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Enseignement supérieur de type long de niveau universitaire

An Employer Value Proposition Framework for Employee Engagement

Mémoire présenté par
Alice GIANNI

Pour l'obtention du diplôme de
Master en Gestion de l'Entreprise – MIBM – 120

Academic Year 2019 – 2020

Promoter:
Madame Anne ROUSSEAU

Boulevard Brand Whitlock 2 - 1150 Brussels

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ABSTRACT

The creation of an Employer Value Proposition expressing the employer brand of an organization is a crucial part of employer branding strategies. Such strategies represent a precious tool for many organizations wanting to successfully attract and retain the right people. While talent attraction and retention appear to be the core objectives of this notion, employer branding's benefits range from increased employee productivity and identification to enhanced organizational performance and commitment. Also included among the advantages from successful employer branding is employee engagement, key driver for satisfaction, performance and competitive advantage among other things. Despite the relation between the two notions being already established, literature around the subject shows several gaps. Therefore, this thesis aims at building a more solid basis for employee engagement to be incorporated into employer branding strategy through the Employer Value Proposition. In order to do this, different theoretical and practical approaches to management tool and framework building were explored, ultimately leading to the creation of an Employer Value Proposition framework to enhance employee engagement.

PART I - INTRODUCTION

1. General Context

While the term "war for talent" was coined in the late 90s, it has been used with reference to the labour market for more than a decade. In 2015, the Harvard Business Review was indeed still reporting about the long and intense shortage of talent that organizations have been experiencing for years (Mosley, 2015). Moreover, the Conference Board's 2016 survey of global CEOs confirmed that talent attraction and retention was still to be considered as a top global issue (Keller and Meaney, 2017). In the recent years, some argued that "the war for talent is over, and everyone lost" (Chamorro-Premuzic & Yearsley, 2017, title), to underline how most organizations seemed not to have responded efficiently to the challenge, leading to a "highly inefficient job market" (Chamorro-Premuzic & Yearsley, 2017, para. 10).

Accessing the right talent and retaining it still represents a complex challenge for many organizations today in 2020. Pwc (2020) underlines how strategies that could have worked in the past are unlikely to be as successful in today's changing context, presenting a new workforce, new technologies and new business models (Agrawal et al., 2020), demanding organizations to keep evolving at a rapid pace. This is essential in the candidate-led market that businesses face today, in which employees require at least the same attention as customers do (Accenture, 2020). It is in this context that employer branding has gained importance as a valuable solution for coping with attraction and retention difficulties. Indeed, when informally exploring employer branding and its relevance in today's context, it appears that many consider it essential for reaching, capturing and sustaining the "right talent" required for an organization's success. While some organizations may have been working this way since their set up, for some others adopting an employer branding view may lead to a shift towards a more people-centred view.

During the reflection about this thesis, we found the topic of employer branding to be particularly interesting as, approaching the notion for the first time, we discovered a fit between our personal views and the postulates at its core. Indeed, the idea of actively considering people and their talents' key contribution to success resonated as something essential for us, from both a future employee and manager perspective. As students approaching the job-market, a deeper understanding of employer branding had a twofold interest. On the one hand, we will soon be the "right talent" that some

organizations might want and need to attract. Therefore, we will end up being the target of their employer branding strategies as potential, and later current employees. In this sense, exploring employer branding may, for instance, help us better understanding the organizations we will interact with. On the other hand, deepening our knowledge about employer branding may be a starting point for a possible future career in the related field. Based on these two personal motivations, we began informally exploring employer branding and soon encountered several references to employee engagement.

As human resources academics and practitioners advocate, another key to the success of an organization may be found in employee engagement. In fact, employee engagement has been proved to be "a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace" (SHRM, 2020, para. 1) by impacting, for example, employee and organizational performance (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Rameshkumar, 2019) productivity and profitability (Harter et al. 2002; Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009).

Building on work around these two critical determinants of success, some human resources and employer branding practitioners suggest a link between employer branding and employee engagement. As it will be explained throughout our work, it is the scarce and vague nature of the works supporting this view that led to this thesis' specific research question.

2. Thesis Objectives & Structure

Despite the specific research question presented in the next paragraphs, this thesis was developed with a threefold general objective. Firstly, our work aims at providing a more structured overview of employer branding available literature. Secondly, this thesis aspires to provide some lines of thoughts so as to different ways employer branding may contribute to an organization's success. Lastly, our work means to provide a new approach to framework building that would contribute to employee engagement.

More specifically, this thesis explores the suggestion that a connection between employer branding and employee engagement may exist. A first part of literature review reports employer branding's and employee engagement's key concepts and elements to provide context. Then, the chapter named "Employer Branding and Employee Engagement" focuses on the link between the two notions by discussing its nature and dynamics.

While available literature appears to support the existence of a connection between employer branding and employee engagement, it also shows some gaps. Consequently, our thesis aimed at providing "a more solid and precise link between the notions by building a framework to be used as management tool" . More precisely, we aimed at creating an EVP framework, the Employer Value Proposition being a key element for employer branding. Therefore, based on the established causal relationship between the notions, "the research question at the heart of this thesis aimed at understanding how an Employer Value Proposition framework could be built with a view to contribute to employee engagement in an organization" .

In order to reach our objective, research and participatory observation were conducted , providing key elements for the framework's creation. Specifically, literature concerning management tool building was explored while observing a practical approach to EVP framework building during an internship at D'Ieteren Auto . Based on the collected information, an approach for our EVP framework building was developed and implemented to ultimately design an Employer Value Proposition framework for employee engagement .

3. Impact of Covid-19

As we write, the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken to face it are having a profound global impact on all levels. In this uncertain and challenging context, people are having to react by completely adapting their way of living. Needless to say, that the Covid-19 crisis is deeply affecting each and every organization as well, people are not just being impacted as individuals, members of a family or members of society but as employees as well. In such critical times, we suggest engagement may be crucial for both the organization and the employee. On the one hand, engaged employees may represent a key asset for a business survival. On the other hand, feeling engaged may help an employee to better adapt and cope with the ongoing changes. Therefore, we believe that the current disruptive context provides an additional incentive for organizations to consider different ways of strengthening employee engagement, underlying the relevance of our work.

On a more practical side, Covid-19 measures had a direct impact on this thesis and, more specifically, on the research process . While resources for secondary data collection were limited to those available for ICHEC students from home, Covid-19 mainly impacted the internship's context and, therefore, the observation at D'Ieteren Auto. As working modalities and priorities were reassessed, the implementation of the developed framework for EVP building was postponed, excluding the possibility to observe it and its results. This had an impact on the data available for our work, which, as a result, was limited compared to our expectations. Nonetheless, we considered that we were able to collect enough information to support the building of our EVP framework for employee engagement.

1. Employer Branding

1.1 The Origins of the Notion

The American Marketing Association (2020, Definition of Brand section) defines a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". This "complex bundle of images and experiences in the customer's mind" (Green & Keegan, 2017, p.329), represents a promise by the company. Such a promise encompasses both instrumental benefits, including product-related objective and tangible attributes, and symbolic benefits, including non-product-related subjective and intangible attributes (Lievens, 2007).

Peters (1999) explains how from the 70s, the use of brands had been gradually evolving from only differentiating tangible products to differentiating people, places and companies as well. Therefore, it didn't come as a surprise that in 1996, Ambler and Barrow started applying the abovementioned corporate branding notions and techniques internally to Human Resources Management, in line with the view of employer branding as a field where the "science of branding" is applied to HR (Edwards, 2010).

By considering the employer as a brand "with which the employee develops a closer relationship" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.1), the two pioneers assessed that parallel benefits to those offered by a conventional brand were provided to employees: "(1) developmental and/or useful activities (functional); (2) material or monetary rewards (economic); and (3) feelings such as belonging, direction and purpose (psychological)" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.4).

1.2 Basic Elements of Employer Branding

From the work of Ambler & Barrow (1996), a very first definition of employer brand was introduced and saw it as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (p.3). Inspired by this first interpretation, several academics and practitioners developed different definitions of employer branding and employer brand, which are two distinct concepts very often confused with one another (Theurer et al., 2016). The former is the process of establishing and communicating the latter, which focuses on the content and impact of the promised values and offerings (Wong, 2014). In fact, "successful employer branding is defined as an employer's targeted people management strategy to deliver on the employer brand promise" (Botha et al., 2011, p.4). Already at this early stage of concept definition, it is important to report Theurer et al.'s (2016) observation that "the field of employer branding suffers from several shortcomings" (p. 2). Despite some authors trying to cope with such shortcomings and lack of clarity, some gaps and confusion still exist (Ahmad & Dad, 2015).

1.2.1 Employer Branding

According to Lloyd's (2002, as cited by Berthon et al., 2005) view, employer branding represents "the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work" (p.153). Sullivan (2004) suggested a more complete definition of the concept as "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm. The strategy can be tuned to drive recruitment, retention, and productivity management efforts. It works by consistently putting forth an image surrounding management and business practices that make your organization an attractive, good place to work" (para. 1). Based on other definitions, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) proposed their own consideration of employer branding as "the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity" (p. 502) through an employer brand differentiating it from the competition. The two authors inspired Lievens' (2007) definition of employer branding as internal and external promotion of a "clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer" (p. 51). Finally, Martin et al. 's (2011) idea of employer branding picture it as "the process by which branding concepts and marketing, communications and HR techniques are applied to create an employer brand" (p. 3618). To sum up, despite the lack of agreement on one clear definition of the concept, the more common definitions suggest that employer branding could be defined as long-term strategy aiming at building and communicating an attractive and distinctive employer brand to existing and potential employees.

Concerning the concept of employer brand, Minchington (2006) considers that each and every organization, being conscious of it or not, has an employer brand, underlying even more the importance of being in control of it, considering its important impact on many stakeholders. While Ambler & Barrow (1996) saw the employer brand under a more functional perspective, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) cite a different definition from the Conference Board according to which "the employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It encompasses the firm's value system, policies, and behaviours toward the objectives of attracting, motivating, and retaining the firm's current and potential employees" (p. 502). Martin et al. (2011 as cited by Martin & Siebert, 2016) add that a valuable employer brand translates to "a generalised recognition for being known among key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience, and a distinctive organisational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others" (p. 203). In short, the employer brand could be generally considered as the distinct identity of an organization as employer.

Berthon et al. (2005) suggest that the concept of employer attractiveness, or "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (Abstract), could be considered as an antecedent of that of employer brand equity, a concept that will be further defined in the next section. Through this connexion, the authors define different elements valued by the employees and encompassed by the employer brand, namely:

(1) Interest value, relating to workplace, policies, procedures attributes;
(2) Social value, linked to the working environment and culture;
(3) Economic value, concerning remuneration, job security and prospects;
(4) Development value, relating to recognition and opportunity for example;
(5) Application value, regarding training, skills application and development among other things (Ahmad & Daut, 2016).

As the next section will show, these "values" are consistent with the components of the Employer Value Proposition (see p. 9).

Considering its crucial impact on employees' attraction, motivation and retention, it is important to build and recognize a successful employer brand. After analysing several employer brands, Moroko and Uncles (2008) selected "two key dimensions of success characteristics: attractive/unattractive and accurate/aspirational" (p. 1689). Regarding the attractiveness criteria, the two authors assessed that successful employer brands were (1) known and noticeable, (2) relevant

and resonant, (3) differentiated. With regards to the second dimension, successful brands were based on accurate marketing communications and promise delivery.

1.2.3 Employer Brand Equity

Finally, employer brand equity is a third key concept in this context. Brand equity being "the value of a brand beyond what can be explained by a product's functional features" (American Marketing Association, 2017, para. 1), it is a key determinant for consumer preference and loyalty. In the same way, "the more attractive an employer is perceived to be by potential employees, the stronger that particular organization's employer brand equity" (Berthon, et al., 2005, p. 151), which includes all the assets that add to the value of a company in the mind of an employee (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Under this perspective, Theurer et al. (2016) consider brand equity theory as the foundation of employer branding. Ultimately, employer branding activities aim at creating high employer brand equity, which will drive potential employees to apply and current employees to remain within the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

1.3 The Employer Branding Process

According to Backhaus' & Tikoo's (2004) research, three main steps build the employer branding process, which involves having a well-defined view of what makes a company different and desirable for employees (Sengupta et al., 2015).

1.3.1 The Employer Value Proposition

The Employer/Employee Value Proposition (EVP) "provides the central message that is conveyed by the brand" (Eisenberg et al. as cited by Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 502) and includes the perceived unique attributes and benefits offered to current and potential employees (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006; Botha et al., 2011). More specifically, Rideout (2014) cites Minchington defining the employer value proposition as "a set of functional and emotive associations and offerings such as career development, salary, friendly working environment that is provided by an organization in return for the skills, capabilities and experiences an employee brings to the organization" (p 66). Furthermore, Mosley (2015) explicates how an EVP "provides current and future employees with clear reasons to choose and stay with an employer" (Chapter 4, para. 1) by conveying the mutual expectations of both the employer and the employee (Maurer, 2017).

To be representative of the value the company offers, value propositions need to be based on the "organization's culture, management style, qualities of current employees, current employment image, and impressions of product and service quality managers" (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 502). Then, effective relationships can be built on consistent value propositions because those whose needs and values fit with the benefits offered by the organization will be attracted (Milkovich & Newman, 2008).

Therefore, the EVP appears to be a key determinant in the choice of an employer (Bagienska, 2018). Ultimately, creating a successful and differentiated value proposition enables organizations to attract target talent and retain and engage current employees to drive their sustainable growth (Sartain & Schumann, 2006; Botha et al., 2011; Black & Manoha, 2013). Such a value proposition can be seen as the content of the promise that will be made by the organization to all key stakeholders (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Although many agree on the importance and meaning of an EVP, no complete and well-defined approaches to EVP-building were found with the available time and resources.
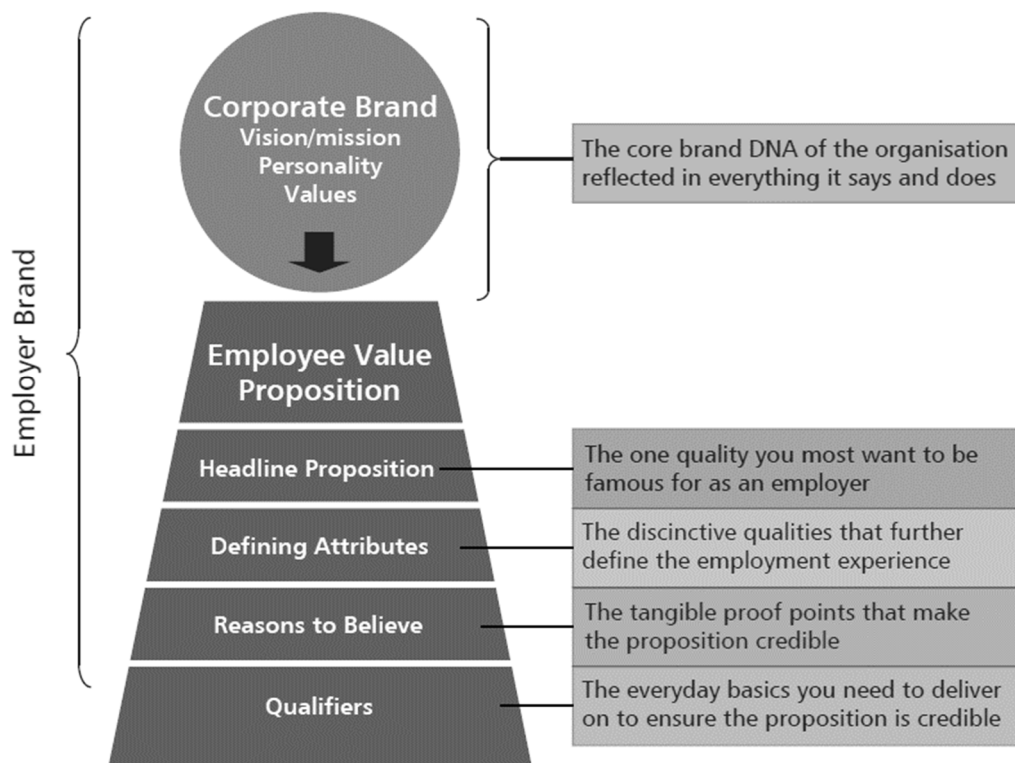
Figure 1: The Recommended Employer Brand Model by Barrow and Mosley (2005)

In their Recommended Employer Brand Model (see Figure 1), Barrow and Mosley (2005) clearly confirm how an EVP needs to be consistent with the corporate brand. This means that a deep knowledge of the vision, mission, personality and values of the organization is essential. Consequently, we could consider that a first preliminary step for anyone building an EVP would be ensuring everyone involved not only knows, but understands and masters such elements.

Furthermore, Browne (2012) underlines how an organization's actual EVP may be different from what employees and the organization aspire at. In that case, a need for understanding the nature and origin of the gaps arises. Therefore, such a line of reasoning shows the necessity of assessing the existing EVP as second preliminary phase to EVP building. Heger (2007) reminds us that employees' perception is to be considered when assessing an EVP, and therefore should be already taken into consideration at this stage.

Once the necessary preliminary assessments are carried out, an organization can move onto the creation of its EVP. According to Browne (2012), it should take specific components into account and build its distinctive EVP by suiting them to their specific needs and aspirations. The specific EVP components Browne (2012) refers to, have been identified by numerous authors during the years. First of all, compensation, to be intended as financial compensation for one's work and performance, represents an

important component of EVP. Secondly, the complementary benefits, encompassing retirement and health benefits, but also time off, are also to be included. Work content, being tied up with employees' satisfaction, appears to be a third component, while career development and advancement constitute a fourth component. Last but not least, affiliation or "the feeling of belongingness" of employees plays another crucial role.

In the same view, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) enumerate seven EVP elements, namely vision, opportunity, incentive, impact, community, communication, and experimentation. As the Information Resources Management Association (2017) explains, the two authors underline the important of a clear vision, growth and development opportunities, financial and non-financial benefits, meaningful work and a social environment. In addition to those five elements that appear to be consistent with the majority of authors, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) stress the role of brand two-way communication and flexibility enabling the EVP "to adapt to the needs of both the organization and the employee" (Information Resources Management Association, 2017, p. 456).

Lastly, the model presented in Figure 1 depicts four distinct levels on which an EVP is to be built. With the help of these different levels, Barrow and Mosley's (2005) model, stresses the need for an EVP to be built on concrete and tangible elements ensuring its credibility. Deepining the reflection in this sense, defining attributes that could be compared to the EVP components mentioned above should be backed up by "everyday basics" strengthening the EVP's credibility.

1.3.2 External and Internal Marketing

Once the EVP is defined, it is destined to be marketed externally and internally in order to deliver it to the employees. The ability to do so is crucial, according to Rosethorn (2009), as it is what constitutes a true employee experience.

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explain how external marketing is deployed to attract the target population including potential employees, recruiting agencies, placement counsellors. During this second step, it is crucial for the value proposition embedded in the employer brand to be consistent with the rest of the organization's branding efforts in order to be of support of the product and corporate brands. Effective external marketing of the distinctive value proposition allows organizations to position themselves as employers of choice and acquire distinctive human capital. Rideout (2014) cites Minchington suggesting that online communication should include "the recruitment section of an organization's website, its social media pages, podcasts, SMS

job alerts and e-newsletters" (p. 67), while offline communication should include "newspapers adverts, careers fairs, employee referral programmes and company events" (p. 67). Ultimately, this second step consists in making the previously mentioned promise.

The third and last step consists in internally marketing the value proposition and keeping the promise made at the previous steps and, therefore, fulfilling the employees' psychological contracts (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Effective internal marketing provides opportunities for the members of the organization to align to organizational culture and be committed to its values and goals. By creating a culture of trust between the two parties and making employees proud of being part of the organization, internal employer branding ends up creating a distinctive workforce that is hard to imitate (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

1.3.3 An Employer Branding Value Chain Model

Developed by Theurer et al. in 2016, the Employer Branding Value Chain Model in Figure 2 is based on a thorough research of available academic and study literature published in English on the subject of employer branding up to 2015. Acknowledged limitations of this model include the fact that the existing literature outside of the authors' research criteria and developed after 2015 is not considered. Despite such limitations, the model provides a theoretical overview of four stages of employer branding that seem to find a counterpart in today's practice (see p. 46).

The first stage "is concerned with what firms can do to develop (potential) employees' employer knowledge" (p. 12) and coincides exactly with the steps described in the previous pages: (1) the development of the EVP, (2) the EVP's external marketing, (3) the EVP's internal marketing. Confirming the general observation of many authors, Theurer et al. (2016) confirm the existence of literature gaps and shortcomings that create room for further research and studies on these subjects. The second stage is concerned with the relation between employer branding and the employees' and applicants' mindsets, feelings and perceived employer knowledge. During this stage, the concepts of employer familiarity, reputation, image resulting from the employer branding's efforts are key in influencing employees' and applicants' attitudes and, eventually, actions.

As a result of the first and second stage, the third one is concerned with the organizational level impact of employer branding on performance and competitive advantage. Ultimately, the fourth stage translates the employer branding's efforts into financial market performance and shareholder value.
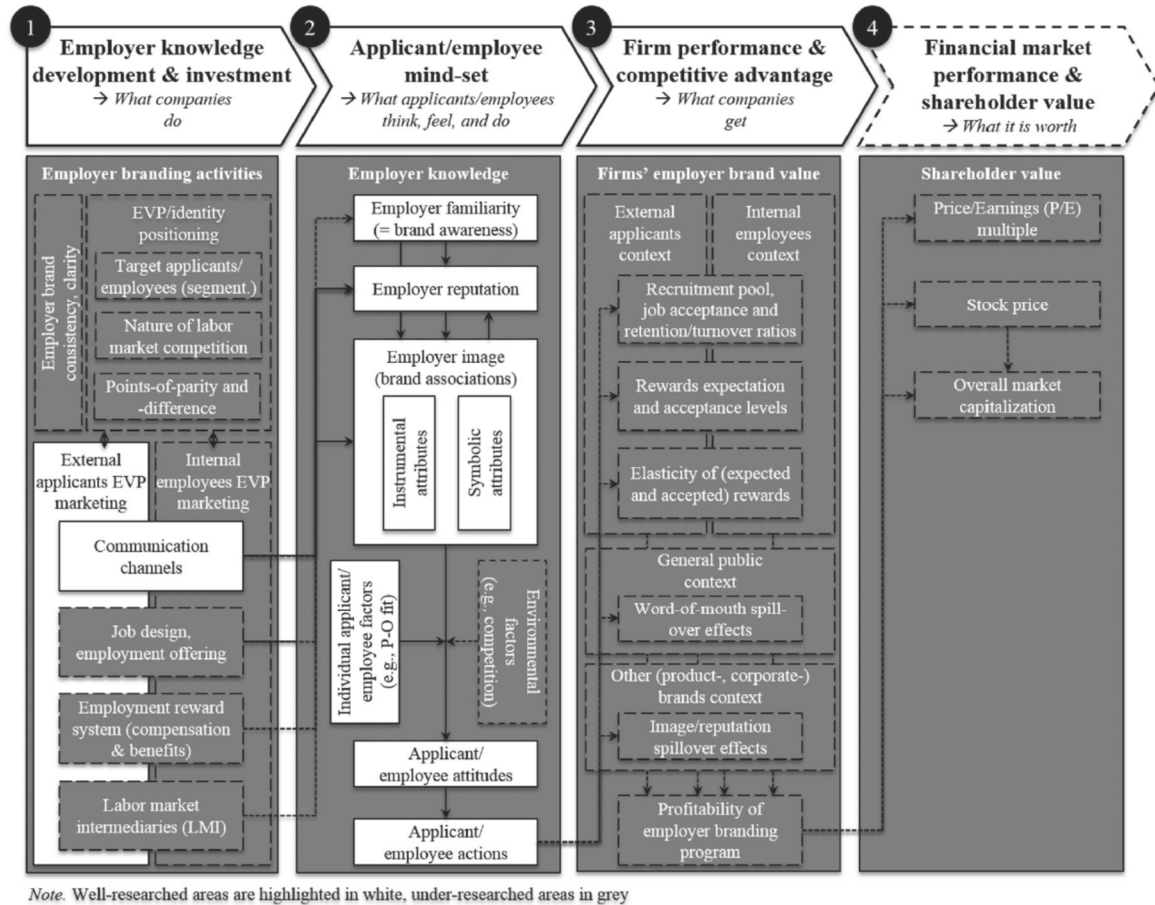
Figure 2: Employer Branding Value Chain Model by Theurer et al. (2016)

Fernon (2008) synthetizes the power of employer branding as "its ability to deliver organizational success by attracting and retaining the right people, providing and environment in which employees live the brand, improving organizational performance in key business areas of recruitment, retention, engagement and the bottom line and differentiating employer from each other, creating competitive advantage" (p. 50). Such a definition already encompasses several concepts that literature links to the notion and practice of employer branding.

First of all, the very nature of employer branding suggests its relation to talent attraction and retention. By examining what employer branding means and it's focused on, as done in the previous sections, the link appears very clearly: attraction and retention are two core objectives of this practice. Solidly supporting this view, many studies have been carried out such as those of Myrden and Kelloway (2015), Elving. et al. (2013), Gilani and Cunningham (2017) and Botha et al. (2011), confirming that employer branding constitutes a tool for addressing recruitment and retention challenges (Martindale, 2010). Wong (2014) cites some more specific issues examined by literature including for instance employer and employment features that applicants find attractive (Berthon et al., 2005), comparisons of external and internal employer brand images (Melin, 2005) or improving recruitment through employer branding (Kateon & Macioschek, 2007; Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008).
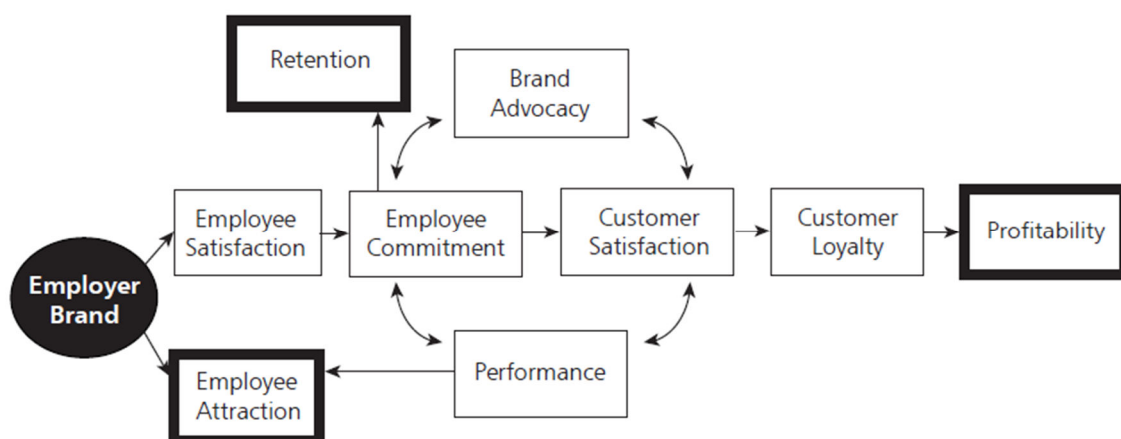
Figure 3: Employer Brand Model by Gaddam (2008)

Gaddam (2008) underlines the role of employer branding in attracting and retaining employees and shows more complex dynamics in its Employer Brand Model (see Figure 3). According to Gaddam's (2008) work, the notions of employee satisfaction

and commitment, brand advocacy and performance, find themselves interrelated to those of customer satisfaction and loyalty, and, ultimately, profitability.

In line with the evidence pointing at the close link between employer branding and employer attraction, the widely cited Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) built a "conceptual framework for understanding employer branding, incorporating marketing and human resources concepts" (p. 504) presented in Figure 4. Through this framework, the authors underline the relation between the two concepts, which can be explained by employer branding's influence on employer brand associations and employer image. At the same time, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) also identify a link with the identity of an organization and its culture, which in turn have an impact on employer brand loyalty. Ultimately, according to the authors' framework, employer branding appears to be related to employee productivity as well.
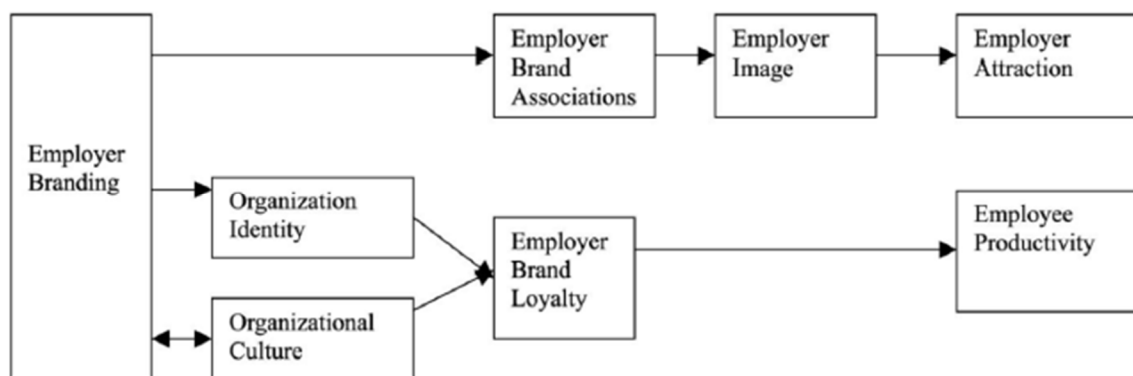
Figure 4: Employer Branding Framework by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)

Employee and organizational performance constitute another topic that has been linked to employer branding by many authors. Ambler & Barrow (1996) already suggested that effective employer branding could lead to increased performance through the creation of a competitive advantage. Such a view has been backed by several studies and reports including those of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Wright (2008) or McLaren (2011). However, when looking into the arguments and results of such studies, it appears that there aren't any solid foundations to this assumption yet (Martin, 2007; Wong, 2014).

According to Mosley (2015) and Lievens et al. (2007), the creation of a strong employer brand would enhance employees' self-esteem, pride and identification with the organization. Such an outcome would be in line with Moroko and Uncle's (2008) suggestion that employer branding would be key in the fulfilment of psychological

contracts between employers and employees, which are defined as "individual beliefs in reciprocal obligations between employees and employers" (Rousseau, 1990, p.389). Yet, further research would be needed to confirm the authors' assumptions.

Last but not least, a link has been suggested between the concepts of employer branding and engagement (Fernon, 2008; Botha et al., 2011; Mosley, 2015). Such a dynamic will be further analysed in Chapter 3 of this literature review part .

2. Employee Engagement

2.1 Defining Employee Engagement

Following the exploration of management and human resources literature in search for a definition of employee engagement, it appears that a single and clear-cut definition of the notion does not exist yet.

Kahn's (1990) widely referred to definition considers employee engagement as a person's spontaneous involvement in the role, involving physical, cognitive and emotional employment and expression. Through this threefold expression, emotionally and intellectually engaged employees experience a state of fulfilment (Schaufeli et al. 2002; May et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). Such a "fulfilling work-related state of mind" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74) is characterized by three elements: (1) vigour, meaning high energy, (2) dedication, related to pride and enthusiasm, and (3) absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009). The emotional component is emphasized by Erickson (2015) as well, who talks about passion and commitment and "the willingness to invest oneself and expand one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed" (p. 14) with involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm (Harter et al., 2002). Summarizing several definitions, the Conference Board (2006) sees employee engagement as "a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization, manager, or co-workers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work." (p. 5). Therefore, we could say that employee engagement is about people giving their best effort to perform (Saks, 2006).

After defining the concept as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value" (Executive Summary, para. 3)", Robinson et al. (2004) establish the need for an organization to develop and nurture engagement, which they consider to be a two-way relationship. In this sense, employer and employees mutually reinforce each other's engagement and success, leading to greater value creation.

In the end, employee engagement could be defined as a strong intellectual and emotional connection of an employee with his/her organization and job, leading to high levels of fulfilment, involvement and commitment.

According to literature on the subject, employee engagement is driven by several interlinked drivers of an individual, interpersonal and organizational nature, some of which are presented in this section.

First of all, personality traits are to be included among the drivers of employee engagement as they involve different and unique reactions and perceptions of the same situation and state for each individual. In this sense, personality constitutes a factor on which organizations may find difficult having any control (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In addition to that, emotions and well-being are also relevant individual drivers, since they affect performance at work (May et al., 2004) and are said to have an impact on engagement (Tower Perrin, 2003). Opposed to the case of personality traits, organizations have a chance of partially influencing these two engagement drivers. One example may indeed be found in well-being or wellness initiatives and programmes in the workplace (M Ruban, 2018).

Secondly, the nature of the job performed is crucial in defining one's engagement. The alignment of the job's values and objectives with those of the individual carrying it out is essential for the worker to find it significant, purposeful and meaningful (May et al., 2004). Psychological meaningfulness is in fact a very strong driver of engagement (Kahn, 1990) through its positive impact on motivation, job enrichment and work role fit. Nonetheless, job's meaningfulness does not stand a chance of engendering engagement if the adequate physical, emotional and cognitive resources necessary to do the work are not provided (Tower Perrin; 2003; Harter et al., 2006; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; M Ruban, 2018). Among such resources we also may include job expectations or key result areas, giving employees a key idea of what is expected from them. Finally, even if the nature of the job and the resources provided support engagement, employees should be offered opportunities for development. Perspectives of intellectual and professional growth are key and can be offered through career growth opportunities, training or challenging work, for instance (Tower Perrin, 2003; Harter et al., 2006; Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

As the employee is part of an organization, there is a fundamental need for interaction with others, be them co-workers, team members, supervisors, managers. Supportive, cooperative and encouraging relationships with the other members of the organization are likely to have a strong influence on one's engagement (Tower Perrin, 2003; May et al., 2004; Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009). Trust and integrity are important factors that make the relationship with the overall organization psychologically safe, allowing employee well-being (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). Perceived Organizational Support, which involves among other things access to

trainings, rewards, consideration, concern and availability, plays an important role in determining the nature of such employee-organization relationships (Saks, 2006; Rothmann & Welsh, 2013).

Two key variables of relationships in organizations are communication and leadership. For employees to feel engaged, a two-way and open communication in which opinions and views are mutually shared (Ayuso et al., 2006) is extremely relevant and is likely to make the employee feel as being value and involved in the decision-making process (Tower Perrin, 2003; M Ruban, 2018). Indeed, M Ruban (2018) stresses how "empowering employees voice" (p. 41) may be determinant for engaging them. Leadership encompasses several elements, including trust, honest communication and collaboration, which have significant importance in fostering engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008; M Ruban, 2018). Good communication and leadership in an organization also enables employees to understand the company's goals and objectives, which allows them to understand their contribution to the achievement of such goals and the organization's performance (Mone et al., 2011).

Moreover, employee engagement is substantially supported by pride about the organization, the feeling of self-esteem from being part of it and the wish to develop with it (Tower Perrin, 2003; The Conference Board, 2006).

In addition to the drivers just presented, other elements, including for instance work-life balance, Corporate Social Responsibility and conflict resolution (M Ruban, 2018), have been identified as engagement drivers. Nonetheless, the limited time and resources at our disposal required a selection of a number of drivers we consider key for our work.

The measurement of employee engagement remains a complex matter "because of the diversity in the definition, assumptions and use of employee engagement, and the differing requirements of every organisation" (Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009, p.43).

As Markwich & Robertson-Smith (2009) report, periodical surveys clearly appear to be the preferred tool of employers for engagement measurement. Yet, very different approaches can be adopted in different contexts. Robinson et al. (2007) summarize a key dilemma as follows: "organisations may have to choose between a standard measure that does not quite meet their requirements, but enables benchmarking, and a customised measure that is ideal in every way except for the ability to compare with other organisations" (p. 24). Markwich & Robertson-Smith (2009) identify different existing and well-known approaches to engagement measurement that organizations may adopt or inspire themselves by.

The Institute for Employment Studies offers different HR tools and approaches to organizations, including a survey for engagement assessment (IES, 2020). As Robinson et al. (2004) explain, based on a survey developed and tested in 2003, the IES engagement indicator comprises some specific attitude statements. Such statements evaluate "organisational citizenship, organisational commitment, the extent to which individuals identify with the values of the organisation, and their belief that the organisation enables the individual to perform well" (Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009, p. 44). Respondents are asked to mark each attitude statement on a scale from one to five, which will provide the organization with an assessment of their engagement level (Robinson, 2004).

According to its website (Gallup Inc, 2020), the global analytics and advice firm Gallup offers an approach to engagement measurement based on twelve identified employee's needs. Through the Q12 Gallup Engagement Survey, twelve corresponding questions are therefore asked to employees to assess their level of engagement and provide basis for action points. Yet, it is important to notice Bathnagar's (2007) critique the Gallup approach shows "some contamination from concepts such as employee satisfaction, commitment and involvement and so further work is required to determine the validity of this measure" (Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009, p. 45).

According to Korneta (2018), the Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a customer engagement metric introduced in 2003 by F. Reichheld in an article for the Harvard Business Review. To compute an organization's NPS, customers are asked to answer using a scale from 0 to 10 the following question: "How likely is it that you would recommend the company to a friend or colleague?". Based on the respondents' answers, customers are then grouped as showed in Figure 5.
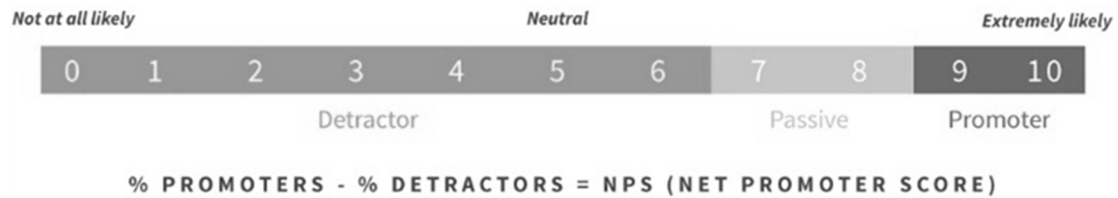
Figure 5: Net Promoter Score Calculation by Satmetrix Systems (2017)

Ultimately, the NPS is computed by subtracting the percentage of detractors to the percentage of promoters, meaning "loyal enthusiasts who will keep buying and refer others, fuelling growth" (Satmetrix Systems, 2017, The NPS Calculation Section). When asking the question to employees of an organization instead of customers, the Employee Net Promoter Score can "provide organizations with an engagement gauge, and an idea of where to intervene to increase numbers of the promoting engaged, and decrease the detracting disengaged" (Markwich & Robertson-Smith, 2009, p. 45).

Moreover, Markwich & Robertson-Smith (2009) cite the Utrecth Work Engagement Scale constructed around Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definition of engagement as "positive work-related state of fulfilment that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (p. 74). The UWES measures the three constructs of vigour, dedication and absorption by the means of three different scales to provide an overall reliable and consistent engagement assessment. Nevertheless, a limit of such an approach is considered to be the lack of benchmarking data according to Schaufeli et al. (2006).

As a matter of conclusion, numerous other approaches and tools for measuring employee engagement exist and keep being developed depending on each organization's situation and context. The four approaches presented in the previous paragraphs were selected to present the reader with a glance on some possibilities but do not mean to provide a complete and exhaustive picture of the literature on the subject.

2.4 Employee Engagement Benefits

Without going into much detail, this section aims at showing the importance of employee engagement and how this notion is linked to many others.
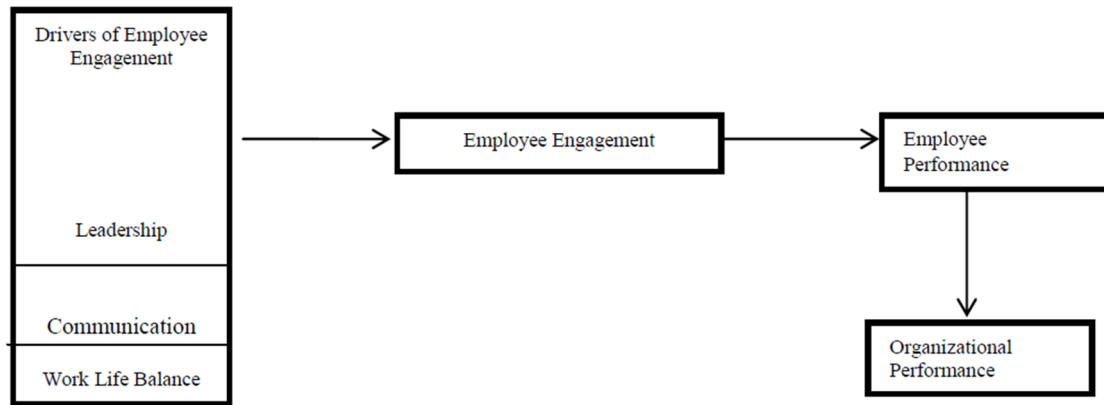
Figure 6: Proposed Integrated Model of Employee Engagement by Bedarkar & Pandita (2014)

As a matter of fact, the idea that employee engagement is of crucial importance for organizations is widely spread today due to its influence on employee performance (Rameshkumar, 2019). Bedarkar & Pandita's (2014) Proposed Integrated Model of Employee Engagement (see Figure 6) was created based on a thorough literature analysis on the subject. While the drivers of engagement have already been considered (see p. 18), the interest of the model is confirming how employee performance, and as an extension organizational performance, are indeed impacted. Markos & Sridevi (2010) suggested that three specific behaviours create this impact. First of all, the employee identifying with the organization, acting as its voice and advocating for it, supports the organization's image and talent acquisition. Secondly, engaged employees increase retention as they are more likely to remain in an organization. Thirdly, employee engagement allows people to see organizational success as their own as well, increasing their active efforts and contribution to it.

Furthermore, Harter et al.'s (2002) and Markwich & Robertson-Smith's (2009) research shows that engaged employees lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty and increased productivity and profitability compared to organizations with greater disengagement. Such organizations risk instead seeing the enthusiasm, commitment and retention of their employees falling drastically (Ortiz, Lau and Qin, 2013) and, ultimately, experiencing higher levels of burnout and absenteeism (Saks, 2006).

Benefits of an engaged workforce are therefore undiscussed, with further research showing that organizational commitment, participation and motivation are significantly and positively influenced by employee engagement (Siddharta et al., 2010; Schaufeli, 2012; Imam & Shafique, 2014; Hanaysha, 2016).

3. Employer Branding and Employee Engagement

While the first two chapters of this literature review presented a general overview of the existing employer branding and employee engagement literature, through this chapter we explored the relation between the two notions.

Despite solid literature about the subject still being scarce and vague, the works presented in the next paragraphs prove the existence of a link between employer branding and employee engagement. The two notions cannot be considered as independent, as a result. Therefore, when attempting to qualify the link between employer branding and employee engagement, three options may present themselves according to Davis (1985). A simple causal relationship between two variables, X and Y, may occur when X causes Y, but Y does not cause X. A first scenario would then see employer branding impacting employee engagement or vice versa. If Y were to cause X after a first causal relationship, then we encounter the second scenario of reciprocal influence. In it, we could see employer branding leading to employee engagement, which in turn would have an impact on employer branding itself, creating a cycle. The third and last possibility concerns an association between the two variables in which it is not possible to determine which causes the other: X is linked with Y and Y with X. In this scenario, we would see a link between employer branding and employee engagement without being able of determining which of the two has an impact on the other. A choice was made to lean on existing literature to understand which scenario, or scenarios, apply to the case we are considering.

As implied above, a few authors have indeed formally established a link between employer branding and employee engagement. On the one hand, Mosley (2015) suggests that the strength of the employer brand can have a significant effect on the engagement levels of employees. As Morgan (2017) mentions how focusing on employee experience leads to lasting engagement, Botha et al. (2011) stress the fact that the positive impact of employer branding on employee engagement has been reinforced by various studies. According to this view, Moroko & Uncles (2008) consider employee engagement as an important metric to measure employer branding success in their study. Accordingly, Heger's (2007) empirical study recognizes that employer branding is an engagement driver. More specifically, EVP attributes appeared to be key in engaging the examined workforce. On the other hand, Moroko (2009) also establishes an inverse relationship where employee engagement would be able to generate both employer branding effectiveness and enhanced employee performance. Ahmad and Daud (2016) create a link between the two notions through the concept of turnover intention. Ahmad and Daud's (2016) work's results show that there is indeed a

relationship between certain components of the employer brand previously identified by Berthon et al. (2005) and turnover intention. As Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) explain, the lowest the turnover intention, the strongest the employee engagement in an organization. Therefore, we could deduce that another link, yet to be developed, exists between employer branding and engagement.

While acknowledging the possibility of reciprocal influence or association between employer branding an employee engagement, these two options will not be retained as they would need further examination at this stage. Instead, in light of the findings on the subject, it appears reasonable to consider a simple causal relationship in which employer branding would have an impact on employee engagement. As shown in the coming chapter, this positioning is the one adopted for the rest of the work.
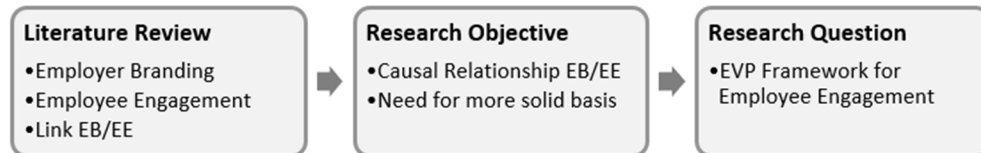
1. Research Purpose

Figure 7: Research Purpose

1.1 Research Objective

Prior theoretical research presented in Part II (see p. 5) aimed at exploring and isolating some key concepts and elements of employer branding and employee engagement. Ultimately, the previous chapters aimed at verifying and exploring the nature and dynamics of the relation between the two notions in a general way. Then, more precisely, the research was conducted with the objective of identifying specific variables that could be interrelated and attempting to explain how.

As presented in Chapter 3 of Part II, based on available research and studies, a link between employer branding and employee engagement has indeed been established. When attempting to qualify such a link, a simple causal relationship in which employer branding would impact employee engagement was retained. Yet, as shown in the previous chapter, the existing literature on the subject is still generic and scarce as it shows several gaps. Taking this into account, the aim of the following research is to establish a more solid and precise link between the notions by building a framework to be used as management tool.

Wanting to establish a link between two notions encompassing several different elements and aspects, selecting a more specific scope was necessary. Considering the preliminary research carried on the subject, the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) undoubtedly represents a crucial element for employer branding (see p. 9). As mentioned in Chapter 1 of Part II, developing a relevant and distinctive EVP is indeed a key step on which the whole employer branding strategy of a company is, or should be, based. Therefore, taking into consideration the fundamental nature of EVP for employer branding, the research question at the heart of this thesis aimed at understanding **how an Employer Value Proposition framework could be built with a view to contribute to employee engagement in an organization.**

2. Methodology
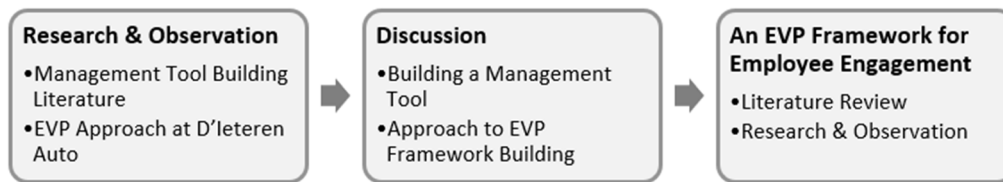
Figure 8: Methodology

2.1 Research Design

In order to deal with the stated research question, both theory and practice intervened in the construction of a framework for EVP development contributing to employee engagement.

One stage consisted in researching different literature approaches to management tools design and building. Throughout this theory-analysis, secondary data was collected by researching available academic publications and databases referenced in the bibliography at the end of this thesis. The research was conducted in English and French and without any limit as to the data's date or place of publication. Furthermore, the screening of the material in order to ensure its quality was based on the criteria of credibility, objectivity, accuracy, relevance and origin provided by Paquet et al. (2015). Publications not meeting the quality criteria applied were excluded from the scope of our research.

At the same time, one approach to building the EVP of an organization in practice was observed. The context of this stage being our internship at D'Ieteren Auto, it provided a chance for taking part in the current practice and methodology, but also starting the reflection and contributing to the adjustments. During the second stage, both primary and secondary data was collected. In order to do so, the approach used by the employer branding manager of D'Ieteren Auto was observed while taking part in its design and implementation. Informal meetings and interviews with this same person and other colleagues of the Human Resources department were also key to gain additional insight. Moreover, other internal data and information was collected through the Intranet and colleagues of other departments.

Building on the results of our literature research and field observation, a second stage consisted in comparing and confronting both theory and practice in order to establish a big picture of the current approaches at disposal. Based on it, and the

previous literature on employer branding and employee engagement, the framework resulting from this thesis was eventually created.

Considering how theory and practice were mobilized and interacted to support the design and building of a management tool, the selected methodology appears to fit in a constructivist logic. More precisely, based on Morana's (2003) analysis of different research approaches, affinity with the one described by Chanal et al. (1997) may be observed. Such a research is qualified by the authors in French as "ingénierique" (adjective related to the French word "ingénierie" meaning engineering) to introduce the researcher's role as engineer, and not only observer. Indeed, through this research method, the researcher aspires at the design, building, implementation and evaluation of a tool, through a back-and-forth process between theory and practice (Morana, 2003). Ultimately, Chanal et al. (1997) summarize the main purpose of such a research as providing an opportunity for practitioners to adopt and exploit theoretical knowledge and the research' results through the generated tool. Importantly, adopting this research method not only results in the generation of new knowledge but also in the articulation, enrichment and stimulation of new perspectives of existing knowledge.

As mentioned in the introduction (see p. 4), due to the exceptional circumstances linked to Covid-19, our research had to be adapted and become more flexible than expected.

Concerning the first stage of the data collection process, the entirety of theoretical research was conducted with the means and resources available for students from home, namely a personal computer and access to the ICHEC library and linked platforms, in addition to free access academic publications and databases.

Moreover, the internship's modalities and context having to be adapted, the data collection process on the field and the data itself were adapted as well. The main impact that the Covid-19 had on the approach developed at D'Ieteren was to make it impossible to implement it during the expected timeframe. As it is explained in the following chapters, the approach required a kind of emotional and human input that was to be provided mainly in person through workshops. Such input would have been the basis for the initial creation of the EVP and constituted an essential component of the approach. Because of that, no data linked to the implementation and results of the approach is currently available. This also means that it wasn't possible to test its impact on employee engagement yet, constituting an important limit to this research. Furthermore, it is important to specify that the reported approach reflects what was developed up until end of April 2020: the approach could have evolved or changed since.

1. Management Tools Building

The outcome of this thesis being the creation of a new framework, this chapter aims at exploring the literature around management tools with a focus on the different approaches to their design or building. The two words are used as synonym in the context of this research to indicate the creation of the tool at a theorical and practical level. At this stage, it is relevant to mention that on the basis of the data collection process detailed above, management tools research appears to be specific to French literature. Consequently, most of the sources cited in this chapter have been rephrased or translated to English during the writing.

1.1 Defining Management Tools

Although no official and clear-cut definition exists (Martineau, 2015), "in general, the term management tool can stand for any tool used for management purposes" (Kern, 2006, p. 59). Accordingly, Moisdon (cited by Canet, 2013) suggests that a management tool can be essentially defined in relation to its contribution to the basic management activities, namely forecasting, deciding and controlling, by being a "set of reasonings and knowledge formally linking a certain number of organizational variables" (Moisdon, 1997 as cited by Gomez, 2015, p. 30). In line with this view, IGI Global (2020) considers a management tool as "an entity of instruments to support implementation of concepts and ideas at all levels of conceptualization and realization of concepts, ultimately aiming to support organizational processes" (para, 1).

Several authors including de Vaujany (2006), Detchessahar & Journé (2007) and Gomez (2015) cite Hatchuel & Weil providing a deeper analysis of what constitutes a management tool by decomposing it into three components. According to them, a management tool is essentially based on specific formal foundations, including all its concrete technical supports, such as tables or graphs that enable it to function. Through this formal backbone, a specific management philosophy is promoted by either organizing behaviours or backing their adoption. These first two elements are combined with a simplified vision of organizational relations defining the actors involved and creating context for the tool.

Considering that management tools attempt to describe reality, Martineau (2015) raises the question of objectivity. According to the author, due to the human component of any organization, it is not possible to be completely objective when modelling it. Instead, "some management tools are rather relations-oriented, while others are rather knowledge-oriented, and finally others can be qualified as mixt" (Martineau, 2015, p. 50). Accordingly, the author points out that trusting tools may become difficult if we perceive deep incongruences compared to reality. In such cases, it is often the manager's job to adapt and improve its tool. Nonetheless, Martineau (2015) affirms that management tools are usually considered to capture quantitative aspects more easily than "qualitative, dynamic and processual" (p. 52) ones, suggesting that they may be more trustworthy in the first case.

Besides merely representing reality in a simplified and structured way (Martineau, 2015), it clearly appears that the role of any management tool is to contribute to management and organizational processes. When considering their role more specifically, management tools are, in many cases, meant to enable organizations to reach defined optima (Gomez, 2015). By comparing them to maps, Martineau (2015) suggests that management tools act as mediators between managers and their organizations. In some other cases, Gomez (2015) suggests that management tools may enable further understanding of an organization's functioning or act as support for change. Furthermore, Paraponaris & Simoni (2006) mention management tools playing a supporting role to the "progressive building of shared representations" (p. 77) tending toward Riot's (2014) view of the tool as cognitive support of an action ultimately leading to what the authors call collective action (Gomez, 2015; Riot, 2014).

Lastly, different roles may be associated with different tool typologies. As a matter of fact, Martineau (2017) suggests a classification of management tools according to their form/substance. In this sense, closed tools are opposed to open tools, the main characteristics of each being reported in Figure 9 adapted from Martineau (2017).

Tool type	Form	Substance	Tolerance to multiple interpretations	Attitude of researched user	Example	Historical diffusion waves
Closed	Non-ambiguity; Clarity; Exhaustivity	Conforming; Standardizing; Controlling; Making predictable	Week	Passive	Budget; Procedures; Regulations; Sequential programming for a software; …	Scientific Management (1900-1923) Systems Rationalism (1955-1980)
Open	Ambiguity; Freedom; Tolerance to multiple interpretations	Stimulating reflection; Supporting decisions	Strong	Active	Strategic dashboard; Brainstorming; BCG matrix; Professional interview guide; …	Welfare Capitalism (1923-1955) Organizational Culture (1980 – Present)

Figure 9: Open Tools & Closed Tools by Martineau (2017)

1.2 Approaches to Management Tools

Canet (2013) and Grimand (2006) report, based on a working paper written by Lorino in 2002, the existence of two distinct views of management tools, leading to radically different approaches to their design.

1.2.1 An instrumental View of Management Tools

Some consider management tools as autonomous actors. According to this view, management tools predictably producing actions on their own are in fact considered to be able to decide autonomously to a certain extent. In this case designing the tool is considered as a specific phase occurring before the implementation and, as a consequence, two separate groups of actors can be identified as either designers or users (Canet, 2013), who remain strictly external to the tool (Grimand, 2012). According to this instrumental view, "a tool's efficiency is linked to its ability to replicate reality" in order to directly influence actions and behaviours to ultimately "increase the efficiency of managerial actions and decisions" as Aggeri & Labatut suggested (as cited by Grimand, 2012, p. 239).

However, such an approach to management tools does not appear to take into account the complexity of the situations they attempt to model. Moreover, critics have shown that a management tool may be interpreted in various ways since it is not a mere reflection of reality but a social construction as such (Oiry, 2012).

1.2.2 Management Tools Adoption

On the other hand, de Vaujany (2006) presents a more pragmatic and diffused view of management tools as integrated and dependent to the behaviour of the actors of the organization. According to this second view, management tools produce knowledge and actions as they are used by the different actors, making their creation a permanent process based on continuous learning. According to this perspective, it is not possible to set apart a management tool's design and use as two distinct phases or processes. This view is at the heart of de Vaujany and Grimand's (2005) theory that a management tool takes form throughout its implementation in an organization. As a matter of fact, de Vaujany (2005) qualifies the design and the use of a tool as "consubstantial", meaning to underline the impossibility to separate the two.

Therefore, the notion of tool-adoption is introduced when considering the design as temporary and iterative (de Vaujany, 2006). According to this theory, as one or several actors adopt a management tool, they "form, deform and interpret it" (p.119),

contributing this way to the tool's design as well. As several actors or groups of actors keep sequentially adopting the redesigned tool, adding their contribution each time, the process of adoption keeps encompassing both a design and use phase at the same time (de Vaujany, 2006). Consequently, the roles of designer and user overlap entering a logic of "co-design" (Pascal & Thomas, 2005).

The assumptions linked to the abovementioned theories explain why, in literature and in the context of this thesis, it is not possible to isolate management tools building without considering their use and the actors involved (Aggeri & Labatut, 2010; Gomez, 2015; Grimand, 2012; de Vaujany, 2006). As a consequence, De Vaujany (2006) cites Moisdon suggesting that these assumptions may lead to new practices where the process of instrumental design and that of use modalities' definition would interact and be mutually reinforcing, exploiting the continuous learning throughout the lifetime of the tool. Moreover, the previously explained theories contributed to a new vision of management tools' value for organizations, which can be articulated in three different perspectives (Canet, 2013; Nivet, 2013; de Vaujany, 2006; de Vaujany & Grimand, 2005). First of all, a tool may be considered of value thanks to its adoption, but not necessarily use, and the social legitimacy given by a certain institution. A more structural value is instead found when valorising the tools' content and architecture conceived during a first design phase. Thirdly, the use and contribution of certain local actors may represent the main elements conferring value to a management tool.

Lastly, when attempting to understand the tool adoption process, de Vaujany (2006) and Grimand (2012) state the importance of simultaneously considering different perspectives. A rational perspective is one considering management tools as working tools adopted instantaneously as they regulate behaviours and solve problems (Grimand, 2012), leading to a distinct view of design and use. A socio-politic perspective allows instead to consider the management tool as a tool for valorisation, more in line with sociologic theories. According to this view, the adoption process becomes a social and collective process throughout the lifetime of the tool. Viewing management tools as supporting the learning process, allowing "reflexivity on one's own practice" (p. 245), is instead proper to a more cognitive perspective. In this sense, adoption remains an individual or collective process throughout the tool's lifetime. Lastly, Grimand (2012) adds a symbolic perspective of value- and sense-creating management tools, carriers of identity and beliefs. Combining these views of tool adoption is meant to provide a more complete understanding of the process provided that both the designers' and users' perspectives are considered. This is translated by "apprehending adoption from a designer/creator's point of view as process to optimize, to correct" (de Vaujany, 2006, p. 116). Instead, from a users' point of view, it means considering adoption as a learning process and an understanding of the tool's role vis-à-vis of the user's interests (de Vaujany, 2006; Grimand, 2012).

1.3 Management Tools Building

Despite the design of management tools being key in management sciences, their design or creation haven't been the object of much focused research (Oiry, 2012). Instead, as shown in the previous section, most of management tool literature rather focuses on their adoption, use and evaluation. This section presents the work of some authors attempting to fill in this gap.

1.3.1 The Actor Network Theory

The Actor Network Theory and its sociology of translation are frequently solicited to provide a better understanding of the elements to be taken into account when building a management tool. Dreveton (2011) and Oiry (2012) are two of the many authors endorsing the idea that management tool design could be seen as a chain of translations.

As Pipan and Czarniawska (2010) report from Latour and Callon, a translation process takes place when "a new idea arrives at a place where it was not known before" (p. 243). In such a process, a translator, which could be a person or a machine, transforms a thing to translate, which could be a person, object, idea or picture. This transformation corresponds to the translator developing his/her own definition or explanation of the thing, which in turn transforms the translator him/herself as well. The Actor Network Theory suggests that a successful translation may enable "the translators, ideas, actions and objects" (p. 243) to deeply connect into a network and form a unique entity called an actor-network. More specifically, such an actor-network takes form when translations succeed in stabilizing enough despite being "subjected to constant negotiation, compromise, revolution and subversion" (p. 244). Accordingly, at the core of the sociology of translation lies the idea that through the translation process, the different actors "will progressively converge and cooperate in a network around a common project" (Durand et al., 2018, p. 6). Durand et al. (2018) report that such a process considered to be leading to the successful introduction of innovations, may be articulated in five steps. Such steps are synthetized in Figure 10, translated and adapted from Durand et al.'s (2018) publication.

Steps of the Model	Description
1) Contextualisation	Identification of internal and external contextual elements that are likely to influence the process.
2) Problematization	Formulation of a common objective, creating sense and highlighting the common denominator among actors' interests. Objective to create a "crossing point": each entity moves from a singular position to cooperation.
3) Interest Development	Sum of the project's promoters' (translators) efforts to interest an increasing number of allies and lead them to actively participating to the creation of the innovation. The promoters lean on specific tools and actions allowing to conduct the translation in practice.
4) Enrolment	Mobilization of the network's actors: the interest for the process is translated into action. The actors are assigned a role in the process and accept to play it; they become spokespersons, take part in the development of the innovation and enrol new allies as well.
5) Network Extensions	Logic conducting the project from the centre (initial micro-network) to the periphery (new network partners).

Figure 10: Sociology of Translation Steps adapted from Durand et al. (2018)

Dreveton (2011) confirms that the abovementioned steps can be identified in the process of management tool building, interlinked by successive translations of each actor. According to his work, the step of problematization during a management tool building consists in proposing three elements to the organization's actors: (1) a representation of the problem faced by the organization; (2) the proposed tool to solve it; (3) the role of each of the actors in the design of such tool. Then, to successfully interest the key actors of the tool's design, it is imperative that they develop their own interesting translation of the tool encompassing: (1) their own translation of the tool's purpose; (2) the role they intend to play in the tool design process; (3) the role they attribute to the other actors of the tool's design process. These translations, naturally in contrast with the initial proposition, concur to transform the tool's objectives and the actors' roles. Once the key actors' interest is ensured, a chain of translations develops as they enrol further actors in the design of the management tool. As Oiry (2012) explains, according to this view, every time "each translation encompasses three complementary elements: (1) the objective attributed to the tool by the actor; (2) the role the actor attributes to himself/herself in the management tool building process; (3) the role the actor attributes to the other designers" (p. 19). Lastly, all the allies are

mobilized though the appointment of spokespersons allowing the coordination of all the actors to become effective (Dreveton, 2011).

1.3.2 Prescriptive Relationships

Building on the application of the Actor Network Theory to management tool building, Oiry (2012) suggests adding to the discussion the concept of prescriptive relationships to take into account power relations among translators. As a matter of fact, Oiry (2012) argues that in a sociology of translation perspective all actors seemed to be equal while noticing some translations appear to have more impact than others in practice. In fact, some end up being incorporated in the management tool while others are completely rejected. Prescriptive relationships theory developed by Hatchuel in the late 90s is called upon by Oiry (2012) to explain that.

In this context, the concept of prescription is to be interpreted on the basis of the following definition: "a recommendation that is authoritatively put forward" (Lexico, 2020, Definition of Prescription). As Oiry (2012) reports, Hatchuel suggests that a relationship is to be qualified as prescriptive due to the presence of two main elements. First of all, "B's activity must be at least partially prescribed by A" (p. 20), meaning that B's activity would be subject to A's authority. Secondly, B needs to accept to conform to such a prescription and consider it as foundation of its relationship to A or a third party, C. A prescriptive relationship is therefore an unequal relationship between two parties, one of which exercises a prescriptive power over the other. The specificity of such a relationship lies in B, subject to the prescription, developing specific knowledge on it. Accordingly, B would be able to learn from the relationship and eventually identify the situations in which the prescription would be efficient and those in which it would not, and even recognize how to improve the prescription's functioning. Due to B's developed deeper knowledge compared to A's, the prescriptive relationship is reversed and systematically faces a crisis. Oiry (2012) cites Hatchuel suggesting two approaches for overcoming this crisis. On the one hand, A may refuse to recognize the legitimacy of B's knowledge and to apply it to the relationship. In this case, A reaffirms its superiority by the prescriptive relationship ceases to work since B would not conform to it anymore. On the other hand, A may recognize the validity of B's Knowledge and apply it to transform the relationship. The degree of the relationship's inequality in terms of power and resources appears to be determinant so as to the choice of reacting in a way or another.

Similarly, when considering management tool building under a sociology of translation perspective, Oiry (2012) noticed that a prescriptive relationship develops as A suggests, or even imposes, to B a certain tool translation, including (1) the tool's

objective, (2) A's role to play and (3) the role the other parties are to play. By comparing this suggested translation with his/her own tool translation, namely (1) the objectives that are important for him/her, (2) the role he/she plays, and (3) the role the other parties play according to him/her, B develops specific knowledge. As explained above, such specific knowledge concerns the situations in which the translation is potentially efficient and those in which it is not, in addition to the transformations that would improve the translation's and tool's efficiency. Therefore, the prescriptive relation encounters a crisis that may be resolved by A by either discarding or integrating B's knowledge and translation into the management tool. Nonetheless, Oiry's (2012) results suggest that refusing to recognize B's knowledge engenders a risk for the tool of not being used.

1.3.3 Industrial Tools Building

The results of Canet's (2013) case study suggest that management tool building could be inspired by the work presented by Le Masson & Weil (2008). The two authors consider that the design of a tool may be described according to a conceptual model and a generative one. The former is to be intended as model defining the different variables that will interact, both at a performance and design level, the links between them, and the mechanisms leading to the expected results. The generative model provides instead with a structured and concrete approach to the conception of the tool by organizing the process into distinct elements and steps. Based on Le Masson & Weil (2008) work, it appears that the four design approaches differ on three distinct axes: (1) who the designers are, (2) what do they design, and (3) the performance linked to the design.

A first approach to tool building is qualified by Le Masson & Weil (2008) as wild because of the lack of any methodology and structure. A trial and error dynamic allow innovators to design their tool through continuous and progressive learning. Opposed to wild design, the second approach identified by Le Masson & Weil (2008) is instead structured in two phases. The first phase includes the definition of design recipes by a first actor or set of actors, while the second phase sees one or a set of experts implementing the designed steps. Therefore, a conceptual and generative model can be clearly identified as well as two types of designers: the first providing specific and rare knowledge and skills, the second providing mostly technical expertise. Such an approach appears to allow the creation of a family of various tools determined by the recipe (Canet, 2013). Building on the second approach, a third design approach defined as systematically regulated aims for flexibility and structure at the same time to provide a set of processes and solutions that could be reused in the future. In order to so, very detailed specifications concerning the needs, objectives, principles, limits, dynamics and

relations on which the design process should be based are identified by the first set of designers. As long as these elements are taken into account, the experts are then free to apply one of the existing conceptual models or to create an alternative when designing a variety of tools. Nonetheless, the systematically regulated approach is criticized for impeding innovation and not resisting to unexpected change (Canet, 2013). To cope with such issues, Le Masson & Weil (2008) elaborated a fourth approach for innovative design combining the benefits of the previous ones. While the authors maintain the two-phase structure of the regulated approach, the design is built around a core concept. This way, the identity of the tool that will be created gradually emerges as the concept itself is developed, allowing for more creativity and innovation and less rigidity.

By looking at management tool building through industrial lenses, Canet (2013) shows how, initially, the need for a tool responding to a certain situation or problem incurred could lead to a wild design process. Therefore, in this first stage the design of a tool starts without a clear idea of its final identity by mobilizing existing knowledge and solutions. On this basis, the tool's designers constantly develop it up to its first implementation. Then, a successful implementation may cause to switch from a problem-solving logic to one of diffusion. By providing more structure and detailing the conceptual and generative models of a management tool for its diffusion, the designers appear to move towards Le Masson & Weil's second approach. Accordingly, two distinct set of actors may be now identified, and a certain degree of adaptability could lead to a family of various tools. As the management tool starts being shared and applied by different actors, Canet (2013) remarks a return to wild design as the tool is defined and adapted to the specificities of each context during its implementation.

1.3.4 Participatory Design

In line with the idea that several actors interact in the design of a tool stands a so-called participatory approach, which is adopted when actively involving actors from the field in a co-design effort. Although not specific to management tool literature, we believe mentioning such an approach to be relevant for our research objectives.

In de Vaujany's and Grimand's (2006) logic of tool adoption, different actors inevitably come to interact with a tool as it is implemented. Therefore, such actors find themselves involved after a first design effort and without being actively called upon. Instead, participatory design implies mobilizing different actors in an active and voluntary way seeking "to combine the views, input and skills of people with many different perspectives to address a specific problem" (Bradwell & Marr, 2008, p. 17). Indeed, participatory design is a term describing a democratic process for design

involving all the stakeholders, especially users, around "the simple standpoint that those affected by a design should have a say in the design process" (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012, p. 103). The co-design process may then present different degrees of democratization. While in some cases stakeholders' involvement is limited to the provision of a certain input, in other cases they would come to share full responsibility of the final outcome (Hartson & Pyla, 2018). Therefore, participatory design develops in a logic of team effort, collaboration and dialog (Trischler et al., 2018). Nonetheless, the original designers and the field designers remain two distinct group, the role of the latter being limited to the mandate given by the former. (Detchessahar & Journé, 2007). As a participatory approach may applied for the creation of any product, interface, system or space (Trischler et al., 2018), we consider the possibility that management tools may be co-designed as well.

2. The Case of D'Ieteren Auto

2.1 D'Ieteren Auto

D'Ieteren is a Belgian group founded in 1805 by the D'Ieteren family, who owns today around 58% of the group's shares, with the remaining shares being quoted on Euronext Brussels. The D'Ieteren Group has four main activities: D'Ieteren Auto, Belron, Moleskine and D'Ieteren Immo (SA D'Ieteren NV, 2018). Taking into consideration the purpose and scope of this thesis, an exclusive focus on the first activity is relevant.

D'Ieteren Auto (DIA) remains in fact the core activity of the group, which positions itself as the first car distributor in Belgium, with a market share of approximately 21%. Through this activity, the company generates a 3.4 billion Euros turnover with the support of around 1.700 employees. The distribution of imported vehicles from different brands being the main activity of D'Ieteren Auto, the company also offers after-sales services through owned concessionaries. At the same time, D'Ieteren Auto is also showing a willingness to extend its scope to new mobility solutions materialized through the creation of its subsidiary: The Lab Box (SA D'Ieteren NV, 2018).

An important mind-shift indeed occurred around 2019, which led to a whole new strategy, mission, vision and values for D'Ieteren Auto. As reported by the company's intranet, the new vision to 2025 completely shifted the focus from cars to "enhance their citizens' social lives through a fluid, accessible and sustainable mobility" (D'Ieteren Auto, 2020, Vision). In addition to this essential shift, 2019 also saw D'Ieteren Auto deciding that one of its priorities would be to naturally become an employer of choice.

It is at this historic turning point for D'Ieteren Auto, that attention to employer branding started to be brought with the creation of an Employer Branding Manager position within the Human Resources department. It is with the person filling this position, Chérine Stakenborghs, that we had the chance to work from February to May 2020. Therefore, as previously explained, the information provided in this and the following section were collected by observation and interviews in this context.

Being the first time that a person had been specifically responsible of D'Ieteren Auto's employer branding, a complete employer branding strategy was designed, the creation of an adapted EVP being one crucial initial step of it. In order to design this strategy, research about existing approaches to employer branding was conducted, including material in English, French and Flemish from both academic and field sources. The following section presents the employer branding framework and timelines, foundations of the employer branding strategy.

In addition to general research on the subject, the frameworks suggested by several consulting and employer branding companies were screened before selecting one that would support the approach at D'Ieteren Auto, presented in Figure 11.
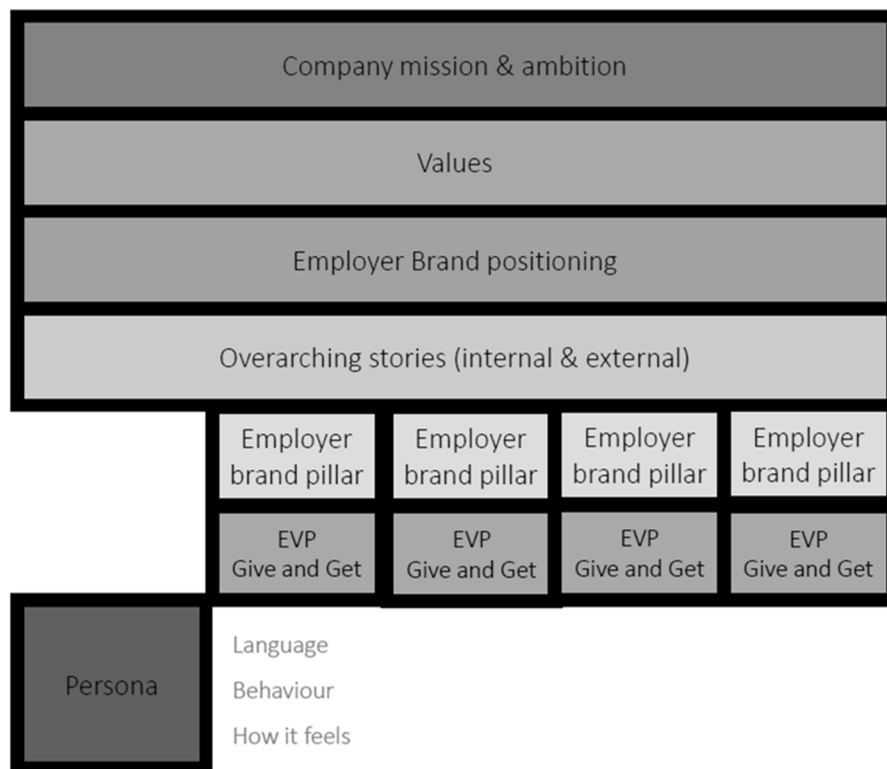

Figure 11: Employer Branding Framework from Ph. Creative (2020)

First of all, based on the framework, having a clear idea of the reason why a company exists is essential to start building the employer branding strategy (Ph.Creative, 2020). This corresponds to the company's true mission and ambition. In the case of D'Ieteren Auto, the mission is to "improve the social life of our citizens with fluid, comfortable, accessible mobility solutions" (D'Ieteren Auto, 2020, Mission). Since it was just reformulated in 2019, it is certain that such a statement reflects the true purpose of the organization.

Secondly, once the purpose is clearly defined, the values on which a company is built are another key element to be considered (Ph.Creative, 2020). As from 2019, D'Ieteren Auto has also worked on 5 key values expressing what the company believes in: enthusiasm, honour, curious boldness, support and perseverance. Each value was explicitly explained with a general description of its meaning in the D'Ieteren Auto context. Furthermore, a list of sentences explaining how a person would act by respecting or not the specific value was created to ensure clarity, understanding and cohesion both at an internal and external level.

Considering the recent activities at D'Ieteren Auto, the first two blocks of the selected employer branding framework were clearly and rapidly identified while the third block appeared to be much more complex and time-consuming. As a matter of fact, the crucial step of defining the employer brand positioning, requires understanding who D'Ieteren Auto wants to be as an employer (Ph.Creative, 2020). This demands to take into consideration the whole employer brand experience, including recruitment, onboarding, retention and offboarding, increasing the level of complexity. Therefore, in order to tackle this block, D'Ieteren Auto's top management needed to be involved. To do so, on the one hand, two top management's members were involved in the very first stages of the employer branding strategy through the dedicated Steering Committee (see p. 46). On the other hand, meetings with the entire executive committee were planned at each of the identified key milestones for employer brand, the first of which was the Employer Value Proposition. Adding to the complexity of this third block, a rebranding of the company in terms of marketing is ongoing, making coordination necessary to ensure coherence and consistency.

Strictly interlinked with the employer brand positioning are the internal and external key employer brand stories which are based on the employer brand pillars (Ph-Creative, 2020). By employer brand pillars, the authors of the framework mean the values and behaviours supporting the positioning. The expression of such employer brand pillars are the company's EVPs. Therefore, according to this view, defining the EVP means defining the key external and internal stories for attraction and retention. The adopted approach for EVP definition is detailed in the next chapter (see p. 46).

A last building block of the employer branding framework selected for D'Ieteren Auto is represented by key personas. A set of specific personas characterized by certain demographic, psychographics and geographic elements and behaviours are indeed to be defined as the concrete target audience of the employer branding strategy (Ph.Creative, 2020). The employer brand and EVP, and later their internal and external marketing, are to be adapted to such key personas to be successful. At D'Ieteren Auto, the process of persona definition was undertaken with the help of an external partner during a series of workshops.

Based on D'Ieteren Auto's employer brand positioning built around the EVP and personas as explained above, a multichannel approach is planned to be developed to communicate and activate the employer branding strategy internally and externally. Four key areas were identified by the employer branding manager throughout her activity as such: a candidate experience design from awareness to ex-employee, careers website development as a marketing tool, a talent attraction approach based on reactive search and proactive talent community building, and an employee experience built and leading to engagement and satisfaction. This last aspect is mentioned in order to provide a general picture of the employer branding strategy as a whole but will not be developed in this thesis.

Based on the employer branding framework in Figure 11, the employer branding manager developed a five-year timeline including the creation, development and implementation of the entire employer branding strategy (see Figure 12).
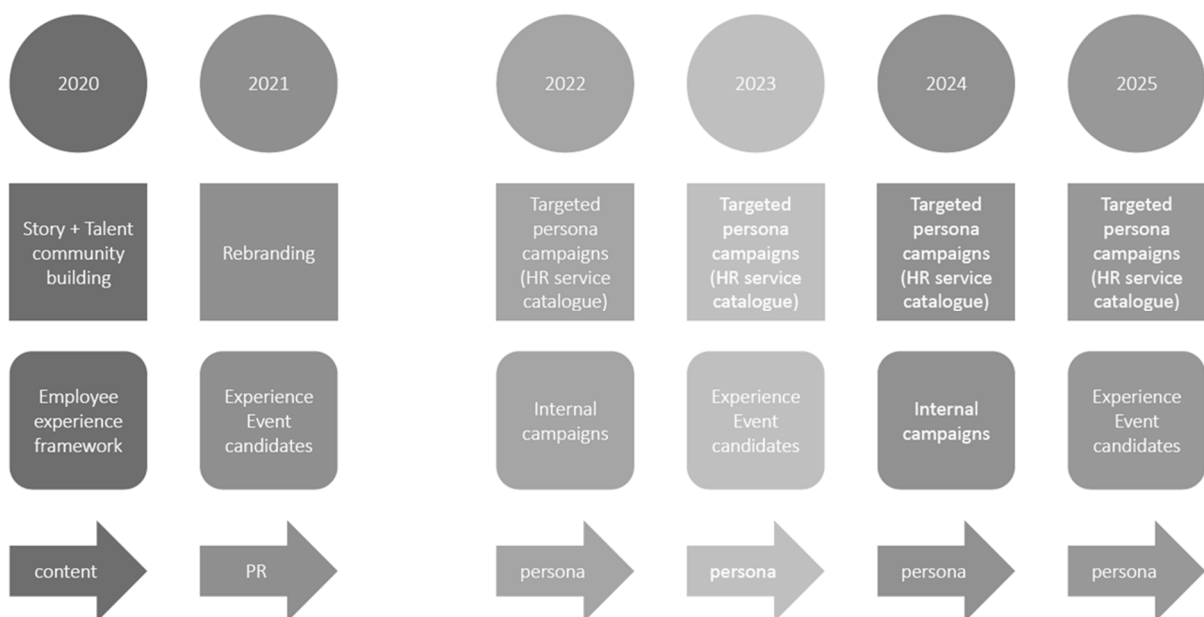

Figure 12: Employer Branding Timeline by Stakenborghs (2019)

2.3 D'Ieteren Auto's EVP Framework

In this section, the reader will find the approach to EVP creation by D'Ieteren Auto's employer branding manager. Throughout the following pages, it will clearly appear that the entire approach is built around the notion of relevance. In this context, relevance refers to the fit between the company and the person it wants to attract or retain. This encompasses numerous elements including, but not limited to, both parties' purpose, interests, experience, communication, timing, strategy, … Figure 13 aims at visually explaining this idea by stressing the role of an Employer Value Proposition as carrier of relevance between a company and its current or potential employees.
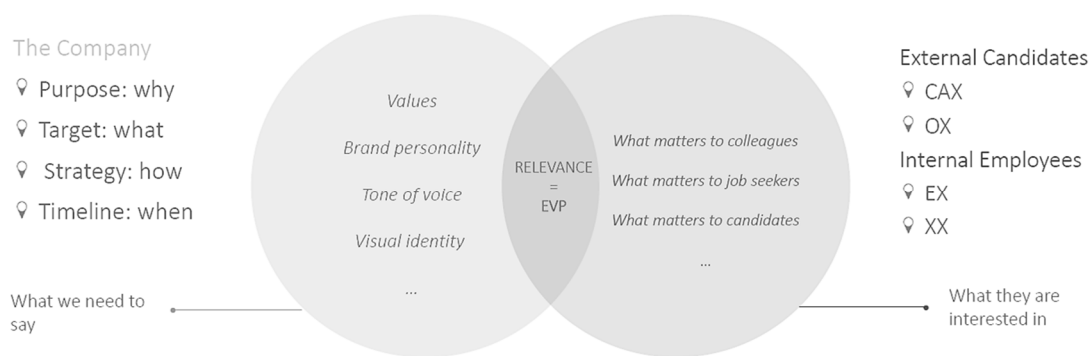
Figure 13: Need for Relevance by Stakenborghs & Gianni (2020)

2.3.1 Preparation Phase

Considering the framework and timeline developed for the employer branding strategy at D'Ieteren Auto, as well as the employer branding manager's objectives and available resources, a first action plan for 2020 was created with regards to the employer brand positioning (see Figure 14).

The first part of the plan was defined as a preparation phase in which a Steering Committee was created with a view to support the strategy by providing guidance and advice and ensuring the consistency with the rest of the company's strategies. The Steering Committee created by the employer branding manager included the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Chief Customer Experience, Marketing and Digital Officer, the Compensation and Benefits Manager, the IT Demand and Governance Manager and the Learning & Development Specialist of D'Ieteren Auto. As it will be explained later on, meetings with this Steering Committee were scheduled at specific moments to regularly exchange on the subject.
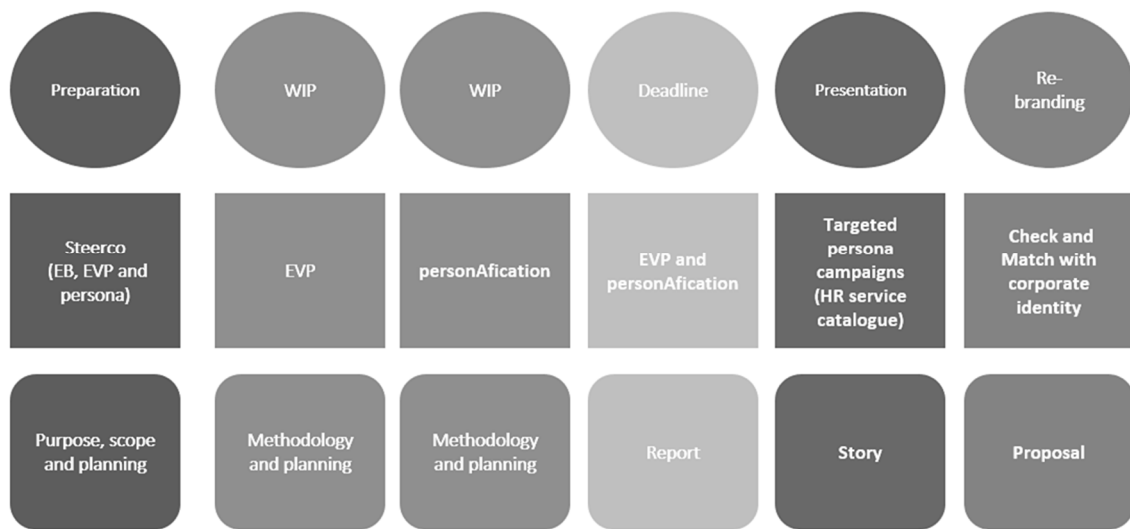
Figure 14: Employer Branding Timeline 2020 by Stakenborghs (2019)

Furthermore, the preparation phase involved the definition of the purpose, scope and approach to adopt, as well as planning the different steps for both EVP and persona building. Nonetheless, persona building being outside of the specific scope of this thesis, the approach presented in the following pages will concern EVP building exclusively. The purpose was clearly identified as the creation of an EVP proposal for D'Ieteren Auto, including all its activities.

Based on research conducted among several employer branding and human resources practitioners, some specific steps by Wislow (2019) were selected for EVP building at D'Ieteren Auto, which will be detailed in the following pages.

2.3.2 Building the EVP

The first step consists in assessing and understanding what the company offers, which could be achieved by conducting an objective assessment of what the company is and what isn't (Wislow, 2019). At D'Ieteren Auto, this step was translated into data collection around the different components of the EVP identified on the basis of prior research (see p. 48). For this data collection process, several colleagues from the competent departments were interviewed aiming at gathering objective information about D'Ieteren Auto's practices, policies and offerings. In addition to that, sectoral benchmarks for comparison were also researched when possible. This information, combined with personal knowledge of the employer branding manager and that of close colleagues, provided a first idea of the existing EVP at D'Ieteren Auto.

Following this first assessment, Wislow (2019) identifies a second step: research and interview existing, prospective and past employees. At this stage, subjectivity is expected to take over since people's opinions are the key data to be collected. As a matter of fact, opposed to the objective assessment mentioned above, personal views of those directly involved are considered to be key in depicting a more realistic and reliable picture of an organization.

A third step of EVP building may include the definition of the EVP components (Wislows, 2019). At D'Ieteren Auto, this stage was expected to be fuelled by the data collected during the first two steps and, at the same time, the parallel development of key personas. On the one hand, the collected data was key to establish the existing EVP of the company, its strengths and weaknesses. Based on this assessment and the developed personas, a new relevant EVP would have been developed, in line with the wished employer brand positioning of D'Ieteren Auto. Therefore, the importance of collecting complete and specific information during the first two steps emerged, leading to the creation of a methodology.

To build the methodology, different categories of EVP components were to be clearly identified to serve as a backbone of the data collection process. Based on prior research, five recurrent EVP components emerged and were retained for D'Ieteren Auto as well. Wislow (2019) provides some explanations that were taken as the basis for interpretation of each component at D'Ieteren Auto:

(1) Financial rewards include all financial offerings, such as salary and bonuses, addressing an "employee's expectations from the evaluation and compensation system";
(2) Employment benefits are instead to be considered as additional non-financial benefits, such as retirement benefits or health insurance, associated to the job;
(3) Work environment component includes "factors that constitute a positive work environment", such as work-life balance, flexible hours, recognition or team building;
(4) Career development component encompasses the growth potential and career development opportunities linked with a job, such as trainings, promotions and mentoring;
(5) Company culture component relates to the company's values and factors such as trust, collaboration, communication and positive relationships.

Based on the clear definition of the EVP components, the data collected at step one was reviewed and completed. At the same time, a more detailed methodology was developed in the context of step two. The methodology's scope was defined around all current D'Ieteren Auto's employees as well as past employees of the company.

Prospective employees were not included due to the limited time and resources. Based on the defined scope, the data collection tools that were selected included workshops and surveys. Despite many approaches suggested by prior research mentioning surveys as the preferred tool for data collection at this stage, workshops were selected to capture more personal and emotional responses of current employees of D'Ieteren Auto. This last choice represents a distinctive feature of the approach, wanting to be centred around a specific human and emotional input providing more solid basis for EVP relevancy.

In order for the workshops to be feasible, a representative sample of D'Ieteren Auto's population was selected on several criteria. Firstly, three different groups were identified based on employees' seniority at D'Ieteren Auto, building on the assumption that the three categories could not meaningfully be compared with each other. Group 1 included recently onboarded employees, working at D'Ieteren Auto for less than 3 years; group 2 included employees with 3 to 10 years in the company; group 3 included employees staying in the organization for more than 10 years. To define the number of participants for each group, the real proportions of the entire population were taken into account. Secondly, representation of each existing role in each group was ensured in order to equally include every level of the organization except for top management, being included following different modalities. Based on these first two criteria, random participant selection to avoid bias was conducted while also ensuring balance in terms gender, function, activity, location, onboarding year and performance. Once selected, the potential participants were invited to take part in the workshops on a voluntary basis. During this stage of groups definition, a few interesting points emerged. Above all, low response and acceptance rates were generally observed, with higher and quicker responses and acceptance rate for group 2 compared to the others, potentially indicating differences in attitude and implication between the three groups.

The content of the workshops was created with aiming to gain insight on people's perceptions and feelings. For this purpose, empathy mapping was selected among other practices as well as brainstorming interactive exercises. Such exercises were built to obtain employees' perspectives on their environment and organization. Furthermore, the workshops were designed to be the starting point for an ambassadors' community of volunteers. With the support of an external provider, a platform for content sharing was set-up with the purpose of building a community of engaged employees acting as D'Ieteren Auto's ambassadors on internal and external media. As mentioned, the D'Ieteren ambassadors were to play a crucial role in the EVP communication and marketing .

At the same time, a survey for the same workshops groups members was created to collect people's opinions around the five EVP components. The survey includes a first

question asking to describe in one word the reason why the respondent chose to join, in the case of group 1, or chose to stay at D'Ieteren Auto, in the case of group 2 and 3. Although this type of answer could be hard to transform in usable data, it was included with the hope to gain additional insight on key aspects to explore. The rest of the questions, classified by EVP component, aimed at obtaining both rational and emotional responses. Moreover, a survey was the selected tool to reach past employees as well. Nonetheless, the tool was not developed yet at the time this thesis was being written. This was due to the fact that unexpected circumstances (see p. 4 and p. 30) impeded the implementation of the planned approach. The following section briefly presents the planned steps that would have followed in "normal" circumstances and are expected to take place in the future.

2.3.3 Writing the EVP Statement

Following the first steps mainly aiming at clearly defining the company's current offering and EVP, Wislow (2019) identifies the fourth step as writing a strong EVP statement. At this stage, employer branding practitioners find themselves having to create a "clear, unique, and inspirational" EVP aligning the employees' and company's expectations while remaining realistic. The Steering Committee created at D'Ieteren Auto was expected to play an important role in evaluating and/or even suggesting a series of relevant EVP statement propositions elaborated by the employer branding team, ultimately leading to one or a few propositions to be presented to the executive committee.

2.3.4 Communicating & Marketing the EVP

Once the EVP is built, internal and external communication and marketing play a key role in successfully attracting and retaining talent (Wislow, 2019). As a result, the importance of leveraging the entirety of communication channels at a company's disposal for the targeted persona campaigns is highlighted by Figure 15
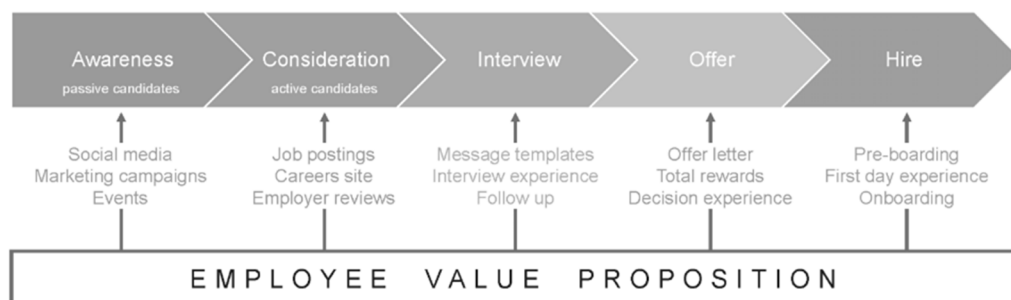

Figure 15: EVP Communication Channels by Sack (2020)

Moreover, Wislow (2019) points out that employee advocacy and employer brand ambassadors are very effective in marketing an EVP. As a result, D'Ieteren Auto's employer branding strategy forecasted the integration of the EVP in each of the existing internal and external communication channels used by the company. Nonetheless, the planned approach aimed at building a community of employer brand ambassadors that would have been at the core of EVP communication and marketing. Consequently, an external partner was selected as a support for the development of the brand ambassador's community.

2.3.5 Reviewing Results

Lastly, Wislow (2019) reminds us that results are to be periodically reviewed. Concerning the EVP developed through the first five steps, specific metrics could be selected to measure its impact on talent attraction and retention, such as engagement on social medias, increase applications or falling attrition. Eight metrics were taken into consideration to evaluate the impact of D'Ieteren Auto's EVP, including: the number of new candidates; the turnover rate; brand awareness; the Net Promoter Score; the employee referral rate; employer review rankings; social media engagement. Three key metrics were then to be selected after evaluation. For the purpose of this thesis, measuring employee engagement would have been crucial to have an indication, or not, of a link between the developed EVP framework and employee engagement in the case of D'Ieteren Auto. At the same time, reviewing the content of the EVP is equally crucial to ensure its relevance for the ever-changing people's and environment's expectations. Consequently, a yearly EVP review was planned for D'Ieteren Auto through reiteration of the data collection process about people's perceptions and expectations.

2.3.6 EVP Framework

Despite the impossibility to witness the implementation and results of D'Ieteren Auto's EVP framework, its first design was already completed in April 2020.

To sum up, employer branding research among both theoretical and practical sources, combined with personal knowledge and experience of the employer branding manager, provided the basis for the employer branding strategy at D'Ieteren Auto. As detailed at p. 43, the employer branding framework by Ph.Creative (2020) emerging from such a research was indeed selected as a general foundation for the company's strategy. The approach to EVP building was then developed within a specific area of this framework through subsequent steps. Following a preparation phase for planning and definition, Wislow's (2019) six-steps for EVP building were retained as a framework for

D'Ieteren Auto, each of the step being nonetheless developed to suit the company's specificities and employer branding objectives and resources.

Figure 16 aims at providing a simplified graphic representation of this approach combining existing tools with specific knowledge from the employer branding manager and D'Ieteren Auto. Nevertheless, the framework designed up until April 2020 is not to be considered as static. Some aspects may be adapted due to new or changing variables prior or during the approach' implementation, especially considering the current evolving context (see p. 4).
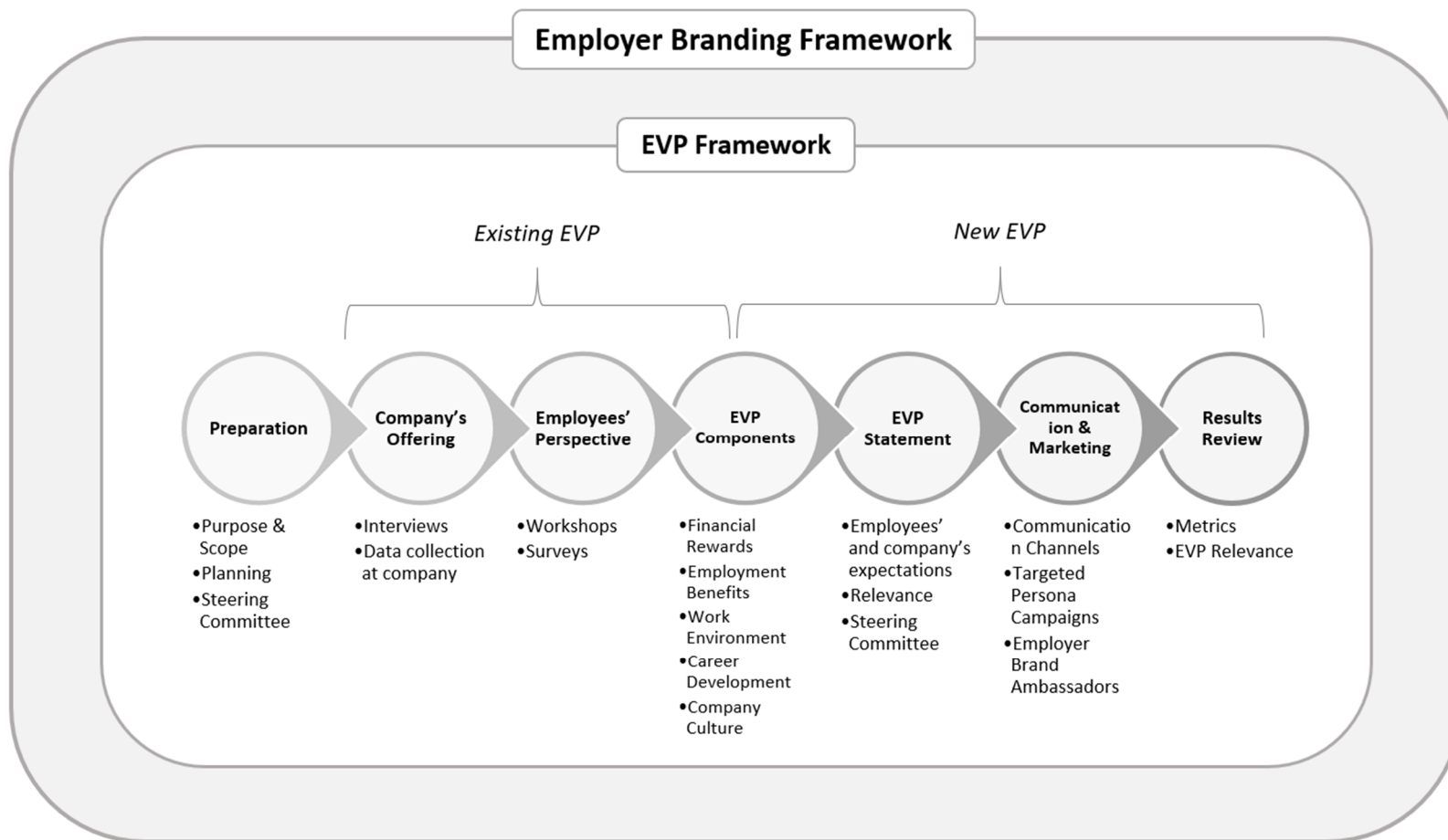
Figure 16: EVP Framework at D'Ieteren Auto

PART V - DISCUSSION

1. Building a Management Tool

In one of the previous chapters, literature concerning management tools was explored with a view to identifying different approaches to their creation. As Oiry (2012) underlined, management tools in general, and their design in particular, have not been fully explored in literature yet. Nonetheless, valuable insight can be found in the existing publications referred to in the dedicated chapter (see p. 31).

First of all, we dispose now of a clearer definition of management tool as "set of reasonings and knowledge formally linking a certain number of organizational variables" (Moisdon as cited by Gomez, 2015, p. 30) and contributing to management activities. Secondly, such tools may be considered as encompassing three key elements suggested by Hatchuel & Weil: a set of formal foundations promoting a management philosophy combined with a simplified vision of organizational relations (de Vaujany, 2006; Detchessahar & Journé, 2007; Gomez, 2015). Drawing on this idea of management tools describing reality, Martineau (2015) adds a reflection about the perceived objectivity and trustworthiness of management tools, to be taken into account especially for "qualitative, dynamic and processual" (p. 52) tools. Thirdly, the existing literature provides us with a consideration of different management tools' purposes. General agreement exists around the tools' objective to represent and structure reality and contribute to management and organizational process. In addition to that, the purpose of a management tool may include enabling to reach defined optima, deepening understanding of organizations, driving change (Gomez, 2015), acting as mediators between managers and organizations (Martineau, 2015), supporting the building of shared representations (Paraponaris & Simoni, 2006) and supporting collective action (Riot, 2014). Finally, Martineau's (2017) work provides us with the distinction between open and closed management tools, entailing different forms and substance and, therefore, different approaches.

In the process of attempting to understand how management tools, characterized by the elements reported in the previous paragraph, may be built, the existence of two management tool views arose. Considering the two visions was essential for us as they lead to two completely different perspectives on a tool's design. Indeed, a first instrumental view sees management tools as replicating reality so efficiently that they are able to autonomously produce efficient actions and decisions.

Accordingly, a management tool would be completely designed for this purpose and then simply implemented to produce the envisioned results.

As some authors started questioning this first perspective, a second view of management tools as integrated and dependent to the behaviour of the actors of the organization developed. As a consequence of this point of view, designing the tool would not be just a process before implementation, but a permanent process based on continuous learning and lasting indefinitely. Based on this idea, de Vaujany and Grimand (2005) suggest two possibilities. On the one hand, a management tool's design and use could be considered and "consubstantial" and undistinguishable. On the other hand, design could be regarded to as an iterative process in which the tool evolves and transforms as it is adopted by different actors. If we consider that different actors participate in the creation of the tool, we may talk about a process of co-design in which said actors play both a designer and user role (Pascal & Thomas, 2005). Moreover, research showed a last participatory approach as a possibility in which designers would actively involve some field actors, not necessarily users, in the creation of a management tool without each of the roles being confounded (Detchessahar & Journée, 2007). Ultimately, it is in the context of de Vaujany's and Grimand's (2005) view of design as a process during the whole tool's lifetime that a few authors questioned themselves so as to how to approach management tools building. According to the examined literature, two distinct approaches have been suggested.

On the one hand, a few authors including Dreveton (2011) and Oiry (2012) considered management tool design through the Actor Network theory and the sociology of translation. In this view, a management tool is designed with certain objectives and relationships to respond to a problem in the organization after a first phase of contextualisation. Then, the designers involve a set of key actors in the building process, who will develop their own translation of the tool's objectives and the linked roles and relationships. Successfully translating the tool will ensure their interest, which will enable their enrolment: the now allies will be assigned a role in the process, accept to play it, and enrol new allies in turn. This way, the management tool building process transforms in a chain of translations that continuously transform the tool itself. Oiry (2012) completes the discussion by suggesting that actors are part of prescriptive relationships aiming at taking into account power relationships. Accordingly, not all translations are treated the same as some are incorporated in the management tool while others are rejected.

Furthermore, a second approach to management tool building was instead suggested by Canet (2013), who mobilizes industrial tool building literature. Based on Le Masson's & Weil's (2008) works, tools may be designed through four approaches. A wild design process appears to be the starting point in most cases, involving weak structure

and methodology, no clear idea on the ultimate identity of the tool, mostly driven by a continuous learning through trial and error. Then, the approach is likely to evolve into a more structured one after its first implementation. At this stage, the designers create some design recipes or steps to be implemented by a second set of actors, allowing replication of the design process. A systematically regulated approach may then develop to refine it for diffusion. Specifications become more detailed as a result, which generated some criticism so as to the limited innovation and adaptation allowed. Therefore, a fourth innovative design combining structure and flexibility as it is built around a gradually evolving core concept developed.

In addition to these two approaches to management tool building, it is relevant to mention the possibility of co-designing the tool by actively involving field actors. Such participatory approach would take into account de Vaujany's and Grimand's (2006) considerations with regards to tool adoption and the interaction of several actors in a management tool's design. More importantly, a participatory approach does not exclude but may combined with one of the previously mentioned approaches.

At the same time, the D'Ieteren Auto case provided us with an opportunity to observe a more practical approach to management tool building. As previously described (see p. 43), the EVP framework design process started with research around the subject based on defined objectives, resources and a work of contextualisation with the employer branding strategy. Then, the research' findings were combined with the personal contribution of the designer, the employer branding manager in this case, in terms of knowledge, experience and reinterpretation. This provided the basis for the creation of a first framework through the selection of existing elements adapted, translated and combined with new ones.

Subsequently, the defined framework started evolving as its implementation began to take into account new insights arising from new research, other actors' contributions or personal reflexion. Indeed, the participant observation of the preparation phase and the beginning of the company's offering assessment already allowed to gain some interesting insight. In fact, as the first preparation phase took place, supposedly after the design of the EVP framework was completed, it was already possible to observe certain evolutions. The more relevant example of such a dynamic process can be found in the first meeting with the Steering Committee created by the employer branding manager to support the employer branding strategy. As the defined EVP approach was presented and discussed with the members of the Steering Committee, the approach itself was refined. Therefore, it appears reasonable to assume that, had we assisted to the complete implementation of the framework, we would have witnessed further evolution in the process. Such a dynamic, reconducts us in some way

to the idea of management tool design as strictly interrelated to the implementation of the tool.

As previously mentioned, building on the idea that designing a management tool is not to be considered as a definite and specific phase, de Vaujany and Grimand (2005) argue that a management tool is transformed as it is adopted by different actors. Since the D'Ieteren Auto's EVP framework has not been implemented yet, it would not be relevant to consider it in terms of tool-adoption. Nonetheless, we may conduct a rapid analysis with regards to two existing tools that were used in the construction the framework: the employer branding framework by Ph.Creative (2020) and the six-steps for EVP building by Wislow (2019). During the development of the approach, these two management tools were naturally combined with the employer branding manager's personal contribution and interpretation, in addition to be adapted to D'Ieteren Auto's specific context. Regarding the employer branding framework, the different blocks corresponded with the idea proposed by Ph.Creative (2020), while the interpretation and definition of each of them already resulted from a blend of the proposed definitions from the tool's designers, the personal interpretation of the employer branding manager and the input based on research and experience. In addition to that, the relations between each block and the definition of what they entail strategically and operationally were also the product of personal and research contribution, transforming in practice the way the designers envisioned the framework. In this sense, the employer branding framework evolved with its adoption at D'Ieteren Auto, in line with de Vaujany's (2006) adoption theory. In the same way, the six-steps for EVP building that were designed by Wislow (2019) were subject to this process of adoption. Accordingly, each of the steps' definition and implementation were reinterpreted and adapted to the new context. Based on these two concrete examples of how a management tool is likely to be transformed as it is adopted by new actors, viewing design as a distinct phase in itself appears less and less relevant. As a result, we may conclude that the adoption of a tool by different actors leads to its evolution, and therefore, the evolution of its design.

As we are considering that different actors intervene in the construction of a management tool, it appears relevant to interrogate ourselves about the role of each of them. As already mentioned, (see p. 34), adopting an instrumental position allows the clear distinction between designers and the rest of the actors. Instead, in the cases envisaged by de Vaujany and Grimand (2005), in which design and use both concur to the creation of the management tool, it is not possible to set apart the designer's and user's role (Pascal & Thomas, 2005). Nonetheless, a third scenario envisages different actors participating to management tool building while remaining clearly distinct from one another: a participatory approach (Detchessahar & Journé, 2007). Examining the D'Ieteren Auto case under this perspective, we could consider that involving the Compensation and Benefits Manager, the IT Demand and Governance Manager and the

Learning & Development Specialist in the Steering Committee may be sign of a participatory approach being adopted. Yet, again, further considerations may arise in the future as the implementation of the EVP framework will take place.

In the meantime, we may look at the approach for the creation of D'Ieteren Auto's EVP framework through different lenses. Indeed, if we consider Canet's (2013) suggestion to consider industrial tool building as a valid basis for management tools as well, we may conclude that a wild design process was employed. Without knowing the final identity of the management tool, the research around EVP building, and more broadly employer branding, was conducted as the foundation of the approach. Then, existing knowledge and solutions were mobilized and combined with the personal contribution of the employer branding manager to result in the EVP framework. Finally, through the observation of the approach, continuous and progressive learning stood out as key in the process. Once again, without experiencing the implementation of the tool, it was not possible to assess whether the design would have evolved as Le Masson & Weil (2008) suggest, constituting a limit to this analysis.

Instead, we may continue our analysis of D'Ieteren Auto's approach through the sociology of translation's lenses. A work of contextualisation was made by the employer branding manager in the larger context of the employer branding strategy. Then, the step of problematization saw the sense-creating objective of attracting and retaining the right talent arising. Yet, such an objective remains related to the broader context of employer branding. Therefore, we may consider building a relevant EVP as the specific objective of the EVP framework to be created. Such a purpose represents a common denominator among actors' interests as it drives coherence and consistency between the needs and objectives of both the organization and its current and future employees. The early interruption of the employer branding strategy due to unexpected events (see p. 4 and p. 30) created once again a limit to our analysis. If we continue analysing the D'Ieteren Auto case based on solely the observed approach, we may assume that the three steps of interest development, enrolment and network extensions didn't occur. Yet, it is interesting to mention that the creation of the ambassadors' community that was meant to take place during the second step of the framework (see p. 48) show some affinity with the process and objectives entailed by these three last steps. Moreover, at this stage it is not relevant to consider the nature and impact of different actors' translations on the management tool, leading to the impossibility to draw any conclusions adopting prescriptive relationships lenses.

As Part III reported, the purpose of this entire discussion around management tool building was to pinpoint a relevant approach for building an EVP framework for employee engagement. In order to do so, we researched existing approaches in literature and observed one approach on the field, providing data that was compared

and discussed in this chapter. Arising from this discussion, is a crucial finding that practice appears to confirm that a management tool evolves with its interaction with different actors. Consequently, this consideration was taken into account when building our EVP framework. Considering now the different approaches to management tool building, one possibility for us could have been considering the sociology of translation view. We may consider that this approach would not have been applicable in the context of this research as we were not considering a specific organization and specific actors yet. In such a situation, there would be no actors to interest and mobilize for this EVP framework and therefore no proper translation beside ours. Nonetheless, we aimed at copying with this limit by blending a "wilder" design process to the considerations brought up by the sociology of translation. In this sense, the EVP framework was built by mobilizing existing knowledge and solutions around the core idea of different actors and their translations being cyclically incorporated in the framework.

2. An EVP Framework for Employee Engagement

2.1 Approach to EVP Framework Building

As explained in Part III, dedicated to our research and methodology (see p. 26), the research question around which this thesis was developed aimed at understanding **how an Employer Value Proposition framework could be built with a view to contribute to employee engagement in an organization**. Indeed, by examining literature on the subject, the assumption was made that a causal relationship existed between employer branding and employee engagement in which the former has an impact of the latter. Then, more specifically, the Employer Value Proposition was selected as the employer branding element to act on engagement through a specific framework. Such an EVP framework is to be intended as a conceptual structure for EVP development enabling the organization to ultimately attract target talent and retain and engage current employees.

The previous chapters aimed at supporting the creation of the EVP framework by pinpointing the approaches that could be used. As explained above, the selected approach envisaged two main parts. On the one hand, we built on the data collected in the context of this thesis in order to define the content of the EVP framework. Our first approach to management tool design could therefore be considered as wild. Indeed, existing findings and works provided the basis for the construction of a tool based on the methodology at the heart of this these solely. The identity of the tool was developed throughout the design process in order to reach our previously defined objective.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, we were to take into consideration that the design of a management tool is a continuous process driven by the interaction with several actors. Indeed, we may expect actors of different natures to adopt or interact with the tool, contributing to its design. Therefore, a sociology of translation view was used to drive the structure of the framework to formally integrate this continuous design process in a more participative perspective from the beginning. In general terms of management tool building, Durand et al. (2018) underline the likelihood of such an approach to ensure the successful introduction of the tool. More specifically, we considered that it is building our EVP framework this way that would support our objective of contributing to employee engagement, as it will be explained in the next section.

When defining the content of the EVP framework, the results of prior research were considered to develop Figure 17 at the end of this page. Accordingly, the development of the EVP would be starting by the definition of key EVP components. Based on inputs from both literature and practice, we suggest those key components being financial benefits, employment benefits, work environment, company culture and career development as defined at p. 48.

Subsequently, each of the EVP components would be submitted to both an objective and subjective assessment. As it was intended by Wislow (2019), an objective assessment would encompass the screening of the current organization's offering based on concrete and objective practices and policies. At the same time, a subjective assessment builds on the idea of collecting people's perspectives, and more specifically, those of current and potential employees. For this purpose, we suggest as an option an anonymous survey to be developed to collect the perceived organization's offering in terms of the EVP components. Drawing on conclusions from both the objective and subjective assessment, an idea of the existing EVP of the organization would arise.

The purpose of the process being the development of a new EVP attracting and retaining target talent, considering what current and potential employees value and require appears necessary. At the same time, the organization's identity, needs, objectives, resources, … would have to be taken into account to ensure feasibility and the relevance mentioned at p. 46. In order to gain insights about current employees, we propose to take into consideration the results of the first subjective assessment. On the other hand, just as envisaged at D'Ieteren Auto, we propose persona-definition as a mean to develop insights on potential employees. The organizational counterparty would instead be built on an exchange with top management. On this basis, a new Employer Value Proposition may be defined. Therefore, the process just described enables the EVP framework to fulfil its first function of conceptual structure for EVP development.

Figure 18: EVP Development Process

We now move onto the EVP framework's purpose of contributing to employee engagement. As seen in the first part of or work (see p. 18) employee engagement is driven by several elements. Our assumption is that positively influencing some of these drivers would have a positive impact on employee engagement.

On the one hand, by including each employee in a subjective assessment of the existing EVP, the organization would provide the opportunity for everyone to share their opinion and perspective. As it was seen through the engagement literature review, this could already have an impact on leadership, communication and perceived organizational support drivers. Nonetheless, we consider that the provision of a personal input through a survey would not be enough to ensure the framework's contribution to engagement. Consequently, we aim at providing another opportunity for employees to feel valued and involved, for empowering employee voice, key elements for employee engagement (Tower Perrin, 2003) by incorporating the logic of the sociology of translation in a co-design effort. This way, employees would be actively involved in the employer branding strategy of the organization. Also, by supporting the organization's EVP development, employees would be faced with an opportunity to better understand the organization's objectives and to see their actual contribution to them (Mone et al., 2011). In sum, the contribution of the EVP framework to employee engagement is based on the employees' involvement and contribution to the framework itself.

The opportunity for this involvement and contribution would be generated through the creation of what we will call an "EVP team" prior the beginning of the EVP development process. Such a team would be composed with the purpose of supporting the EVP development by the employer branding team of the organization, who would have adopted the tool first, and a number of employees. When we say "a number of employees" we aim at taking into account the impossibility of involving each and every employee as of an organization for practical reasons. Consequently, we suggest a certain number of employees from each department could be selected by their co-workers to take part in the EVP development efforts. Selection by colleagues aims at spreading the involvement as much as possible and limiting bias. In the context of the EVP team, the employer branding team would have the possibility to take a first problematization step and propose: "a representation of the problem faced by the organization; the proposed tool to solve it; the role of each of the actors in the design of such tool" (see p. 37). The conditions would therefore be created for the actors, namely the employees, to develop their own translation and for the tool's promoters, namely the employer branding team, to rapidly integrate them into the tool. According to Dreveton's findings (2011), the employees' interest would then be ensured and would start enrolling more allies within the organization at the same time that the EVP development process occur. Lastly, as the sociology of translation suggests, we could envision the allies being mobilized

though the appointment of spokespersons, which would then take part in a newly formed EVP team, repeating the process once again. Indeed, we built our framework on the idea that an organization's EVP is to be periodically reassessed and must evolve over time to remain relevant, differentiated and successful.

Based on the explanation provided in the last pages, Figure 18 graphically depicts our EVP framework contributing to employee engagement.
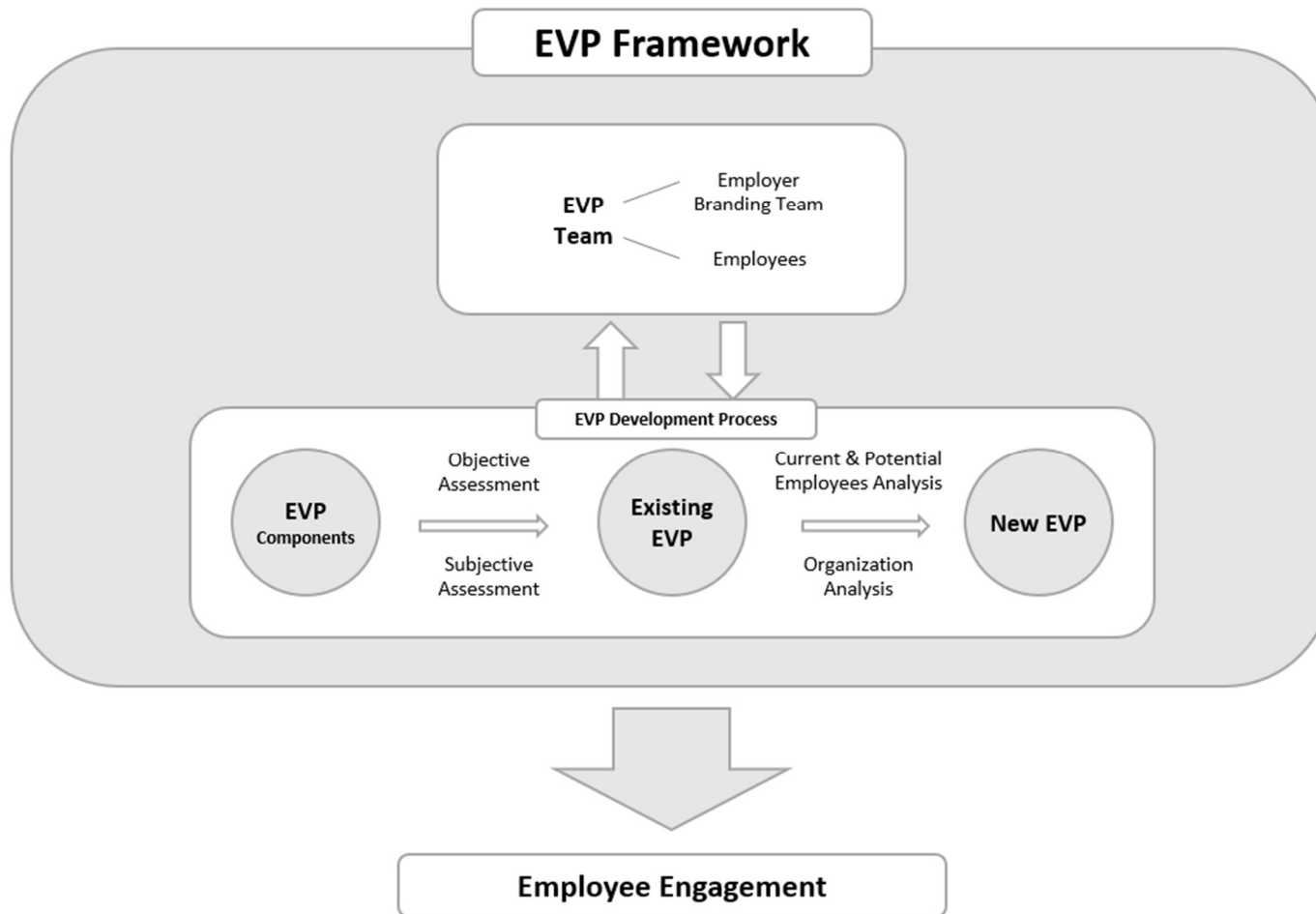
Figure 19: EVP Framework for Employee Engagement

As we hope to see our EVP framework for employee engagement being implemented in practice in the future, a few considerations appear necessary at this stage. Indeed, we believe that some remarks need to be made with regards to the context to which our EVP framework may be applied.

Above all, it is important to mention that the framework was built for organizations aiming at truly pursuing their employer branding strategy. In this sense, we suppose that an organization developing a new EVP with a view to attract and retain their current and potential employees, would consequently coherently adapt all the necessary elements of its offer. Indeed, we consider that implementing our EVP framework while, on the other hand, acting inconsistently in practice with regards to the defined EVP, would be even likely to produce the opposite result and lead to greater disengagement.

Moreover, we consider organization-wide communication as a key support to our EVP framework. Indeed, we believe that greater results with regards to engagement may be achieved when ensuring that everyone in the organization is informed about the process. A first feeling of involvement may develop at this stage, while transparency could dampen some resistance towards the introduction of a new approach.

Lastly, we wish to point out that the process of setting up an EVP team and its composition might differ from one organization to another as depending on several dimensions including the size of the company, its structure, the assigned roles and responsibility, sector of activity and maturity.

PART VI – CONCLUSION

As employer branding's importance for any organization appears consolidated in terms of talent attraction and retention, its contribution to employee engagement still needs further exploration. However, although still scarce and vague, the works on the subject support the existence of a causal relationship in which employer branding may lead to precious engagement improvements. Wishing to fill in the encountered gaps, this thesis was built around the objective of creating more solid basis for this causal relationship through the creation of a framework. More specifically, considering the crucial role of the Employer Value Proposition in the context of employer branding, this thesis' research question focused on understanding "how an Employer Value Proposition framework could be built with a view to contribute to employee engagement in an organization" .

As explained in Part III, the selected methodology envisages to make the most of both theory's and practice's contribution for the design and building of the wished management tool in a constructivist logic. As our role as researches exceeded that of pure observers to become engineers of a new tool, our research method appeared to join the logic of the method that Chanal et al. (1997) call "ingénierique", aiming at "providing an opportunity for practitioners to adopt and exploit theoretical knowledge and the research' results through the generated tool" . Concretely, literature approaches to management tools design and building were explored while an approach to EVP framework building was observed on the field in the context of an internship at D'Ieteren Auto. Based on the findings from research and observation, the different approaches at our disposal for the creation of an EVP framework for employee engagement were discussed and evaluated.

Considering the inputs from theoretical sources and our participant observation on the field, our approach for the construction of the EVP framework for employee engagement was developed in two parts. First of all, an EVP development process was built on the results of employer branding's literature review combined with the inputs from field observation. The EVP development process suggested in the context of this thesis encompasses the definition of the EVP components followed by both an objective and subjective assessment of the organization's offering to define the existing EVP. Considering current and potential employees' and the organization's perspective on the existing EVP would then allow the development a new EVP to support talent attraction and retention as intended. Then, the EVP framework for employee engagement itself was built to integrate the findings of our theoretical research around management tool building. In this sense, "a sociology of translation view was used to drive the structure

of the framework to formally integrate this continuous design process in a more participative perspective from the beginning" (see p. 60), which was key in supporting the EVP framework's contribution to employee engagement. While involvement of employees in a subjective assessment of the existing EVP would provide an opportunity for them to feel valued and heard, supporting some engagement drivers, adopting a co-design logic is crucial for the framework's role in enhancing engagement. Indeed, the EVP team has been imagined as the context in which employees would truly and actively be involved in the employer branding strategy of the organization and the development of a relevant EVP. As their opinion, views and perceptions would be integrated in the strategy and the EVP framework, ever evolving by the interaction with different actors, their level of employee engagement, and that of their mobilized colleagues would increase. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that despite the research supporting our EVP framework building, its results still necessitate proof through implementation on the field, for which the remarks made at p. 65 would need to be taken into account.

In addition to meeting the specific thesis objective by building the EVP framework, we might consider that our work's general objectives were successfully met as well. Indeed, through a first part including our literature review, employer branding literature was gathered and structured for the reader to have an overview of the notion. Secondly, a focus on employer branding links to other notions and then, more precisely, on the link with employee engagement are likely to "provide some lines of thoughts so as to different ways employer branding may contribute to an organization's success" (see p. 3). Finally, we consider that the approach adopted for our EVP framework may be applied to other notions than the one of employer branding to generate employee engagement in other contexts.

Nonetheless, some difficulties needed to be faced in order to reach the mentioned objectives. First of all, as previously explained, Covid-19 related measures impacted the research resources at our disposal as well as the context of our participatory observation. Therefore, the information we were able to collect was limited compared to our prior expectations, leading to a reassessment of our objectives and methodology. Furthermore, finding relevant literature to guide our management tool building appeared to be complex as the subject has been explored by a limited number of authors, showing an opportunity for other researchers to explore the matter deeper. Nonetheless, the available material was considered sufficient for our purposes. Lastly, the impossibility of testing our framework's effect on employee engagement on the field represents the main limit of our work. Such a limit made it necessary for us to build the framework solely at a theoretical level, with a field contribution limited to that of an observed practice.

Therefore, the nature of the challenges faced reinforces the interest for further research in the considered domains. Firstly, throughout the literature review at the beginning of this thesis, it appeared that the further exploration in the field of employer branding may be necessary as several shortcomings are still being observed, as Theurer et al. (2016) suggested. In this context, links with several other notions may be analysed. Secondly, and more specifically, further research on the relationship between employer branding and employee engagement would undoubtedly be valuable and may explore a different dynamic than the simple causal relationship at the heart of our work. Thirdly, as already mentioned, deeper exploration and development of management tool building approaches could enrich the existing literature. Lastly, investigating management tool building with a view to contribute to employee engagement may provide interesting insights both on a theoretical and practical level.

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