

Comparing Social Media Sites:
A Facebook Case Study about Employer Branding

Bachelorarbeit

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)“ im
Studiengang Wirtschaftswissenschaft der Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen
Fakultät der Leibniz Universität Hannover

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Hannover, den 11.08.2015

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1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance and Motivation

“I am convinced that nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people. At the end of the day you bet on people, not on strategies.”

– Lawrence Bossidy, GE

The process of demographic change developed a growing lack of skilled technicians. This leads to an increasing competition of firms to get highly qualified employees (Büttgen & Kissel, 2013: 107). The growth and popularity of Social Networks changed the way how individuals communicate, consume and create fundamentally (Aral, Dellarocas & Godes, 2013: 3; Chaudary et al., 2012: 66; Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011: 1337). As a result, a decreasing number of people are reading local newspapers and Human Resource Managers have to find new ways to get in contact with potential employees (Cross, 2014 45). Hence, more and more companies discovered the Internet for publishing new job offers (Caers & Castelyns, 2010: 2). The high availability of these advertisements intensified the competition. As there is a numerous number of job seeking platforms, it is quiet hard to reach the target group efficiently with a limited budget and to stand out from the mass of competitors. To get an advantage, a basic prerequisite is to create a credible and target group-specific presentation of the company to motivate potential employees for application as well as to be able to retain the current ones (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004: 501; Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 473). Therefore, a brand as an employer is needed which can created by Employer Branding (Büttgen & Kissel, 2013: 107). Although, the user of Social Network platforms is growing rapidly and the numbers of likes are often understood as an indicator for the value of the Employer Brand, up to now, finding an ideal way of dealing with Social Media platforms is still a big open question in current research (Büttgen & Kissel, 2013: 107; Caers & Castelyns, 2010: 2). It is noticeable that Employer Branding Facebook sites of companies have varying degrees of success that is shown through the number of likes, comments and shares as well as through the valence of comments.

Recent studies in the Social Media area have focussed on the effectiveness of posts on the customer level of engagement, but in stimulating product sales (Goh, 2013: 89), business value (Rishika 2013: 146) and firm equity value (Luo, Zhang & Duan, 2013: 146). Many researcher have been focussing on a quantitative analysis (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013: 847; de Vries, Gensler & Leeflang: 2012: 84; Dai, Kakkonen & Sutinen, 2012: 244). But for getting also insights about the sentiment, a qualitative case analysis is helpful. He, Zha and Li (2013: 464) have absolved a case study where they have analysed Facebook sites of the three largest pizza chains in the United States. But they only monitored these site in a time period of one month. But potential and actual employees have different needs compared to normal customers. That is why there is still a lack of research for HR practices on Facebook about influencing factors of the audience engagement rate (Davison, Maraisit & Bing, 2011: 153). The questions therefore arise:

Which indicators influence the engagement of the audience on Employer Branding Facebook sites of companies? Which content should the Facebook team post to trigger more engagement?

1.2 Procedure

The purpose of this thesis is to examine which factors drive Employer Branding post popularity. This thesis analyses the influencing factors communicated by the company such as content types (interactivity and information), media type (photo, video, status and link) and weekdays over the audience level of engagement. A qualitative case study model is developed that is based on findings from Employer Branding and Human Resources Management literature as well as from Data Mining and Social Media Monitoring. Here, data of four different Facebook Employer Branding sites has been captured and analysed over the time period of one year.

In the following chapter 2, a theoretical introduction about Employer Branding, Social Network Sites for using Employer Branding and the functionality of data and sentiment mining as well as Social Media Monitoring and Analysis will be given. Chapter 3 illustrates the research design and the selection of the four companies with the help of defined criteria. Furthermore the procedure will be shown. Chapter 4 presents the results of each Employer Branding Facebook site that is the foundation of the discussion in Chapter 5. The resulting recommendations will be summarized in chapter

6. On this, limitations will follow in chapter 7. In chapter 8 the conclusion and the outlook will be provided.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Employer Branding

Employer Branding is a part of human resource (HR) management and can be seen as a process of building and representing the Employer Identity of an organisation (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 474; Chaudhary et al., 2012: 71). Through highlighting the unique aspects of its Employer Branding, the firm demonstrates to the public, why it is different and special compared to his competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004: 501; Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 473). Employer Branding focuses on representing a company as an employer and is utilized to attract potential employees and helps to rise the commitment of existing employees (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 473). This can be seen as counterpart to Brand Management that is the key activity in the marketing departments of many companies (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004: 501). However, the target group of Brand Management is only an external audience. Employer Branding focuses on reaching internal and external audience (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 473). Thus, the objective of Employer Branding has two directions. On the one hand, it is used to attract potential employees. On the other hand, Employer Branding can be used to show the companies culture and strategy to its current employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004: 501). All in all, Employer Branding presents the company as a unique and good place to work. Companies aim to be an attractive employer in order to recuperate qualified employees (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 473). Both potential and current employees compare the demonstrated Employer Identity with their own characteristics and needs. The more these identities accord, the more is the organisation tends to be attractive for the potential employee (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013: 474). Two indicators demonstrate the success of an organisations Employer Branding. The number of applicants shows the effect of external Employer Branding while the fluctuation rate points out the accomplishments of internal Employer Branding (Weise, 2011: 67).

In the last years, Social Network Sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Xing, are more and more used to stay in contact with potential employees and to present the company

8. Conclusion and Outlook

“Employees are a company's greatest asset - they're your competitive advantage.”

Anne M. Mulcahy, Ex-CEO of Xerox

For this thesis, 719 posts from 4 different Facebook Employer Branding sites of companies have been collected and analysed over a time period of one year. It shows that every Facebook site has its specialities and uniqueness. Moreover, it illustrates that the two larger companies benefit from the popular brand name and get page likes easier. But the two smaller firms were convincing their audience more with their posts. Nevertheless, there are for every Facebook site some things to pay attention to. This thesis demonstrates that there are different content types, media types publishing days or content with varying degrees of success of audience engagement. Moreover, it was pointed out that the content type, interaction or information has a different influence on the type of engagement. Every company can learn from its competitive environment and their way to communicate and network with their potential and current employees on Facebook. But companies should always have in mind that fans of Employer Branding sites tend to be passive job seekers. It is also of vital importance to constantly question, who the target group of the page is. Therefore you have to create purposefully and credibly content for this group of potential and actual qualified employees. Therefore the company should upload, through using all media types, creative and diversified content for gaining attention and generating interest over and over again.

However, the most important thing for companies is to be unique, authentic and to be consistent in every channel such as website, job advertisements and their Facebook site. That also includes the integration of all HRM channels into a multi-channelling concept. The company should be always clear about its impact on their whole company. This contains the content of posts on Facebook and also the way how to deal with comments. Through that they can get important insights into the relevant topics for the target group and also the appreciation of employees. It should be remembered that the creation of an Employer Brand is a long and continuous process. Therefore, the success can only be measured in a long-term perspective. But finally, the number and quality of applications count.

In future research, it would be interesting to identify the authors of the comments and likes and to find out how many people are active. This could give an insight if always the same people like and comment a post or the active audience is continuously changing. Besides that, it could be nice to detect the influence of the length of the posts on the number of likes. Thereby, it could be possible to recommend the optimum number of words or letters for Employer Branding posts on Facebook. Future research should also examine the success of connection of combining different channels for Employer Branding. Through an automatical solution, it would be also interesting to analyse in further research, if the days of generating the most likes are the same day of publishing the post. It could be, that the highest interactivity rate is on Saturday and Sunday, because the people have more time on the weekend. Then, it would be more attractive to post on Saturday or Sunday in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors. To analyse the post range of different Facebook sites in the Employer Branding sector could be also give new implications. Especially by posting job offers it would be interesting to earn more details because one option is that potential employees are recognizing and reading these advertisement but they do not want to show their Facebook friends their interest in the job.