

Disrupting Business with Employer Branding. Strategic levers for medium-sized companies to attract international intrapreneurs.

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Abstract

Internationally operating German medium-sized companies (MEs) are struggling with volatile markets and a declining innovativeness. To stay competitive in the long-term, these companies must invest in innovation and attract international intrapreneurs. An adapted and specified employer brand helps them to do so. Thus, this paper provides a recommendation for German MEs in industry, how to design their employer brand to be attractive to international intrapreneurs. For this purpose, an internationally applicable employer brand model was developed, and relevant employer attributes were identified.

The research results are based on a systematic literature review (SLR) and a qualitative content analysis. The results show that German MEs as employers should live and communicate A) a work culture characterized through empowerment, collaboration, growth, impact, and innovation; B) human and aspirational values; C) a leading, exciting, and friendly personality.

Keywords: employer branding, intrapreneurship, medium-sized companies, human resources

1. Introduction

In the 1990s, the term VUCA first came up to describe a world that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). With the rise of digitization and globalization, companies and their managers have been confronted with fast-changing environments for more than thirty years. One of those industries challenged by the VUCA world is the German Mittelstand. In their high number, international relevance and social responsibility, these small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) play a significant role in the German economy. However, technological developments, new innovations, business models and globalization present ongoing challenges especially for these firms (Astor et al., 2016, p. 1).

To stay competitive in this environment, companies must recognize trends i.a., in technology, invest in innovation and inhabit agile business structures that allow them to adapt (Astor et al., 2016, p. 1). Due to their traditional mentality, hierarchic structures (Armutat, 2018c, p. 4) and observable decrease in innovation activities (Astor et al., 2016, p. 8), German MEs are starting to face a crisis. One of the reasons for the regression is their lack of qualified personnel. In a survey of SME experts, the attraction of professionals was named as the most important determinant for future business success (Welter et al., 2014, pp. 9-14). More precisely, innovative

thinking employees – “intrapreneurs” – promise the highest potential to increase innovation thus staying competitive in the long-term (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu & Homan, 2014, p. 1010).

Research in human resource management (HRM) also thematizes the impact of workgroup diversity on business innovation. Researchers state a socially (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) and functionally (e.g., expertise, education, skills) diverse workforce as catalyst for businesses to quickly generate know-how, creativity and solutions that deal with the VUCA world (Diebig & Klasmeier, 2015, pp. 151-152; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Especially for internationally operating MEs, diversity is important to consider in their HRM (Gerwing, 2015, pp. 7-9). International talents provide a global understanding, language skills, international networks, and intercultural competences (Gerwing, 2015, p. 9) necessary for international operations.

For human resource managers of German MEs, the attraction of international intrapreneurs appears to be difficult. Large, innovative companies present better offers to candidates and make it almost impossible for German MEs to compete. To differentiate from these competitors, the discipline of employer branding offers a great potential. It allows them to

position their identity as employer through a unique employer brand and finally constitute a positive image in the mind of the target group (Bartholomäus, 2018, p. 97).

If German MEs want to define an employer brand that is relevant for international intrapreneurs, they must explore which attributes the target group expect and desire. To provide a recommendation for German MEs, this study aims to identify such relevant for international intrapreneurs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a strategic recommendation for German MEs in industry, how to attract international intrapreneurs with their strategic employer branding. The focus therein will lie on the identification of employer attributes relevant for international intrapreneurs and the respective development of an adapted employer brand model.

The results of this study contribute to literature in two aspects. First, they complement existing literature in strategic employer branding, i.a., of Armutat (2018b), Lukaszcyk (2012) and Meyer and Dietz (2019), considering international aspects. Most literature in the field focuses on employer attributes in a varying emphasis. However, in an international context further cultural influences on employer attractiveness are important. Therefore, this study provides an adapted employer brand model considering these influences for its application in an international context.

Second, it contributes to literature in intrapreneurship, i.a., of De Jong and Wennekers (2008) and Pinchot (1985). These mostly focus on overall characteristics of intrapreneurs, however not in their role as (prospective) employees. Thus, this study identifies and provides a set of employer attributes relevant for international intrapreneurs in their employer selection. It gives a direction for companies how to design and communicate their identity as employer.

2. State of Research

2.1 Intrapreneurship and Diversity

For German MEs to stay successful in fast-changing markets, they must invest in research and development (R&D), and product innovation – areas pushed forward by innovative-thinking, qualified professionals. Based on the concept and definition of Gifford Pinchot (1985) intrapreneurs are entrepreneurs within a company and employees that drive innovation. Thus, the employment of intrapreneurs should be a concern of any German company, and especially of the challenged German MEs. Although many researchers in the field study intrapreneurs and their characteristics, only few researchers examine internationally relevant aspects from the employer side. Based on the definition of Neessen et al. (2019), characteristics identifying intrapreneurs are innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, opportunity pursuit and

networking. Intrapreneurs therefore provide the ideal mindset and skills for German MEs to disrupt their business and work on radical innovations. As stated before, it is beneficial for an innovative environment if the team also consists of a diverse set of people – in their professional and social background (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). The ideal candidates for German MEs to foster innovation therefore are international intrapreneurs.

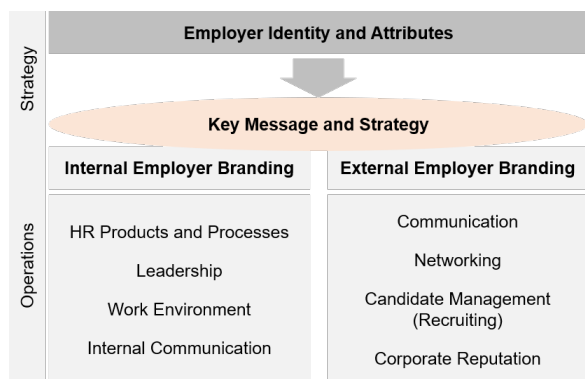
2.2 Human Resource Management

Within a company, all aspects related to successfully leveraging human capital are part of the human resource management. In their task to attract and retain professionals, human resource managers are also confronted with rapidly changing and complex market dynamics. At the same time, many German MEs are characterized by a wait-and-see mentality, hierarchic structures, and traditional thinking (Armutat, 2018c, p. 4), which makes it especially difficult to keep up with dynamics, attract new talents and be relevant for intrapreneurs. Armutat (2018a) analysed areas of activity for human resource managers to address and respond to these challenges, one of them being employer branding (pp. 26-27). Employer branding aims to highlight the uniqueness and characteristics of one employer against another (Armutat, 2018a, p. 35). It offers great potentials for German MEs to differentiate from competitors and appear attractive for the intrapreneurial target group (Astor et al., 2016, p. 6). Even more, as this field of HRM had not been a primary concern of Mittelstand companies in the past.

2.3 Employer Branding

The concept of employer branding describes all activities and efforts that lead to being perceived as attractive employer by current (internal) and future employees (external). These activities include the development of a unique identity (Latzel et al., 2015, p. 20) and to systematically plan, develop and control a consistent employer brand (Lukaszcyk, 2012, p. 13). This process is based on traditional brand management. It includes a strategy development and the transformation of an employer identity into a unique employer value proposition (EVP). The implementation and controlling of the defined employer brand then happen within the operational employer branding. There, all HR products, communications, and processes must represent the defined brand (Figure 1) (Lukaszcyk, 2012, pp. 15-18; Siebrecht & Tobler, 2012, pp. 53-58).

Figure 1. Areas of activity for internal and external employer branding (adapted from Siebrecht & Tobler, 2012, p. 54)



Through employer branding, especially the creation of a unique employer brand and identity, German MEs can differentiate from competitors and appear attractive for the intra-preneurial target group.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Employer Brand Model

As one of the first authors who defined employer brand, Amblor and Barrow (1996) named it "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (p. 187). Most employer brand models have evolved from traditional brand identity models and must reflect "elements of the organizational character itself, such as key values or guiding principles" (Christiaans, 2013, p. 29). At the same time, the company must identify and reflect the values and expectations of the target group (Armutat, 2018a, p. 36).

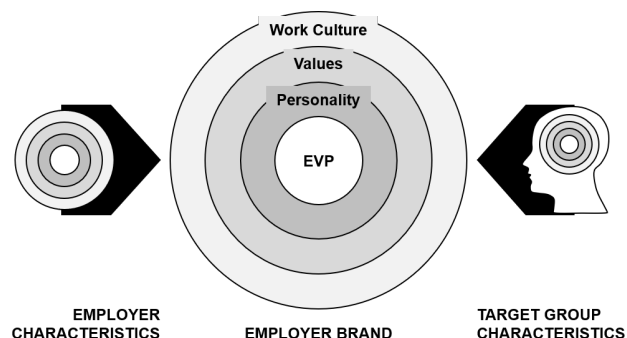
Meyer and Dietz (2019) further emphasized the importance of shared values between the target group and company in their approach. They stated that strong employer brands are heavily anchored within a company's culture, which again consists of common values and beliefs. Only if these values are clearly defined and instilled, the company will recruit and employ professionals that match their culture. They will thereby reduce fluctuation, foster intrinsic motivation, and strengthen the work culture in the long-term (pp. 61-65). The goal of any company should be to create a work culture that is compatible with the attitudes and values of their employees. To do so, the company must define its employer brand based on the internal perspective and already existing values of current employees (Seng & Armutat, 2012, pp. 22-25). At the same time, it must identify the values and expectations of desired candidates – to then evaluate how to fulfil these expectations as employer (Armutat, 2018a, p. 36). In any case, the more the existing and intended business culture comply, the more successful and sustainable the overall employer branding will be (Meyer & Dietz, 2019, p. 61).

The essence of an employer brand is stated as Employer Value Proposition (EVP). It is the sum of all characteristics that describe the uniqueness of an employer (Lehmann,

2012, pp. 33-34). Thereby, the EVP is formed by the values, personality, and work culture of an employer (Lobenstein, 2004, p. 210). In general, work culture describes the work environment and atmosphere and is grounded on common values and beliefs. It also distinguishes from the brand personality, which had been defined by Aaker (1997) as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p. 347). She named Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness as the five dimensions of brand personality (p. 352).

The conceptual framework for the adapted employer brand model of this study is based on the concept of brand identity (Burmam, Blinda, Nitschke, 2003, pp. 3-17). Which means it is influenced by the characteristics of the employer and as well as such of the target group. It describes the personality, values, and work culture of an employer and finally, a unique EVP (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Employer brand model



3.2 Employer Attractiveness Framework

Employer attractiveness is defined as "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005, p. 156). It indicates desires of job seekers to work for a specific employer (Rampl, 2014, p. 1488).

The decision process for or against an employer is mostly based on the motives and emotions of the candidate (Böttger, 2012, pp. 153-156). In traditional marketing, the instrumental-symbolic framework refers to that theory. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) applied the framework to the recruiting context and defined instrumental attributes as tangible attributes that trigger interest mainly because of their utility. Symbolic attributes they defined as intangible attributes that trigger interest because of their expressive value (traits, benefits, personality) (pp. 88-89). Based on that approach, attributes can be clustered into instrumental (functional) and symbolic (non-material) attributes of employers. Thereby, instrumental attributes are easier to cognitively evaluate, however are less suited for differentiation. Symbolic attributes on the other hand appeal to emotions and

values and play a significant role for the selection of the employer of choice (Christiaans, 2013, pp. 52-55). As the instrumental-symbolic framework allows to cluster employer attributes and give insights to their relevance in the employer selection, it serves as conceptual model in this study.

3.3 Target Markets

In various research, culture had been identified as an influential factor on the evaluation of employer attractiveness (Christiaans, 2013, p. 64). This not only covers the external perception of employers, but also the experience as employees within a company. For the attraction and retention of international intrapreneurs, it is therefore crucial that the work culture of the German employer is responding to the cultural characteristics of the target group (Bartholomäus, 2018, p. 97). Thus, to develop a strategic recommendation for German MEs, the research of this study aims to identify attributes that are relevant for culturally similar intrapreneurs. To build this basis, countries high in intrapreneurial activities, and thus with prospective intrapreneurial candidates, were evaluated in their cultural compatibility to Germany.

The Global Entrepreneurship monitor is a global study that strives to understand entrepreneurship across the globe. It covers fifty economies of the Middle East and Africa (11), Asia and Pacific (8), Latin America and Caribbean (8), and Europe and North America (23), and is based on interviews of 150,000 participants (Bosma et al., 2020, p. 13). The researchers found that especially in fast-moving economies, entrepreneurship skills among employees are highly valued. Based on their overall study results, Europe and North America provided the highest rate of intrapreneurial activities (Bosma et al., 2020, p. 42).

To evaluate these countries in their cultural compatibility to Germany, the GLOBE study by House et al. (2004), and its nine cultural dimensions served as conceptual framework. Finally, the Anglo cluster, more explicitly the English-speaking countries England, Australia, USA, and Canada, have been identified as best culturally compatible and suitable. They are recommended to serve as target markets for German MEs and build the basis for this research.

4. Research Approach

4.1 Research Design

The research of this study focuses on identifying symbolic and instrumental attributes relevant for international intrapreneurs in their employer selection. To ensure the previously described compatibility with the German culture and thus existing employees, research focuses on such attributes relevant for intrapreneurs of the Anglo cluster.

The research design is built on a mixed-methods approach. First, a systematic literature analysis aims to identify overall employer attractiveness attributes from existing research.

Then, these attributes are tested and extended through a qualitative content analysis of the employer branding of international, innovative companies in the Anglo cluster. The theoretical foundation of this procedure is based on the person-organization fit model by Chatman (1989). It described "the congruence between the norms and values of organizations and the values of persons" (p. 339). Based on that theory, a correlation between prospective employees and the identity of a company can be made (pp. 339-341). Concluding for this study, the communicated employer identity of innovative companies will be used to draw conclusions on attributes that are important for the target group.

4.2 Systematic Literature Review

To understand the motives of international intrapreneurs, the systematic literature review (SLR) aims to cover already conducted research on the topic. The research question reviewed in the SLR is the following: *What are symbolic and instrumental attributes that positively influence employer attractiveness?*

4.2.1 Method

The selected approach is based on the work of Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003). It consists of three steps: (1) planning the review, (2) conducting the review and (3) reporting and dissemination.

At first, a detailed search for existing literature reviews on the topic of international intrapreneurship and the employer selection motives of intrapreneurs was conducted. A manual search on Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, IBZ Online, WISO, Springer Link and Emerald Insight showed that there has not yet been published an equivalent study. For the review, literature of the databases in EBSCOhost were used. As inclusion criteria, the type of publication was defined as full-text, journal article, scholarly (peer reviewed), in English and published between 2000-2020. Finally, an initial sample of 48 publications was identified. To ensure a high quality of the research, only articles published in journals ranked in the Academic Journal Guide 2018 (AJG) of the Chartered Association of Business Schools were considered for further assessment (N = 27). After the quality assessment and elimination of duplicates, 14 publications were reviewed through abstract screening. Based on the external and strategic investigation of employer attractiveness for this study, articles that focused on internal or operational employer branding were excluded. The final sample of the SLR consisted of 6 publications dealing with employer selection attributes, which are of Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Lievens and Highhouse (2003), Lievens, Van Hoy and Schreurs (2005), Rampl (2014), Sommer, Heidenreich and Handrich (2016) and Thompson, Payne and Taylor (2015).

The SLR is based on a narrative approach and attempts to identify different influences on employer attractiveness as

well as synthesize the study results. The narrative review started with a within-study analysis to then compare the results in a cross-study analysis.

4.2.2 Results

Overall Employer Attributes

Within their research, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) and Lievens, Van Hove and Schreurs (2005) differentiated between instrumental and symbolic attributes and provided a clear definition. After accumulating and matching similar attributes across studies, the results were allocated towards being instrumental or symbolic. Finally, Pay and Benefits, Job Security, Advancement, Flexibility, Location, Work Culture and Work Content were identified as instrumental attributes of employers. Identified symbolic attributes of employers were Innovativeness and Prestige. Attributes that did not occur across studies were evaluated as not significant for this study and excluded. These were such only occurring within a specific industry (e.g., the military) and/or country (e.g., Belgium).

Attributes Promoting Employer Attractiveness

Each study identified attributes promoting employer attractiveness based on their theoretical foundation. Bringing the results together, job and organizational attributes such as Pay, Job Security, Advancement opportunities, Flexibility and Location do impact employer attractiveness, yet do not predict an employer of choice or differentiate from competitors. Employer traits (Innovativeness and Prestige), emotions and familiarity on the other hand, do significantly impact the perceived attractiveness. More specifically, an innovative work culture and exciting work content had been identified as most important levers. In Table 1 an evaluation on the impact of the previously defined attributes on employer attractiveness is displayed. This is based on the analysed study results.

Table 1. Impact of instrumental and symbolic attributes on employer attractiveness as identified through the SLR

Attributes	Impact on Employer Attractiveness*
Advancement	++
Flexibility	++
Innovativeness	+++
Job Security	+
Location	+
Pay & Benefits	++
Prestige	++
Work Content	+++
Work Culture	+++

Level of impact: +++ high impact, ++ medium impact, + low impact, 0 no impact
 * Impact on employer attractiveness is evaluated based on accumulated study results

Additionally, the theoretical frameworks used in the studies provide a direction for the characteristics of the adapted em-

ployer brand model. The study results implicate, that symbolic attributes, namely brand personality traits, have the highest impact on employer attractiveness (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Van Hove & Schreurs, 2005; Rampl, 2014). Thus, for the further assessment of employer personality traits in this study, the model of Aaker (1997) will serve as theoretical basis. Another important finding is that of Sommer, Heidenreich and Handrich (2016). Their results state that innovative employees demand for an innovative work culture, which might be a congruent indicator for expectations of international intrapreneurs.

4.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

To identify attributes relevant for international intrapreneurs, the qualitative content analysis examines the employer branding of innovative, international companies. The objective of the qualitative content analysis is to identify symbolic and instrumental employer attributes of selected innovative, international companies. The research question is the following: *What are symbolic and instrumental employer attributes of innovative, international companies?*

Based on the person-organization fit theory (Chatman, 1989, p. 339), the communicated attributes of these companies will be transferred to this study. Integrated in the overall study design, the qualitative content analysis covers three aspects: (1) review of the previously identified attributes in their relevance for innovative, international companies, (2) identification of additional attributes and (3) evaluation of the identified attributes in their impact on employer attractiveness. Thereby, the symbolic-instrumental framework serves as theoretical foundation. Due to their high effect on employer attractiveness, the brand personality traits of Aaker (1997) are used as additional conceptual foundation for the category development.

4.3.1 Method

The selected approach is based on the work of Mayring (2015) and Kuckartz (2016). Of the many techniques (Mayring, 2015, p. 68), this study follows a content structuring qualitative content analysis. This technique includes the inductive and/or deductive definition of categories and their coding on the material (Kuckartz, 2016, p. 97).

To identify the corpus of the qualitative content analysis, profound research for innovative companies was conducted. Based on a scientific ranking of the most innovative companies published by the Boston Consulting Group (2020) and the defined selection criteria, the companies providing material for the content structuring qualitative content analysis were Apple, Google, Microsoft, Samsung, IBM and Tesla. All companies are operating globally, are strong in (radical) product innovation and have been ranked among the top 15 innovative companies for the past five years.

As Units of Analysis the company's global career site was selected. As employer brand attributes are the foundation of all internal and external employer branding measures, they can be found in the company's communication. The material consisted of the available text on the respective sites and excluded images or video material. It was analysed in the English language.

Based on Mayring (2015) the category development in this study followed both, a deductive and inductive approach. Through deductive category development the research results of the SLR and the conceptual foundation of this study have been transferred to the material. Adding to that, further categories and subcategories were developed through an inductive approach. The available material was paraphrased, abstracted, and reduced to then result in final categories for the analysis (Mayring, 2015, p. 72).

Finally, eleven categories and their descriptive attributes were identified. These are Advancement, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Diversity, Empowerment, Excitement, Flexibility, Innovativeness, Job Security, Pay and Benefits, Prestige, Ruggedness, Sincerity, Work Content and Work Culture.

4.3.2 Results

The following hypotheses were derived from the qualitative content analysis research results.

Most important for international intrapreneurs is their work content and the impact they create with their work. More specifically, they desire a human-oriented motivation making an impact for people, planet, industry, and the future. Further do they value personal and professional challenges, high dynamics, and work complexity (Work Content).

H1: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with a human-oriented work culture, making an impact.

H2: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with challenging work.

Intrapreneurs need an innovative work environment. This characterizes through innovative business practices in various areas and a culture that is creative, imaginative, exciting, unique, visionary, risk-taking and open to push the boundaries of what's possible (Innovativeness, Excitement).

H3: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with a work culture that is innovative.

H4: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with an employer personality that is exciting and aspirational.

Intrapreneurs want to actively contribute to innovation, whilst being autonomous and responsible. They enjoy to continuously learn and grow, which is why advancement oppor-

tunities, mentoring, education and respectively career opportunities are important to them. The valued growth culture is also characterized through a high density in talented people with a high expertise, passion, and visionary thinking. What rewards intrapreneurs therein, is the possibility to learn from others, overcome challenges and make an impact with their work (Advancement, Competence, Empowerment).

H5: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with the promise of individual empowerment.

H6: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with a work culture focusing on personal and professional growth.

H7: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with an employer personality that is intelligent and competent.

Just as important for intrapreneurs is an open, supportive, appreciative, honest, friendly, and encouraging work culture, that values the individual and actively supports collaboration and teamwork. They seek for a work culture that promotes diversity, equality and inclusion in all hierarchies and work areas (Diversity, Sincerity, Work Culture).

H8: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with a collaborative work culture.

H9: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with employer values that are human and sincere.

Finally, international intrapreneurs enjoy working for leading companies with a good reputation in the market and therefore high business standards in all areas – equal to the claims they make for their own work. In turn, they appreciate comprehensive benefits and offers for recreation and well-being (Pay and Benefits, Prestige).

H10: International intrapreneurs can be attracted with an employer personality that is leading.

Ruggedness, Job Security, Flexibility and Corporate Social Responsibility have not been identified as relevant attributes to appear attractive for the intrapreneurial target group. Comparing these results with such of the SLR, the high importance of Work Content, Culture and Innovativeness was confirmed as influential and relevant for employer attractiveness, also for international intrapreneurs. Advancement was evaluated as more important for this specific target group. Prestige and Benefits were confirmed as equally relevant but compared to other attributes as less important. Contrary to the results of the SLR, Pay, Job Security and Flexibility were not confirmed as relevant for intrapreneurs. Having included further personality traits, Competence, Sincerity and Excitement were evaluated as relevant employer attractiveness attributes for intrapreneurs.

5. Adapted Employer Brand Model

As defined in chapter 3, the employer brand model is built of the work culture, values, personality, and EVP which reflect employer characteristics as well as target group expectations. Through the research of this study, attributes appealing to the intrapreneurial (Anglo) target group were identified. For companies to be attractive to intrapreneurs, the following attributes should be considered in their employer brand.

Work Culture

Employers appear more attractive for intrapreneurs if the purpose of their work creates an impact, e.g., if they can empower businesses, shape the future, or improve people's lives. Thereby, companies should foster and communicate an innovative work culture, which tackles important problems through creative, open, and visionary work, open to push boundaries and take risks. Within that environment, intrapreneurs want to actively contribute to innovation, face challenges, work autonomously and self-responsible. To empathize the mindset of personal and professional growth, companies are recommended to offer career perspectives, education, and training programs. But also benefits and recreation opportunities for employees to recharge. Besides the high standards and development aspirations, the work should be accompanied by an inclusive, open, supportive, appreciative, and respectful atmosphere. Collaboration and teamwork are important for intrapreneurs, especially since they draw inspiration from interacting with diverse people and minds. It is recommended for companies to live a work culture that values the individual and fosters collaboration, inclusion, and respect.

Personality

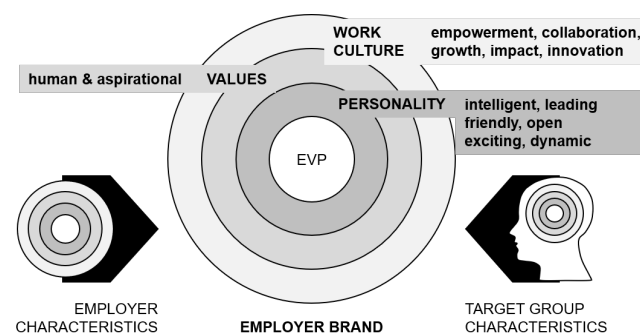
As identified in the SLR, personality traits have the highest impact on employer attractiveness. To appeal to international intrapreneurs, it is recommended to live and communicate a brand personality that highlights the high standards in the company's work. This includes the competence, expertise, and know-how of employees, but also high work standards and a good reputation (prestige) in the market. Further important are traits describing a dynamic, innovative environment and such standing for an inclusive, open work culture.

Values

As basis of the work culture and employer personality, it is recommended for companies to foster aspirational and human values. More precisely, that is openness, creativity, ambition and growth, but also inclusion, equality, honesty and respect.

The described characteristics of work culture, values and personality should be reflected in the employer brand of companies that aim to attract intrapreneurs. Furthermore, these characteristics should then result in a unique EVP, which at the same time is influenced by the essence of target group characteristics, the employer characteristics and such differentiating the employer from its competitors (Figure 3). It is recommended to execute a profound analysis of all influencing factors to identify a unique EVP in a strategic process. And then convert the defined employer brand into a holistic employer branding (Figure 1).

Figure 3. Adapted employer brand model, specified to attract international intrapreneurs



6. Recommendation for German MEs (Application of Results)

For the success of employer branding, it is important that the existing and intended business culture comply (Meyer & Dietz, 2019, p. 61). Any differences between target group expectations and the existing employer attributes cannot be solved through employer branding alone but must be anchored within the company. It is therefore important, that the results of this study are not only transferred to the communication of the employer, but first be implemented and anchored in the existing environment.

The defined adapted employer brand model serves as basis for any company targeting international intrapreneurs. As this study aims to provide a recommendation specifically for German MEs, general information on that specific industry gives an initial starting point, however, must be assessed for each company individually.

6.1 Employer Characteristics

The typical characteristics of German MEs are, among others, a lack of dynamic, long processes and hierarchic structures on one hand (Armutat, 2018c, p. 4), but also a familial, team-oriented work culture with high individual responsibilities on the other (Armutat, 2018b, p. 168). As international intrapreneurs value a dynamic and agile work culture (De Jong & Wennekers, 2008, pp. 17-20), the traditional structures of

German MEs are not only barriers for new ideas and innovation, but they are also contrary to the expectations of international intrapreneurs. Their culture of collaboration and teamwork, however, matches the target group desires for an open and friendly work environment.

It is, that German MEs not only must work on their employer branding to appear more attractive on the job market but work on parts of their culture and work environment first. The previously described employer characteristics provide guidance towards the desired culture by intrapreneurs. More specifically, German MEs with hierarchic structures should think about changing towards more agile working methods and less traditional decision-making processes. It should be a priority goal to establish an innovative, dynamic work environment that invites for collaboration, creativity, and new ideas. Depending on available perspectives, advancement opportunities might be something to work on as well.

On the other hand, German MEs benefit from an existing culture of self-responsible working. It should therefore be easy to live principles of employee empowerment and individual growth. As important players in the German economy and international markets, German MEs may also highlight their competence, expertise, and prestige in the markets. Besides that, these companies are known for a familial, collaborative environment – something that is important for innovation and valued by intrapreneurs.

6.2 Human Resources

For human resource managers to find and attract intrapreneurs, it is recommended to look for candidates that characterize through innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, opportunity pursuit, networking, passion, curiosity, and dedication. To attract these talents, it is recommended to build a work environment that welcomes their qualities and responds to their character. When targeting intrapreneurs, they can most likely be found in England, Australia, USA, and Canada (Anglo cluster). That again benefits the diversity of the workforce and thus increases innovative thinking. It is to state though, that potential language barriers must be evaluated in the process as well.

7. Discussion

The results of this study provide a recommendation and framework that intends to help German MEs to build up a successful strategy and appear attractive for the innovative target group.

This study contributes to research with an adapted, internationally applicable employer brand model. Limitations, however, lie in the theoretical foundation of the model. As it had been developed based on an extract of literature, the employer brand model might differ if its theoretical foundation varied. For its application in an international context, the

evaluation of the cultural compatibility was made based on the GLOBE study. The results might vary if other cultural dimensions and models are considered.

Finally, the mixed-methods approach helped to identify employer attributes and verify them for the intrapreneurial target group. Limitations therein lie in the generalizability of the SLR results, as the sample of studies mostly focused on students and young professionals, emphasized selective industries, and were conducted in a simulated research setting. It is recommended to verify them for experienced employees and in a natural occurring recruiting environment. The qualitative content analysis identified relevant characteristics, proved the importance of diversity for innovative companies, supported literature on intrapreneur characteristics and the cultural dimensions of the Anglo cluster. Limitations of the research results lie in their reliability, as the analysis was only conducted by one person and included a complex interpretation process. Future research may verify the developed hypotheses qualitatively and/or quantitatively directly with the target group.

8. Outlook

Finally, this research offers German MEs a strategic direction for their employer identity and branding to attract intrapreneurs. It helps these companies to set the first step for becoming more innovative, inventive, and competitive in the market. However, characterized through their traditional mentality, it will prospectively be difficult for German MEs to implement the recommendations stated in this paper. Even more if the structures, mindset, and culture have been the same for the past decades. Though, for a long-term success and innovativeness of German MEs, it is important to implement and promote the intrapreneurial mindset within the company (as described in chapter 6).

Intrapreneurship within organizations is affected by the workplace behaviour and initiative by employees. Also is it influenced by the number of resources, horizontal participation, and the trust of direct managers (Rigtering & Weitzel, 1999, p. 354). To create change within a traditional German ME, it is therefore necessary to develop a clear change plan that integrates existing employees and managers into the process and creates a cultural change from the bottom up. The hiring of intrapreneurs might help to set the seed and bring the intrapreneurial mindset into the company. However, intrapreneurs must then be provided with enough freedom to get creative and inventive. It is important to offer special support for such employees, as they are continuously confronted with personal and professional challenges. They must be convinced of the company's commitment to innovation (Prexl, 2019, p. 239).

Building on this study, future research may aim to identify solutions for German MEs to change their existing and inherited work culture towards becoming more innovative, agile, and attractive for intrapreneurs. Even more, to support a work culture that creates innovative employees from within the company. Only then, a long-term success in global, fast-changing markets is achievable.

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