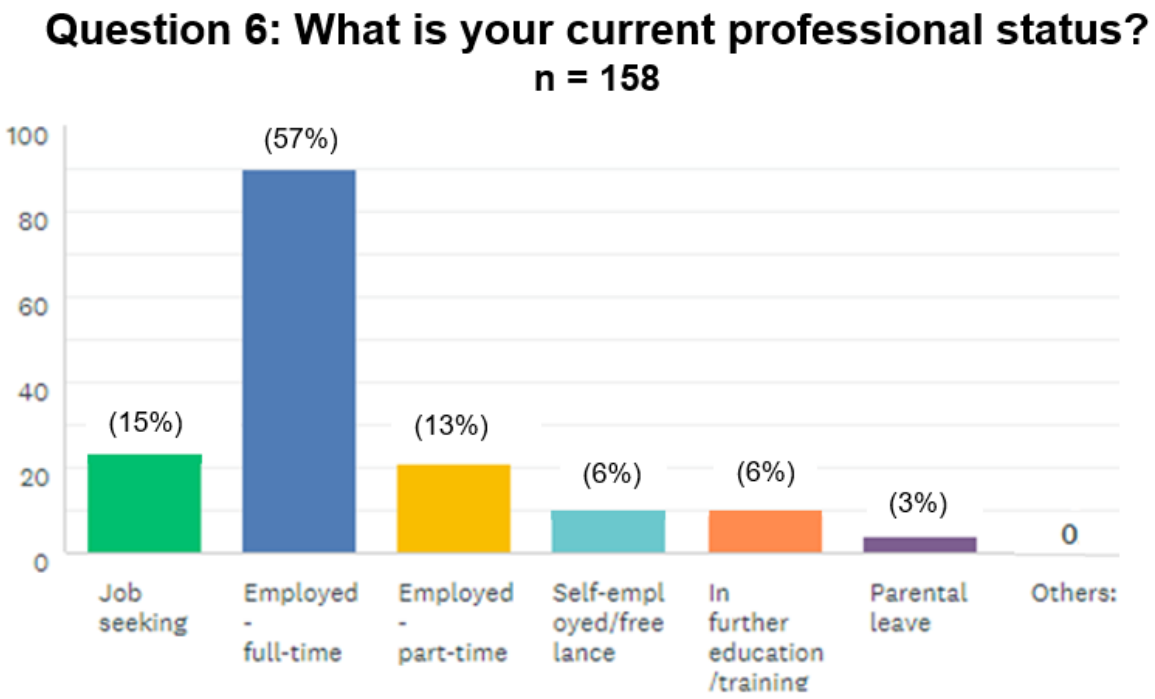

Figure 19: Level of employment (own presentation)

The result is consistent with the previous literature research, as it also revealed that the majority of Italians are either unemployed or full-time employed.

8.3.2 Level of awareness and important characteristics

Question 7 dealt with the distribution of awareness of ALDI in Italy as a discounter and its closest competitors among the Italian population.

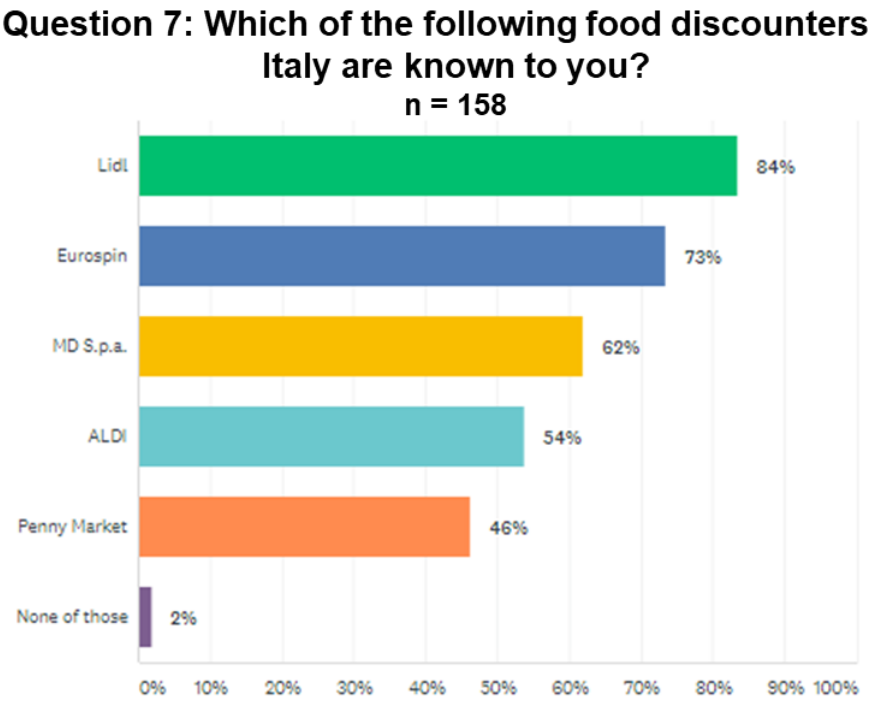

Figure 20: Most preferred discounters as employers (own presentation)

On a positive note, ALDI is on the 4th place and about 54% of the respondents know ALDI in Italy as a discounter. This places ALDI above Penny. Although more than half of the participants know ALDI as a discounter, only 6% know ALDI as an employer very well (see Figure 3 in the appendix).

The evaluation of the characteristics as a dream employer (question 10 in the appendix) vs. the perceived attributes (question 19 in the appendix) of ALDI in Italy in Table 8 has shown that the following characteristics are most important in descending order:

	Dream Employer		ALDI in Italy	
1	friendly	73%	friendly	55%
2	competent	71%	competent	52%
3	fair	66%	fair	7%
4	interesting	63%	interesting	54%
5	innovative	58%	innovative	46%
6	dynamic	55%	dynamic	35%
7	modern	52%	modern	50%
8	international	37%	international	76%
9	personal	36%	personal	4%
10	young	35%	young	51%
11	attractive	34%	attractive	13%
12	powerful	27%	powerful	10%
13	likeable	25%	likeable	8%
14	diversified	23%	diversified	7%
15	strong	18%	strong	8%
16	big	15%	big	25%
17	special	15%	special	4%
18	popular	10%	popular	6%

most congruent | moderately consistent | least consistent

Table 8: Characteristics of a dream employer vs. perceived characteristics of ALDI in Italy (own presentation)

On the one side, ALDI in Italy is perceived most as friendly, competent, interesting, innovative, dynamic, modern, and young and represents with these attributes also that of a dream employer.

On the opposite, ALDI is perceived as fair (7%) and personal (4%). However, these aspects seem to be important for the target group when they think about their dream employer. Furthermore, ALDI is also not perceived as likeable (8%) and diversified (7%) too.

Although ALDI is perceived as very international, this characteristic is not important for the target group. Another two diagrams regarding those findings can be found on Figure 4 in the appendix.

8.3.3 Hypothesis Examination

In the following, the hypotheses that have been established in chapter 7.1.2 will be examined on the basis of the results of the quantitative survey.

Hypothesis 1:

H0: The willingness to change their place of residence for a higher working position at ALDI in Italy is independent for Italians.

H1: The willingness to change their place of residence for a higher working position at ALDI in Italy is strongly dependent for Italians.

Hypothesis 1 arose from the question of the flexibility of potential employees. Due to the high unemployment rate, especially in the south of Italy, it is assumed that a move would be accepted by receiving a suitable work position. The hypothesis is also used to test the willingness of future employees to travel, since this requires a high degree of flexibility.

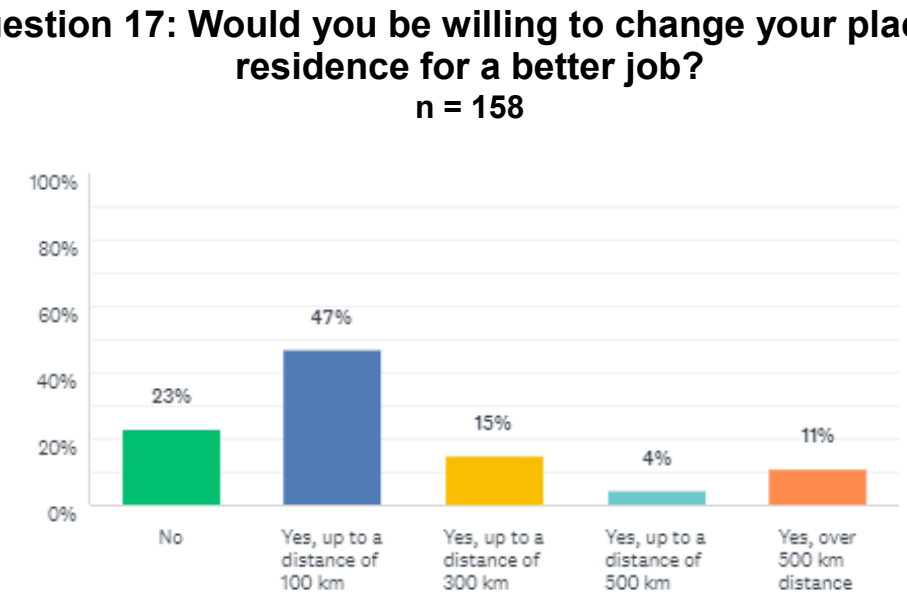

Figure 21: The willingness to change the place of residence for a better job (own presentation)

As can be seen in Figure 21, the majority of 47% of the interviewed persons are willing to change their place of residence up to 100km. Only 23% of the people are not willing to change their place of residence for a better job.

H0 is thus dismissed and H1 is approved.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: There is no correlation between the target group of 25 to 45-year olds and the use of digital media in job search.

H1: There is a positive correlation between the target group of 25 to 45-year olds and the use of digital media in job search.

Hypothesis 2 aims to prove whether 25-45 year olds use digital media when looking for a job or not.

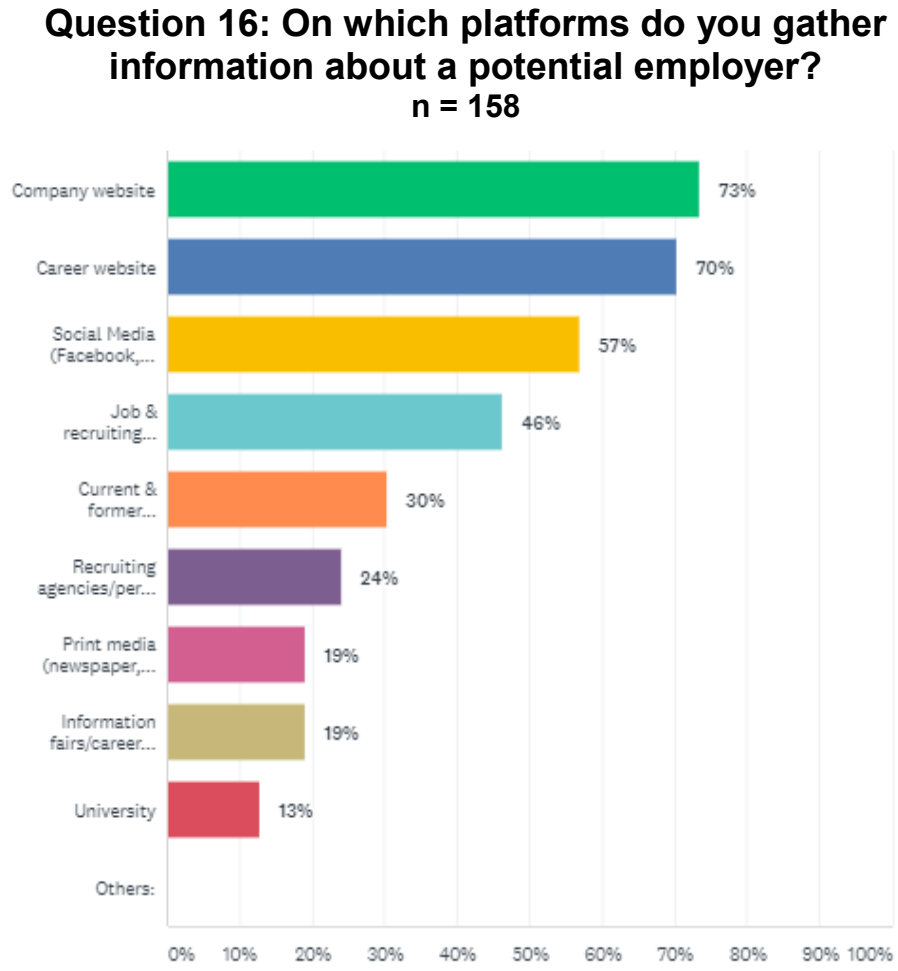

Figure 22: Platforms to gather information about a potential employer (own presentation)

Figure 22 shows, that the majority of respondents use digital media in their job search. Information is obtained primarily from the company's website (73%), the company's own career website (70%) and Social Media channels (57%). The least used platforms and channels for job search are universities, career fairs and print media.

Therefore H1 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 3:

H0: There is no interrelation between the attractiveness of ALDI in Italy and the willingness to work for them.

H1: There is a strong interrelation between the attractiveness of ALDI in Italy and the willingness to work for them.

Hypothesis 3 deals with the question whether a good image of ALDI in Italy entails an increase in the willingness to apply for ALDI as an employer.

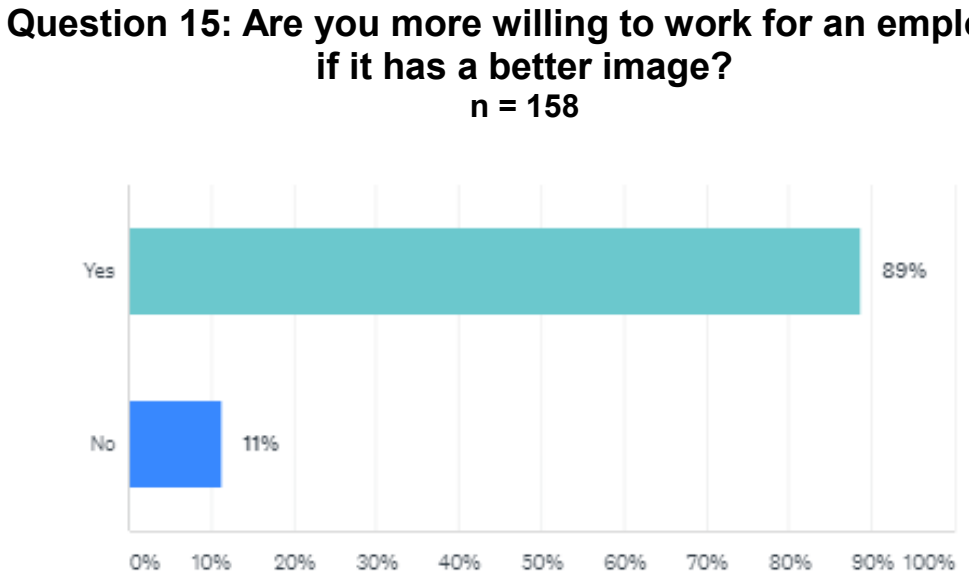

Figure 23: Willingness to work for an employer vs. image (own presentation)

As the results clearly show, 89% of the people questioned consider that they would rather work for an employer with a better image than not.

Therefore H1 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 4:

H0: The better awareness ALDI in Italy has, the less attractive it is as an employer.

H1: The higher the level of awareness of ALDI, the more attractive the company is as an employer.

Hypothesis 4 aims to prove whether higher awareness of ALDI also leads to higher attractiveness.

Question 14: How do you rate the image/attractiveness of the following companies as employers?
n = 158

Attractiveness as an Employer	(most) attractive	neither nor	(most unattractive)
Lidl	71%	23%	6%
Eurospin	63%	28%	9%
MD S.p.a	56%	35%	9%
ALDI	42%	28%	29%
Penny Market	24%	50%	26%

Table 9: Attractiveness as an employer (own presentation)

In terms of attractiveness as an employer, Lidl scored best with 71% as the most attractive one, followed by Eurospin with 63%. ALDI is on the fourth place with 42%. The (most) unattractive discounter seems to be Penny Market rated with 24%.

A ranking of the most attractive companies from the point of view as an discounter can be found in the appendix on Table 4.

The following diagram shows the results to the question, to which employers the interviewed persons would most likely apply.

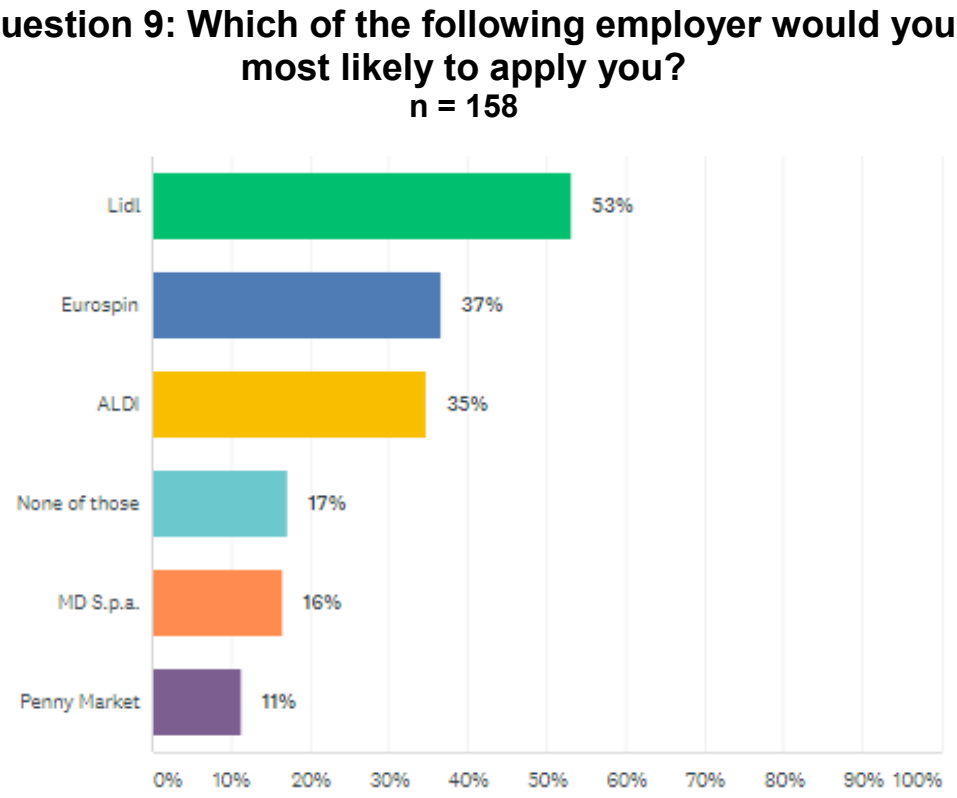

Figure 24: Awareness of Italian food discounters as an employer (own presentation)

53% of the respondents would apply to Lidl, followed by Eurospin with 37% and ALDI with 35%. The fewest people would apply to MD S.p.A. with 16% and Penny Market with 16%. 17% even stated that they do not like to apply to any of the mentioned employers.

Comparing the ranking of discounters in both diagrams (question 14 and question 9), it can be noted that higher awareness does not always result in higher attractiveness as an employer.

Therefore H1 is refused.

Hypothesis 5:

H0: There is no connection between the fluctuation of the employees from ALDI in Italy and the quality of the management.

H1: There is a strong connection between the fluctuation of the employees from ALDI in Italy and the quality of the management.

The theoretical research has shown that high turnover is often caused by poor management quality. Therefore, possible causes for high staff turnover were investigated in question 18.

According to survey results, the 5 most common reasons why employees leave the company again are the following:

1. **Poor leadership qualities towards employees (71%)**
2. I don't feel treated fairly (61%)
3. My salary is too low (58%)
4. The environment is not collegial (51%)
5. I have too little time for my private life besides work (49%)

The 5 least common reasons why employees leave the company are the following:

1. I cannot work independently (16%)
2. The employer does not offer any training opportunities (15%)
3. The employer offers no benefits apart from the salary (10%)
4. The employer is not innovative (7%)
5. The business environment is not international (2%)

The detailed evaluation can be found in the appendix on Table 5.

Point 1 of the most common reasons why employees leave the company can be attributed to poor management quality.

Therefore H1 is confirmed.

This completes the evaluation of the results achieved through primary research. In the next step, the development of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is carried out, as proposed in theoretical chapter 5.3.

8.4 Development of the EVP for ALDI in Italy

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the EVP of ALDI in Italy. This part of the thesis builds the core of the Employer Branding Positioning Concept and represents the company ALDI in Italy as an employer. As described in chapter 5.3., the EVP gives the answer to the question *why* an employee should be interested in an employer.

8.4.1 The most significant benefits of ALDI and its competitors

To define the EVP of ALDI in Italy, it is also necessary to identify the EVP of its competitors. Only what distinguishes ALDI from its competitors should be considered as an EVP. The comparison with the competition serve to identify beneficial or comparable approaches to the successful recruitment of Area Managers. The analysis of the websites and career sites of the companies in the external analysis on chapter 8.2.2 serves as a starting point for this evaluation, as this is one of the first points of contact for potential applicants (see Figure 22).

It is important for ALDI in Italy that a special EVP has to be developed for the target group of Area Managers, which clearly differentiates itself from the competition without imitating its competitors in any way.

In Table 10, the following EVPs have therefore been identified. Special distinguishing elements were marked in bold (cf. Aldi Italia 2020b; Lidl Italia 2020b; Eurospin Italia 2020b; MD S.p.A. 2020b; Penny Market Italia 2020b).

The most significant benefits of ALDI in Italy and its competitors			
	Career Slogan	**Career Site**	**Benefits**
ALDI Italia	Give your work more value	Very clearly arranged with lots of information	• Great importance is attached to training and further education • Unlimited service contracts • **High responsibility right from the start** • **Competitive salaries** • Benefits like company car, laptop and mobile phone, also for private use • High career opportunities and promotion of the individual • Outstanding onboarding quality
Lidl Italia	Join a successful and constantly growing reality; Passion for success	Very clearly arranged with lots of information	• Permanent contract • Comprehensive onboarding with personal mentor • Extensive training measures including **e-learning** • Benefits for employees such as **vouchers**, company car, company mobile phone and tablet • Good career opportunities
Eurospin	No slogan available	Little information as an employer; Compulsory profiling makes it difficult for applicants to inform easy about job vacancies	• Some training measures • No further benefits for employees were identified
MD S.p.A.	Join a good sales team!	Little information as an employer; Compulsory profiling makes it difficult for applicants to inform easy about job vacancies	• No further benefits for employees were identified
Penny Market Italia	Choose PENNY for your career; Penny for your future	Very clearly arranged with lots of information	• Vocational training opportunities • Onboarding phase • **E-Learning courses as an additional tool** • **Penny Academy** • **Employee discounts on purchases** • **reduced gym membership**

Table 10: The most significant benefits of ALDI in Italy and its competitors (own presentation)

The above statements were found by a quick search without searching deeper. This was a premise to simulate the search behaviour of a potential applicant.

8.4.2 Selection of the most effective attributes for defining ALDIs EVP

At the beginning it is important to point out the common characteristics of all companies and to highlight the particularly unique attributes of ALDI as an employer.

ALDI, Lidl and Penny Market are international companies, while Eurospin and MD S.p.A. are national Italian discounters. Although ALDI shows a high degree of internationality, the results of primary research (see Table 8) show that internationality is not one of the most important criteria for a dream employer and, at 37%, tends to be in the midfield. Although ALDI was classified as big by 25% of the people surveyed, this is only relevant for 15% of the participants.

A further look at Table 8 shows that the attributes friendly, competent, fair, interesting, innovative, dynamic and modern are considered as the most important factors of a dream employer.

It is positive that ALDI is perceived as such by the interviewed persons for almost all characteristics. Therefore, these characteristics should absolutely be reflected in the EVP so that the target group gets the feeling that ALDI offers exactly what they

are looking for as an employer. The only deficiency that ALDI has to deal with is that the company is not perceived as a fair employer.

As mentioned in chapter 2.4., an important factor for the EVP is the emotional component behind it. The (future) employees should feel connected with the company brand and be able to identify with the values of the enterprise in order to have a deep loyal connection with the employer.

In order to attract the (future) employee emotionally, it is important to consider the reasons for leaving the company at an early stage and to emphasise these reasons in a particularly positive way within the company.

Here are once again the 5 biggest reasons (see also Table 5 in the appendix) why an employee would leave the company prematurely:

1. *Poor leadership qualities towards employees*
2. *I don't feel treated fairly*
3. *My salary is too low*
4. *The environment is not collegial*
5. *I have too little time for my private life besides work*

Because of these above mentioned reasons and the benefits ALDI in Italy provides their employees (namely high responsibility from the start and competitive salaries), Figure 25 illustrates a sample image with all the strong keywords that should be highly represented in all written matters of the ALDI in Italy:

good leadership | strong | fair | collegial environment | dynamic | friendly | high salary | benefits for employees | Work-Life-Balance | competent | interesting | modern | career possibilities | high responsibility

Figure 25: Suggested keywords for ALDIs EVP (own presentation)

The use of these keywords can occur in different ways: In slogans, in written texts, verbally or visually, as demonstrated in Figure 25. The most important thing is always that the use of keywords in all touchpoints is directed to the target group, the Area Manager.

As an example, the current slogan *Give your work more value* of ALDI can be adjusted with the exemplary keywords from Figure 25. The following list of slogans will serve as a first inspiration in connection with the above mentioned keywords and should highlight ALDI as a strong employer:

- Stop dreaming. Start your real career now!
- Bored? Not with us! Interesting tasks and a dynamic employer is waiting for you!
- Start your dream career. With a strong player.
- Your leadership qualities. Our support.

As the Employer Branding cycle on Figure 9 shows, the formulation of an EVP is a constant and recurring process. Every target group approach requires target group-specific and adapted measures.

To sum up the findings for the development of an EVP, the following considerations should be taken into account:

1. The proposed keywords in Figure 25 should serve to use the attributes in as many communication measures as possible aimed to the target group of Area Managers (e.g. slogans, job advertising texts, Social Media texts)
2. The word cloud created in Figure 25 in the shape of a thumb up serves as an example of how attributes can be displayed visually without being obtrusive. The thumbs up also represents a positive attitude.
3. ALDI as a company is perceived as friendly, competent, interesting, innovative, dynamic and modern. In order to be perceived as a fair employer, it is recommended that advertising is directed in this direction, as the values between dream employer and ALDI in Italy differ by 59% (see Table 8).
4. The characteristics of ALDI must be reflected in all EB measures.
5. The career website serves as the most important first impression of an employer. Therefore, it should also offer the values of ALDI, the benefits of the employees and a user-friendly, clear interface with a wide range of information about jobs and career opportunities.

Due to the importance of point 5, the contact points of a future employee with ALDI in Italy will be added in the following chapter, especially because ALDI is not perceived as being personal with 4%.

8.4.3 Improvements for touchpoints with focus on Area Manager

Question 16 in primary research dealt with the channels through which future employees inform themselves about their future employer. Besides the company website (73%), the company's career site (70%) and Social Media networks (57%) were mentioned as the most commonly contact points.

Therefore, the main points of contact via the career website and the recruitment process are discussed in more detail to find out where improvements are possible.

Recruitment strategy via career site

The career site serves as a strong influential factor when it comes to the perception of an employer. Although ALDI's career site in Italy is already very well done and informative, there are still some points that could still be improved. These factors are outlined in Table 11 (cf. Aldi Italia 2020b).

Field of observation	Findings	Possible Improvements
Simplicity to apply	Job advertisements are viewable without creating an account. An applicant profile for digital applications has to be created. Initial applications are not possible	Initial applications should be possible
Personal factors	No concrete contact person; Career events for personal contact are announced	Name a contact person in order to appear more personal
FAQs	The most important questions are answered briefly and concisely but meaningfully	Ongoing adding of new questions and answers that often arise
Career opportunities/Further training	Information on further training and career opportunities are provided, but no specific details are given.	Provide examples of the careers of existing employees, e.g. in the format of a video.

Table 11: Field of observation career website (own presentation)

Recruitment Process

In order to guide the applicant through the application process in the most appropriate way and to avoid possible uncertainties, the target group should know how an application process takes place and which things go along with it.

In the personal job portal, it is clearly defined how the documents and formats have to be submitted and what the status of the application is. However, there are a few areas for improvement in other fields, which are described in Table 12 (cf. Aldi Italia 2020b).

Phase of the application	Findings	Possible Improvements
Documents to be submitted	Clearly defined in the job portal	no improvements
Format in which to submit	Clearly defined in the job portal	no improvements
Status of application	Clearly defined in the job portal	no improvements
Time frame for feedback	The FAQ section documents that an answer will be given shortly, but an exact time frame is missing	Clearly state how many days or weeks are to be considered by the applicants
Selection process	Defined in the FAQs	Clarify how many loops an applicant goes through.
Invitation to the interview	No information available	If an applicant qualifies for a position, it should be clearly stated where the interview takes place and how many people are involved in the interview. In addition, if there is a travel allowance, this information should also be provided.
Refusal	No information available	In case of a refusal, the applicant should be informed what happens to the application documents and whether they are kept in evidence.
Reasons for refusal	No information available	It is advised to give the applicant a reason for the refusal.

Table 12: Phases of application and possible improvements (own presentation)

The larger and the more international the employer is, the more difficult it is to provide the necessary information about the recruiting process to an applicant. Nevertheless, it should be made as easy as possible for every applicant to apply to

a company, just because of the consideration of inexperienced or older applicants with less technical know-how.

In addition, a professional handling of applications indicates a competent employer, which is an important criterion for 71% of the questioned target group (see Table 8).

It should be avoided, that an applicant gain negative experience with the employer ALDI in Italy, as such experiences can quickly turn into a multiplier effect through word-of-mouth propaganda and in the following to a negative image as an employer.

The list of possible implementations could be extended by many more pages, but unfortunately this would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

9. Recommendations based on the Employer Branding Positioning Concept

This chapter proposes recommendations for Employer Branding measures. These measures are divided into subchapters for internal and external actions. Basically, the author recommends embedding Employer Branding as a long-term and recurring process in the company.

The rough assumption of the expected costs for external measures strongly depend on the internal human resources of ALDI. The measures can of course be outsourced as well, but nevertheless it requires internal resources that are available for coordination. Another point to consider is the maximum amount of money available for those measures. The available budget was not indicated by the company. Therefore, a detailed cost and time breakdown of both internal and external measures can be found in the appendix in Table 6. The stated costs are based on assumptions and have to be revisited before the project will be implemented.

There are numerous indicators to monitor the effectiveness of those EB measures. As these controlling measures have already been described in detail in chapter 5.5, it will not be discussed again in this section. The list offers comprehensive possibilities for monitoring the recommended measures with regard to different resources such as human, time or expertise.

9.1 Internal measures

Internal Employer Branding is the premise for external Employer Branding. Because only what is actually lived internally can be communicated to the external community. Establishing, living and strengthening the employer brand internally supports the authenticity of ALDI in Italy.

Measure 1: Rethink the organizational structures

Before implementing internal EB measures, ALDI is advised to reflect on the existing corporate culture and to rethink it if necessary. For example, in order to make the corporate culture fit to the characteristics of a dream employer, the following is recommended:

- The introduction of flexible working time models
- Home office or remote work for a better work-life balance
- Individual career perspectives
- Additional monetary incentives
- Organize teambuilding events (e.g. sports activities, hiking tours, excursions) for a more collegial environment

Measure 2: Communicate the strategy, values and corporate culture to the employees

To be as authentic as possible as an employer, the author recommends communicating ALDI's strategy, values and corporate culture to all employees at every stage of the hierarchy. This will not only foster a sense of loyalty to the company, but also encourage pride in being part of ALDI in Italy. It also strengthens the employer brand internally. Furthermore, the flow of information should also be increased by informing employees about positive news, successes, achievements or employee benefits, to name just a few points.

Measure 3: Conducting an annual employee survey and integrate question regarding Employer Branding

ALDI in Italy currently carries out an employee survey every two years. Unfortunately, the author has only limited insight into the results of this survey, therefore it is not possible to judge whether questions regarding Employer Branding are already part of the survey or not. However, it is suggested to conduct the employee survey every year in order to be able to identify possible changes at an

early stage. Questions could be asked, for example, about the fairness of ALDI or in areas where ALDI still has some catching up to do.

Measure 4: **Interview newly employed Area Managers after 4 months via an anonymous survey about the onboarding phase and gained impressions**

It is advantageous to ask newly employed Area Managers after 4 months about their first experiences, impressions and the 3 months onboarding phase. This provides a good insight into whether they were satisfied with the onboarding and if they feel secure and comfortable in the company after 1 month of independent work. Further questions could be asked about the application process and recommendations for improvement. The advantages of this survey are, on the one hand, the open-mindedness of the new employees and their recent experience in the recruitment procedure.

9.2 External measures

In contrast to internal Employer Branding, external Employer Branding focuses on the orientation of the employer brand on the labour market. A clear differentiation from the competition has to be one of the objectives of external EB measures in order to be perceived by candidates as an Employer of Choice.

Measure 1: **Agree on the EVP of ALDI in Italy and communicate it to the external environment.**

The outlined characteristics for an EVP (see chapter 8.4), which should already lived internally (see internal measure 2) for ALDI in Italy, should be successfully communicated to the target group and be anchored in all EB activities. The exemplary keywords and slogans serve as inspiration for further creative thinking processes and will depend on the outcome of the internal measure 1.

Therefore the following tasks are suggested:

- Hold meetings between external agency, management, HR and marketing respectively persons responsible for Employer Branding measures at ALDI in Italy
- Conduct discussion about the results of this thesis and what could be realized

Measure 2: **Revision of the career site of ALDI in Italy and adding missing information**

Although ALDI's career site in Italy already offers a lot of information and even a separate page for the job as an Area Manager, information on the application process (as suggested in Table 12) should still be implemented. This gives the portal more personality.

Therefore the following tasks are suggested:

- The implementation of a strong slogan is proposed as well
- Implementing keywords
- Continuously update frequently asked questions and answers (FAQs)
- Design usability in a simple way
- Provide as much information as possible about the activities as an Area Manager
- Highlight the benefits of the position

The aim is to make it as easy as possible for the interested target group to find all information at a quick look. It should not be assumed that the target group will spend the time to browse through all the pages on the career site.

Measure 3: **Detailed description of the working environment as Area Manager at ALDI in Italy**

To enthuse the target group for the job as Area Manager at ALDI in Italy, the advantages should be clearly communicated on all channels.

Therefore the following tasks are suggested:

- Establish a detailed description of the working environment of an Area Manager
- Clearly define the requirements for the position
- Create short videos of already existing satisfied Area Manager
- Show employees with different backgrounds in order to underline the diversity of the company

Measure 4: Stronger support for Social Media channels

Due to the fact that 57% of the target group use Social Media to inform themselves about their dream employer, these channels should be well maintained at all times. The content should be designed in such a way that it reflects the interests of the target group.

The contributions should contain the following information:

- Details about the responsibilities of an Area Manager
- Information about the application process
- The benefits associated with this position (company car, mobile phone, laptop, high salary, high responsibility, comprehensive training, flexible working time models, and collegial environment)
- Introduction of employees in short videos

This is preceded by a coordinated Social Media policy which should include the following:

- Corporate identity
- Right approach for addressing the target group
- Language (Italian, English, German)
- Available budget for paid contributions
- Usage of keywords
- Limit of length of contributions
- Frequency of postings (when to reach the target group best)

For the implementation of the policy a coordination between marketing, HR and management should take place that the application follows a transparent guideline.

At least one Social Media Manager should be responsible for the implementation of Social Media measures.

<u>Measure 5:</u> Reconsider the prerequisite for the qualification for Area Managers in Italy

Another measure that may help to make it easier to find qualified employees is to not require the German language for new employees.

The following is therefore proposed:

- Training in Austria in English language. English is more common than German for Italians.
- English Language courses for employees in Austria who are supposed to train Italian colleagues

To implement all these measures, different departments must communicate with each other. HR, marketing and management are in the foreground.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the implementation of the measures is not seen as a one-off step, rather as an ongoing process, as things change far too quickly.

10. Conclusion

The correct application of Employer Branding will become more and more important in the coming years due to the increasing lack of qualified specialists and executives.

The theoretical part of this thesis serves as a guideline that can be applied to any company, regardless of its industry, and shows the process that must be carried out in Employer Branding in order to be successful. The advantages of EB are shown to give companies an incentive to deal with this topic in order to inspire and retain existing and future employees.

The importance of living the values of a company was highlighted in order to be authentic as a company. If something is communicated to the external environment that does not correspond to reality, the image of an employer will be damaged and the disappointed employees will leave. Winning back a target group costs considerably more money and trust than playing with open cards from the very beginning. The EVP as the heart of the Employer Branding should address the target group and highlight a unique selling point of an employer. Every company should therefore be clearly aware of which EVP they have.

The findings and resulting measures from the quantitative survey do not only serve to acquire new employees, but can also be applied to existing employees. Since this survey was conducted specifically for the professional group of ALDI's Area Managers in Italy, the results cannot be transferred to the general public.

Although ALDI is still very young on the Italian market, a positive trend in terms of awareness as an employer can already be observed. The measures developed serve to facilitate reaching the target group. The results from secondary and primary research were pleasing, as they often overlapped each other and further strengthened the final result of this thesis. The proposed measures should serve as an impulse for a more in-depth analysis.

As a conclusion, a positive direction can already be noted with regard to the occurrence of ALDI in Italy vs. its competitors. It is important that ALDI continuously carries out EB measures and considers EB as a recurring process. With a well thought-out communication of the employer brand, there is no longer anything to prevent ALDI from succeeding in Italy's highly fragmented labour market.

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Appendix

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1. Project Plan

TASK DESCRIPTION	PLAN START	PLAN END	DAYS
Application & Administration Phase	28.03.2019	15.07.2019	110
Search for Company/Topic	28.03.2019	07.06.2019	72
Skype Call Company Mentor	17.06.2019	17.06.2019	1
Prepare Application I	18.06.2019	20.06.2019	3
Fill out LOI	18.06.2019	19.06.2019	2
Send Application I	21.06.2019	21.06.2019	1
Send LOI	21.06.2019	21.06.2019	1
Feedback Application I	25.06.2019	25.06.2019	1
► 1st Milestone: MT Application approved	25.06.2019	25.06.2019	1
Further procedure information to the company via E-Mail	15.07.2019	15.07.2019	1
Tasks Master Seminar 1	06.08.2019	25.10.2019	81
Literature Research for MS 1	06.08.2019	13.10.2019	69
Information about MT-Mentor	16.09.2019	16.09.2019	1
Template design for 1st Mentor Consultation	17.09.2019	18.09.2019	2
Contact with Mentor for 1st Mentor Consultation	19.09.2019	24.09.2019	6
Write Initial Situation, Challenge, Company Pres., Objectives	19.09.2019	27.09.2019	9
Definining Frame of Reference	23.09.2019	27.09.2019	5
Preparation of a Table of Contets	23.09.2019	27.09.2019	5
Send Documents to MT-Mentor	28.09.2019	28.09.2019	1
1st Mentor Consultation	01.10.2019	01.10.2019	1
Include Feedback from 1st Mentor Consultation	02.10.2019	13.10.2019	12
Elaborate Project Plan	02.10.2019	13.10.2019	12
Extend Initial Situation, Challenge, Company Presentation	02.10.2019	13.10.2019	12
Create bibliography for MS1	02.10.2019	13.10.2019	12
Preparation Kick-Off Meeting with Company	14.10.2019	15.10.2019	2
Create Presentation for MS 1	14.10.2019	18.10.2019	5
Kick- Off Meeting with Company	15.10.2019	15.10.2019	1
Include Feedback from Kick-Off Meeting	15.10.2019	17.10.2019	3
Upload Documents and Presentation for MS1 on Moodle	18.10.2019	18.10.2019	1
Send Documents and Presentation for MS1 to MT-Mentor	18.10.2019	18.10.2019	1
Deliver Documents for MS1 to the Campus 02 Office	18.10.2019	18.10.2019	1
Preparation for the Presentation for MS 1	19.10.2019	24.10.2019	6
Presentation MS1	25.10.2019	25.10.2019	1
► 2nd Milestone: Finish Master Seminar 1	25.10.2019	25.10.2019	1
Tasks Master Seminar 2	28.10.2019	25.01.2020	90
Ongoing Literature Research	28.10.2019	02.02.2020	98
Include Feedback from MS 1	28.10.2019	31.10.2019	4
Elaborate MT-Agreement	01.11.2019	21.11.2019	21
Submission MT-Agreement	22.11.2019	22.11.2019	1
Write Theortical Part	01.12.2019	09.02.2020	71
- Chapter Employer Branding	01.12.2019	18.12.2019	18
- Chapter B2C Trade	19.12.2019	09.01.2020	22
- Chapter International HR Management	10.01.2020	17.01.2020	8
- Chapter Development of an Employer Branding Positiong C.	18.01.2020	02.02.2020	16
Christmas Holidays	24.12.2019	01.01.2020	9
Review Theoretical Part	27.01.2020	09.02.2020	14
Appointment with MT-Mentor	31.01.2020	31.01.2020	1
Revision of project plan	02.02.2020	02.02.2020	1
Create Presentation for MS 2	05.02.2020	07.02.2020	3
Send Presentation to MT-Mentor	08.02.2020	08.02.2020	1
Include Feedback from MT-Mentor into Presentation	09.02.2020	09.02.2020	1
► 3rd Milestone: Finish Theoretical Part	09.02.2020	09.02.2020	1
Upload Documents and Presentation for MS2 on Moodle	10.02.2020	10.02.2020	1
Send Documents and Presentation for MS2 to MT-Mentor	10.02.2020	10.02.2020	1
Deliver Documents for MS2 to the Campus 02 Office	10.02.2020	10.02.2020	1
Preparation for the Presentation for MS 2	10.02.2020	12.02.2020	3
Presentation MS2	12.02.2020	12.02.2020	1
► 4th Milestone: Finish Master Seminar 2	12.02.2020	12.02.2020	1

Table 1: Project Plan - 1 (own presentation)

Tasks Master Seminar 3	13.02.2020	14.04.2020	62
Ongoing Literature Research	02.02.2020	16.02.2020	15
Make an Appointment with the MT-Mentor	13.02.2020	20.02.2020	8
Include Feedback from MS2	13.02.2020	20.02.2020	8
Secondary Research	13.02.2020	27.02.2020	15
- Internal Analysis (ALDI Italy)	13.02.2020	27.02.2020	15
- External Analysis (Competitors)	13.02.2020	27.02.2020	15
► 5th Milestone: Finish Secondary Market Research	27.02.2020	27.02.2020	1
Primary Research	03.12.2019	24.03.2020	113
Develop Study Design	02.02.2020	02.02.2020	1
Literature Research for Empirical Research	02.02.2020	05.02.2020	4
Define Object of Investigation	02.02.2020	02.02.2020	1
Define Research Method and Survey Instrument	02.02.2020	02.02.2020	1
Define Sample Selection	02.02.2020	02.02.2020	1
Send Research Design to MT-Mentor	08.02.2020	08.02.2020	1
Include Feedback from MT-Mentor	09.02.2020	09.02.2020	1
Send Research Design to C-Mentor	08.02.2020	08.02.2020	1
Include Feedback from C-Mentor	09.02.2020	09.02.2020	1
Design Survey Questions	13.02.2020	16.02.2020	4
Send Question Catalogue to MT-Mentor	17.02.2020	17.02.2020	1
Include Feedback from MT Mentor	18.02.2020	20.02.2020	3
Send Question Catalogue to C-Mentor	20.02.2020	20.02.2020	1
Include Feedback from C-Mentor	21.02.2020	21.02.2020	1
Pre-test of the Survey	20.02.2020	22.02.2020	3
Adjustment of the Survey (if necessary)	25.02.2020	25.02.2020	1
Implement the Survey in an Online Tool (e.g. Survey Monkey)	26.02.2020	27.02.2020	2
Send out Survey to Target Group	28.02.2020	13.03.2020	15
Monitoring the Response Rate to the Survey	28.02.2020	13.03.2020	15
Make Appointment with MT Mentor	29.02.2020	29.02.2020	1
Meeting with MT-Mentor	29.02.2020	05.03.2020	6
Analysis of the Results (through SPSS, MAXQDA)	14.03.2020	19.03.2020	6
Interpretation of the Results	20.03.2020	24.03.2020	5
► 6th Milestone: Finish Primary Market Research	24.03.2020	24.03.2020	1
Dev. of Employer Branding Pos. Concept for ALDI in Italy	25.03.2020	30.03.2020	6
Calculate Budget	25.03.2020	30.03.2020	6
Define Controlling Measures	25.03.2020	30.03.2020	6
► 7th Milestone: Employer Branding Pos. Concept for ALDI I	30.03.2020	30.03.2020	1
Write Recommendations/Further Steps	31.03.2020	01.04.2020	2
Start Proof Reading	02.04.2020	10.04.2020	9
► 8th Milestone: Finish Practical Section	05.04.2020	10.04.2020	6
Make Appointment with MT-Mentor	06.04.2020	06.04.2020	1
Phone Call with MT-Mentor	07.04.2020	07.04.2020	1
Incorporate Feedback from MT Mentor	08.04.2020	08.04.2020	1
Prepare Documents for MS 3	08.04.2020	10.04.2020	3
Prepare Presentation for MS 3	01.04.2020	10.04.2020	10
Send Document and Presentation to Coach	08.04.2020	08.04.2020	1
Include Feedback from MT-Mentor	09.04.2020	09.04.2020	1
Final Review of MS 3 Document and Presentation	10.04.2020	10.04.2020	1
Submission Documents and Presentation for MS3	14.04.2020	14.04.2020	1
Phone Call with MT-Mentor	11.04.2020	14.04.2020	4
Preparation for the Presentation for MS 3	14.04.2020	16.04.2020	3
Presentation MS 3	17.04.2020	17.04.2020	1
► 9th Milestone: Finish Master Seminar 3	17.04.2020	17.04.2020	1
Tasks Final Phase	18.04.2020	02.05.2020	15
Phone Call with MT-Mentor	17.04.2020	17.04.2020	1
Include Feedback from MS 3	20.04.2020	25.04.2020	6
Write Conclusion	20.04.2020	25.04.2020	6
Write Summary and Abstract	20.04.2020	25.04.2020	6
Write Acknowledgement	20.04.2020	25.04.2020	6
Proof Reading (also Formal Criteria)	26.04.2020	01.05.2020	6
Print out MT	02.05.2020	02.05.2020	1
► 10th Milestone: Master Thesis Uploaded on Moodle + Offi	04.05.2020	04.05.2020	1
Submission Library Reddy Master Thesis incl. Application for resi	26.06.2020	26.06.2020	1
Final Presentation to the company	-	-	0
► 11th Milestone: Final Examination	29.06.2020	03.07.2020	5

Table 2: Project Plan - 2 (own presentation)

2. Sales of the leading discounters in Italy in billions 2018

The following diagram shows the turnover of the leading discounters (x-axis) Eurospin, Lidl, MD and Penny in 2018 in billions (y-axis).

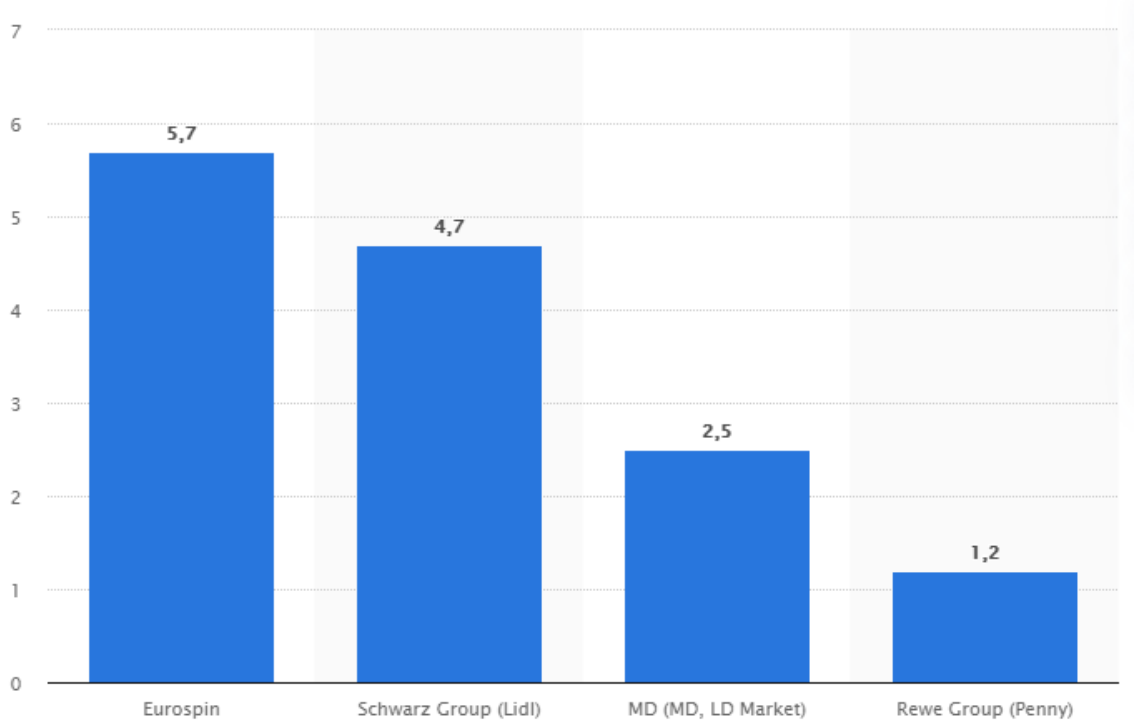

Figure 1: Sales of the leading discounters in Italy in billions 2018 (Statista 2019d)

3. Online Survey Questionnaire

Employer Branding Survey

A warm welcome to this survey!

Thank you very much for participating this survey on the topic of **Employer Branding**.

I am a student at the University of Applied Sciences CAMPUS 02 in Graz, Austria, studying the Master Degree Programme International Marketing.

Your participation will be completely anonymous and will take just 5-7 minutes of your time.

Please finish the survey completely, only then the results count.

Many thanks in advance!
Nadine Paar

* 1. How old are you?

- ◯ 24 years or younger
- ◯ 25 to 35 years
- ◯ 36 to 45 years
- ◯ 46 years or older

* 2. Are you an Italian?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 3. Do you speak German?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 4. What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Neutral

* 5. Please indicate your highest educational level!
Only single choice possible!

- ◯ No degree
- ◯ Compulsory school
- ◯ Apprencticeship
- ◯ School leaving examination
- ◯ University/University of Applied Sciences

* 6. What is your current professional status?
Only single choice possible!

- ◯ Job seeking
- ◯ Employed - full-time
- ◯ Employed - part-time
- ◯ Self-employed/freelance
- ◯ In further education/training
- ◯ Parental leave
- ◯ Others:

* 7. Which of the following food discounters in Italy are known to you?
Multiple selection possible!

- ☐ Lidl
- ☐ ALDI
- ☐ Penny Market
- ☐ Eurospin
- ☐ MD S.p.a.
- ☐ None of those

* 8. Please rank the following companies according to their attractiveness in the food retail sector
1 = most attractive, 5 = most unattractive
Move answer with mouse or select number

- Lidl
- ALDI
- Penny Market
- Eurospin
- MD S.p.a.

* 9. Which of the following employers would you most likely apply to?
Multiple selection possible!

- [ ] Lidl
- [ ] ALDI
- [ ] Penny Market
- [ ] Eurospin
- [ ] MD S.p.a.
- [ ] None of those

* 10. Think about your dream employer. How would you characterize them?
Multiple selection possible!

- [ ] big
- [ ] interesting
- [ ] personal
- [ ] dynamic
- [ ] innovative
- [ ] friendly
- [ ] competent
- [ ] young
- [ ] modern
- [ ] powerful
- [ ] fair
- [ ] international
- [ ] popular
- [ ] attractive
- [ ] strong
- [ ] special
- [ ] diversified
- [ ] likeable

* 11. How well do you know the discounter ALDI in Italy as an employer?
Only single choice possible!

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Not much
- ◯ Good
- ◯ Very good

* 12. What do you associate with ALDI in Italy? What does ALDI mean to you?
Please write your comment in the grey line!

* 13. How important are the following factors to you when choosing an employer?
Please answer each line!

	extremly important	important	neither nor	not important	extremly unimportant
Good working environment	○	○	○	○	○
Attractive/interesting tasks	○	○	○	○	○
Further training	○	○	○	○	○
Career opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Challenging activity	○	○	○	○	○
Flexible working time models	○	○	○	○	○
High salary	○	○	○	○	○
Creative freedom	○	○	○	○	○
Internationality	○	○	○	○	○
Good image of the employer	○	○	○	○	○
Flat hierarchies	○	○	○	○	○
Attractive products/services	○	○	○	○	○
Company success	○	○	○	○	○
Additional offers (e.g. company car, mobile phone, laptop, others)	○	○	○	○	○
Secure employment	○	○	○	○	○
Fair treatment	○	○	○	○	○
Collegial togetherness	○	○	○	○	○
Work/Life-Balance	○	○	○	○	○
Overtime compensation	○	○	○	○	○
Equal opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Social and ecological actions of the employer	○	○	○	○	○
High responsibility	○	○	○	○	○
Unlimited contracts	○	○	○	○	○
Teambuilding events	○	○	○	○	○
Independent work	○	○	○	○	○

* 14. How do you rate the image/attractiveness of the following companies as employers?
Please answer each line!

	very good	good	don't know	bad	very bad
Lidl	○	○	○	○	○
ALDI	○	○	○	○	○
Penny Market	○	○	○	○	○
Eurospin	○	○	○	○	○
MD S.p.a.	○	○	○	○	○

* 15. Are you more willing to work for an employer if it has a better image?
Only single choice possible!

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 16. On which platforms do you gather information about a potential employer?
Multiple selection possible!

- ☐ Company website
- ☐ Career website
- ☐ Print media (newspaper, journals)
- ☐ Job & recruiting websites
- ☐ Current & former employees
- ☐ Information fairs/career fairs
- ☐ Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn,...)
- ☐ Recruiting agencies/personnel consulting
- ☐ University
- ☐ Others:

* 17. Would you be willing to change your place of residence for a better job?
Only single choice possible!

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes, up to a distance of 100 km
- ◯ Yes, up to a distance of 300 km
- ◯ Yes, up to a distance of 500 km
- ◯ Yes, over 500 km distance

* 18. What would be a reason for you to change your employer/What would you be dissatisfied with?
Multiple selection possible!

- ☐ My salary is too low
- ☐ Poor leadership qualities towards employees
- ☐ I don't feel treated fairly
- ☐ I have too little time for my private life besides work
- ☐ The employer offers hardly any opportunities for advancement
- ☐ I cannot develop personally
- ☐ The environment is not collegial
- ☐ The work tasks are not attractive
- ☐ The employer does not offer overtime pay
- ☐ The employer does not offer any training opportunites
- ☐ There is no equal treatment
- ☐ Too great distance from the place of residence/poor accessibility
- ☐ My employer does not act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner
- ☐ The employer is not innovative
- ☐ The employer does not offer secure employment
- ☐ The employer offers no benefits apart from the salary
- ☐ I cannot work independently
- ☐ My employer is not successful
- ☐ The products and/or services of my employer are not interesting
- ☐ The business environment is not international
- ☐ Others:

* 19. How would you characterize ALDI in Italy as an employer?
Multiple selection possible!

☐ big	☐ competent	☐ popular
☐ interesting	☐ young	☐ attractive
☐ personal	☐ modern	☐ strong
☐ dynamic	☐ powerful	☐ special
☐ innovative	☐ fair	☐ diversified
☐ friendly	☐ international	☐ likeable

Thank you!

This is the end of the survey.
Thank you very much for your participation.

Figure 2: Online Survey Questionnaire (own presentation)

4. Diagrams from the analysis of primary research

Question 11: How well do you know the discounter ALDI in Italy as an employer?

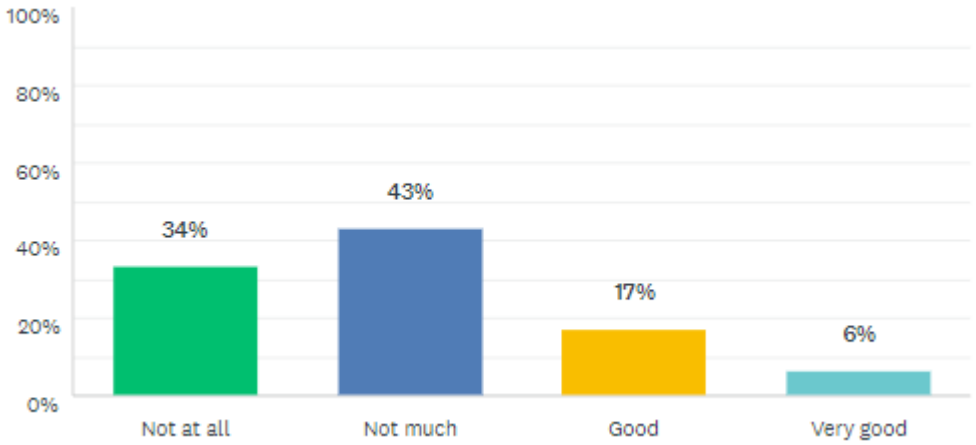

Figure 3: Awareness of ALDI in Italy as an employer (own presentation)

Question 10: **Think about your dream employer. How would you characterize them? vs.**

Question 19: **How would you characterize ALDI in Italy as an employer?**

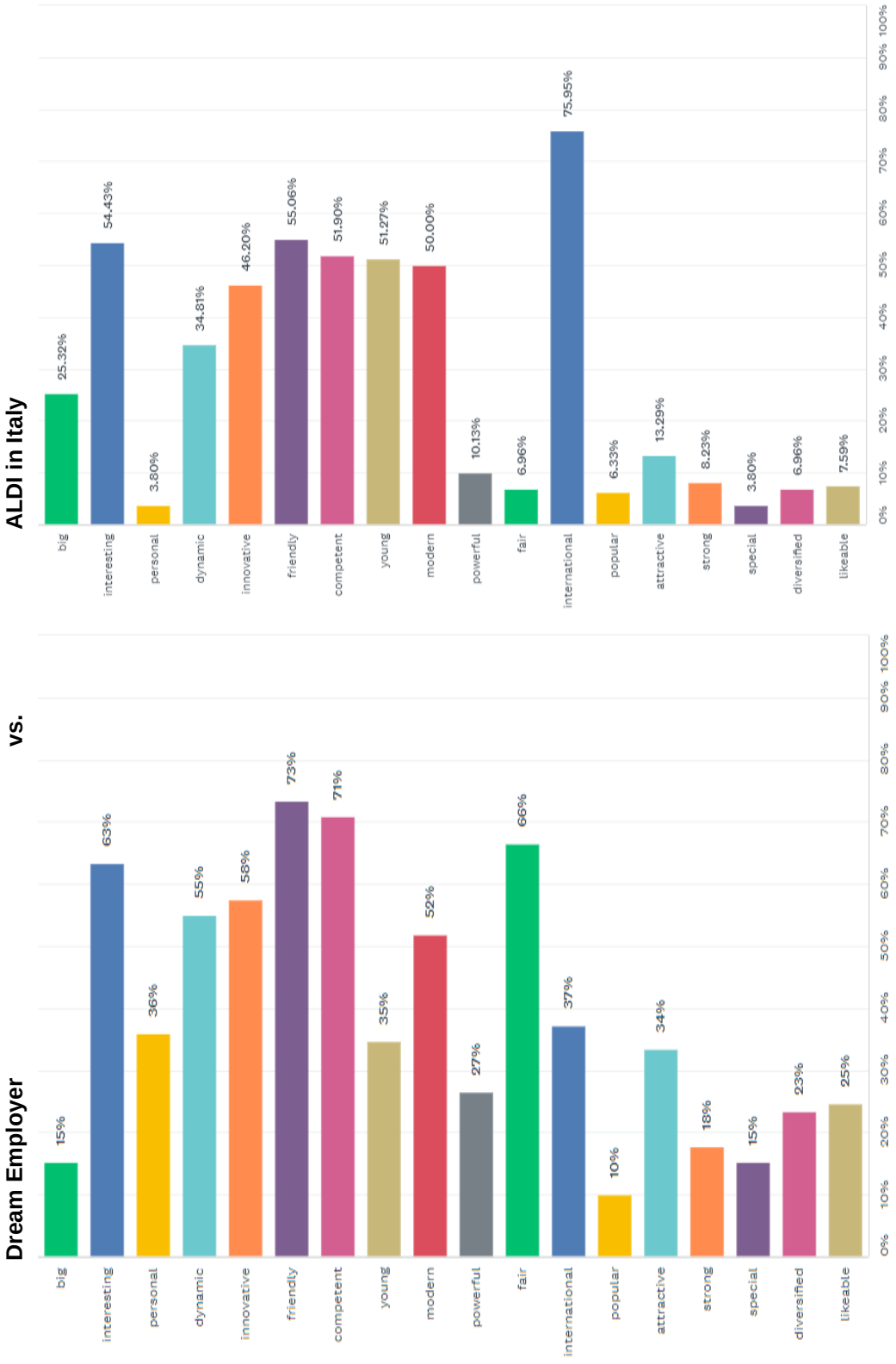

Figure 4: Characteristics of a dream employer vs. ALDI in Italy (own presentation)

Question 12: **What do you associate with ALDI in Italy? What does ALDI mean to you?**

Good	10.13%	16
Großes Angebot	8.86%	14
cheap	6.96%	11
Niedrige Preise	5.70%	9
products	4.43%	7
food	4.43%	7
good products	3.80%	6
friendly	3.16%	5
Italy	3.16%	5
know	2.53%	4
German	2.53%	4
good quality	2.53%	4
discounter	2.53%	4
price	2.53%	4
new	2.53%	4
Nothing	2.53%	4
Junges Unternehmen	2.53%	4
young	2.53%	4
discount	2.53%	4
know Aldi	2.53%	4
Hoher Druck auf	1.90%	3
affordable	1.90%	3
grocery store	1.90%	3
Viele verschiedene Produkte	1.90%	3
Hofer	1.90%	3
Freundliche Mitarbeiter	1.90%	3
Bad	1.90%	3
high quality	1.90%	3

Figure 5: Further Association with ALDI in Italy (own presentation)

Question 13: How important are the following factors to you when choosing an employer?

	(extremly) important	neither nor	extremly (unimportant
Fair treatment	97%	3%	0%
Good working environment	95%	3%	2%
High salary	95%	4%	1%
Attractive/interesting tasks	94%	4%	2%
Collegial togetherness	93%	6%	1%
Work/Life-Balance	93%	6%	1%
Equal opportunities	89%	9%	2%
Good image of the employer	86%	10%	4%
Secure employment	86%	10%	4%
Unlimited contracts	84%	13%	3%
Flexible working time	84%	13%	3%
Career opportunities	83%	10%	7%
Company success	82%	17%	1%
Further training	81%	13%	6%
Overtime compensation	80%	18%	2%
Attractive products/services	80%	17%	3%
Independent work	80%	15%	5%
Social and ecological actions of the employer	77%	15%	8%
Challenging activity	77%	16%	7%
Creative freedom	76%	19%	5%
High responsibility	68%	23%	9%
Flat hierarchies	67%	28%	5%
Team building events	58%	25%	17%
Additional offers	56%	34%	10%
Internationality	39%	41%	20%

Table 3: Important factors when choosing an employer (own presentation)

Question 8: **Please rank the following companies according to their attractiveness in the food retail sector!**

	(most) attractive	neither nor	(most) unattractive
Lidl	69%	20%	11%
Eurospin	47%	20%	34%
ALDI	42%	9%	49%
MD S.p.a.	26%	30%	44%
Penny Market	16%	21%	63%

Table 4: Attractiveness of Italian Food Discounters (own presentation)

Question 18: **What would be a reason for you to change your employer/What would you be dissatisfied with?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Poor leadership qualities towards employees	71%	112
I don't feel treated fairly	61%	97
My salary is too low	58%	91
The environment is not collegial	51%	81
I have too little time for my private life besides work	49%	78
The work tasks are not attractive	32%	50
The employer does not offer overtime pay	30%	48
My employer is not successful	30%	48
There is no equal treatment	29%	46
I cannot develop personally	28%	45
The employer does not offer secure employment	25%	39
Too great distance from the place of residence/poor accessibility	23%	36
The employer offers hardly any opportunities for advancement	20%	32
The products and/or services of my employer are not interesting	17%	27
My employer does not act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner	16%	25
I cannot work independently	16%	25
The employer does not offer any training opportunites	15%	23
The employer offers no benefits apart from the salary	10%	16
The employer is not innovative	7%	11
The business environment is not international	2%	3

Table 5: Reason of changing the employer (own presentation)

5. Time frame and budget plan for suggested measures

Internal Measures	Costs	Time Frame																							
		2020											2021												
		7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12					
Measure 1: Rethink the organizational structures	Internal human resources (management, HR, marketing) and external agency External agency: Communication and media consulting: € 190 per hour x 25 hours/month = € 4,750 x 5 = **€ 23,750**	x	x	x	x	x																			
Measure 2: Communicate the strategy, values and corporate culture to the employees	Internal human resources (as an ongoing process in every communication through ALDI)						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Measure 3: Conducting an annual employee survey and integrate question regarding employer branding	Internal human resources 25 €/hour x 50 hours = **€ 1,250/year**										x	x													
Measure 4: Interview newly employed Area Managers after 4 months via an anonymous survey about the onboarding phase and gained impressions	Internal human resources (ongoing) 1 - 2 new area manager per month Establishment of a survey = 20 hours 25€/hour x 20 hours = **€ 500/year**			x												x									

External Measures	Costs	2020						2021											
		7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Measure 1: Agree on the EVP of ALDI in Italy and communicate it to the external environment.	Internal human resources (management, HR, marketing) Preparation, writing and, if necessary, dispatch of communication materials (e.g. flyers, give-aways) - **€ 20,000** Trade fair booth (construction, furniture, design, coffee machine) - **€ 10,000**						x	x											
Measure 2: Revision of the career site of ALDI in Italy and adding missing information	External Agency: Textual Works: Content creation/revision - revision of FAQs - creation of slogan, keywords - revision of usability **€ 1,500** External Agency: Video production of an area manager: Statement-film (lenght: 60 sec.) Incl. text proposal; production: direction and camera; camera assistance; postproduction: editing, colour correction; export in desired format/desired file size = **€ 500**						x												
Measure 3: Detailed description of the working environment as area manager at ALDI in Italy	External Agency: Textual Works: - revision of job description of an area manager incl. benefits € 300 per text x 1 = **€ 300**						x												
Measure 4: Stronger support for social media channels	External Agency: Social Media Marketing: Incl. content creation; ongoing editorial reporting; research work (at least 3 postings per week); creation of an annual strategy and monthly posting plans; moderation of the site and answering customer queries; moderation and evaluation of statistics Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn Package: € 2,200 x 12 = **€ 26,400**						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Measure 5: Reconsider the prerequisite for the qualification for area managers in Italy	Internal human resources and external agency External agency: Consulting € 190 per hour x 4 hours/month x 2 = **€ 1,520**			x	x														

Table 6: Time frame and budget plan for suggested measures (own presentation)